

They Called a River Charles

I sat down on the bank:

Wanted to ask you, ask myself, your secret;

To convince myself that rivers slide towards a
wish

~~yearning~~ and live;
that

And that each one/is born and dies is different (just like
they call you Charles).

I wanted to ask you, my soul wanted to ask you

What you yearn for, what you slide to, what you live for.

River, Tell me, River,

And tell me, say why it is they call you Charles.

Ah, madman, I, mad, wanted to know what you were, who you were
(genus, specie)

And what it was, what it meant "to flow", to be "fluid",
be "fluent";

What moment was your moment,

Which of your thousand images, your absolute image;

I wanted to inquire into the ultimate ~~core~~ of your life:

Your singularity, that ~~unique~~ ^{soul} ~~only~~ ^{domain} ~~subject~~ ^{long} of unique water,

(By which they know you as Charles.)

The one they know you as, as Charles.

Charles is a sadness, very mild and gray, that flows

Among noble buildings, sacred to Minerva,

And among hangars crowned by adds and signs.

And the river flows and flows, indifferent.

Sometimes, suburban, green, a smile

of grass ~~roads~~ spreads along, hugging the bank.

I ~~have~~ ^{have} sat ^{down} there, on the winter-burnt grass

to think about why rivers

Always want the future, ~~like you~~, slow and gray, ^{like you}

And to ask you why they call you Charles.

And you flowed, flowed on, unceasing, indifferent,

And ^{weren't} ~~not~~ listening to your ecstatic lover,

Who looked at you, asking,

The way we look at our first love

To see whether a soul flows in her eyes

And whether ^{at its lowest point} ~~at its lowest point~~ the world will be all white light,

Or whether by chance her smile is only that:

A bitter mouth that kisses.

That is the way I asked you: the way we ask in God in

~~in~~ the shadow of our fifteenth year,

Between dark fevers and the days -what a summer- so

slow.

I wanted you to reveal ~~the secret~~ to me the secret of life,

And your life, and why they called you Charles.

I don't know why I have become so sad, con-

templating

the flow of this river.

A river is water, tears, but I don't know who cries them.

The River Charles is a grey sadness, but I don't know who
Cries it.

But I know that sadness is grey and that it flows.

Because sadness is all that flows in the world.

All that flows is tears.

All that flows is sadness, and we don't know from where

Sadness comes ^{from} ~~from~~

Just as I don't know who cries you, River Charles.

As I don't know why you are a sadness

Nor why they call you Charles.

It was (bien de) morning when I sat down to
contemplate the flowing mystery of this river,
And I spent many hours asking myself,
Asking you.

Asking this river, grey like a God;
Asking myself the way one asks a sad god:
What do rivers look for? What is a river?
Tell me tell me what you are what you look for,
River and why they call you Charles.

And now there flows a sadness in me,
a grey river of sadness,
With slow grey bridges, like grey
funeral structures.
My soul and my feet are cold.
And the sun is going down.

Much time must have gone by.
Time must have gone by slowly slowly minutes ~~centuries~~
centuries, eras.

All the pain in the world must have gone by, like
~~time at its slowest~~ ^{a very slow} such a slow time -

All the tears in the world must have gone by,
like an indifferent river.

Much time must have gone by, my friends, much time
Since I sat down here on the bank, on the banks,
Of this sadness, of this
river the one they call Damaso, I mean Charles.

DAMASO ALONSO

~~They called the river Charles~~

A RIVER CALLED CHARLES

(Charles River, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

- I I sat down on the bank:
I wanted to ask you, ask myself, your secret;
- To convince myself that rivers slide towards a
wish and live;
- And that each one that is born and dies is different (just like
they call you Charles).
I wanted to ask you, my soul wanted to ask you
- What you yearn for, what you slide to, what you live for.
Tell me, River,
- And tell me, say why it is they call you Charles.
- Ah, madman, I, mad, wanted to know what you were, who you were
(genus, specie) ^x
- And what it was, what it meant "to flow", to be "fluid",
"fluent";
- What moment was your moment,
- Which of your thousand images, your absolute image;
I wanted to inquire into the ultimate domain of your life:
- Your singularity, that soul of unique water,
- The one they know you by, as Charles.

- Charles is a sadness, very mild and gray, that flows
- Among noble buildings sacred to Minerva,
- And among hangars crowned by adds and signs.
And the river flows and flows, indifferent.
Sometimes, suburban, green, as a smile
- Of grass spreads along, hugging the bank.
I have sat down there, on the winter-burnt
grass, to think about why rivers
long for - Always want the future, slow and grey like you.
And to ask you why they call you Charles.

- And you flowed, flowed on, unceasing, indifferent,
- And weren't listening to your ecstatic lover,
- Who looked at you asking, *questioning you*
- The way we look at our first love
- To see whether a soul flows in her eyes
- And whether deep down in her the world will be all white light,
- Or whether by chance her smile is only that: a bitter mouth
- That kisses.
- That is the way I asked you: the way we ask God in
- the shadow of our fifteenth year,
- Between dark fevers and the days - what a summer- so
slow.
I wanted you to reveal to me the secret of life,
- And your life, and why they called you Charles.

- I don't know why I have become so sad, con-
templating
- The flow of this river.

A river is water, tears: but I don't know who cries them.
The River Charles is a grey sadness, but I don't know who
cries it.

But I know that sadness is grey and that it flows.

Because sadness is all that flows in the world.

All that flows is tears.

All that flows is sadness, and we don't know where
sadness comes from.

Just as I don't know who cries you, River Charles,

— As I don't know why you are a sadness

— Nor why they call you Charles.

It was early morning when I sat down to

contemplate the flowing mystery of this river,

— And I have spent many hours asking myself, *questioning*
Asking you. *questioning*

Asking this river, grey like a God;

— Asking myself the way one asks a sad god:

What do rivers look for? What is a river?

Tell me, tell me what you are, what you look for,

River, and why they call you Charles.

And now there flows a sadness in me,

— A grey river of sadness,

— With slow grey bridges, like grey
— funeral structures.

My soul and my feet are cold.

And the sun is going down.

Much time must have gone by.

Time must have gone by slowly, slowly, minutes;
centuries, eras.

All the pain in the world must have gone by, like
such a slow time.

All the tears in the world must have gone by,
like an indifferent river.

Much time must have gone by, my friends, much
time

— Since I sat down here on the bank, on the banks

— Of this sadness, of this

— River, the one they call Damaso, I mean Charles.

Dunster House, February, 1954