



## Masterstroke

Your feet follow the dips and bends  
of the towpath or the lie of the grass,  
rushes are bent into huts and hairdos,  
catkins flirt in the breeze,

a coot snails upstream  
on a diagonal, half-drifting,  
half fighting the current  
so its bill misses nothing,

the wind teases a flickering  
network of light from the water  
to a boat's white bow:  
a galaxy forming and fading.

The oarsman, headed wherever,  
inscribing the watery steppe,  
looks for eddies and snags,  
for advantages. The river submits

to muscle and will, to the robotic pull  
of the blades, the swift scissors  
till on the bend, as he feathers,  
stilled, poised in his shell,

he's the keystone that locks into one  
clouds, willows, water-birds, river.

Ian House  
From *Reading Poetry: An Anthology*

You will find excerpts from this poem, hand-lettered by Sally Castle ([www.sallycastle.co.uk](http://www.sallycastle.co.uk)), all along the south bank of the river Thames, from the Horseshoe Bridge to the new footbridge at Christchurch Meadows. Take a walk with this postcard and look at the river again, through the eyes of a poet and an artist.

We hope you enjoy sharing our appreciation of our rivers,  
from Two Rivers Press: 'Reading's own Publisher'.

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