

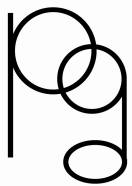
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**The C&O Canal** is the eighteenth edition of This PDF Chapbook.  
Visit the website for the latest installments.

Submissions are welcome year-round.  
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Francis Raven is a graduate student in philosophy at Temple University. His books include *5-Haifun: Of Being Divisible* (Blue Lion Books, 2008), *Shifting the Question More Complicated* (Otoliths, 2007), *Taste: Gastronomic Poems* (Blazevox 2005) and the novel, *Inverted Curvatures* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2005).

Francis lives in Washington DC; you can check out more of his work at his website: <http://www.ravensaesthetica.com/>.

as you pass through locks

will guide

in period clothing

Adults \$8  
Children \$4

festival replicas: clicks to  
know when you should

look up: "Exhibits tell the story of the canal's construction, cargo, mules, locks, and crew."

I walk to work via the C&O Canal in Georgetown, which piqued my interest in the subject. I read some books and visited some of the other highlights on the canal. When I ventured to Great Falls I was struck by the fact that the canal looks so much like Roman and European ruins. Then it occurred to me that we have very few American ruins; we have Native American ruins (like Mesa Verde) and houses of famous people that are preserved (like Monticello) but very few actual European-American ruins that are falling apart and yet are still preserved in some way. These poems are a bit like those ruins, falling apart, but factually accurate.

-FR

// NUMBERS:

Cumberland to Georgetown:  
4-5 days

2-3 mules  
6 hour shifts

crew of 5

but I didn't mention the length of their shifts

608 foot elevation difference  
between endpoints: tail and mouth

Engineers final report:

Surface: 40 ft. wide

Bottom: 28 ft. wide

4 ft. deep

“totaling \$22,275,427.69” //

The C&O Canal  
Francis Raven

five rapids: (either

straight through

or around):

Little Falls, Great Falls, Seneca Falls, House Falls, &  
Shenandoah Falls

: a visiting source

promoting

his own

solution :

the sides of a canal  
are its heart

without the sides  
there would be  
nothing

to hold  
what flows  
within

by the time the words reached  
they were obsolete //

// we are not just us  
we belong to institutions  
we belong to country  
we are owned

by methods of carrying

but the tether is narrow hope  
in times of change; sometimes  
we must go it alone  
wherever we are //

Inlet Locks

let

water

course, to give a number

functioning as a name

which means

it cannot be added

adjacent

to

admitting boats

above mean river level

to protect

// Absorbed: Fractional Lock  
is proportional

in three steps  
instead of four

to salvage the system  
to avoid renumbering

// it's a matter of honor to be able to transport across  
these songs of glory

1785  
Washington founded  
the Potowmack Company  
to improve the river's navigability

impassable until  
rapids were  
worked around

something was filling in

rivers fill in

with stock in the air  
states ate

*the necessity of free trade*

sound familiar?

informal names  
keep features  
in the community is split

thus, the fractional

tow  
under which the whole river is held

//

away from us  
to settle: upper lock walls  
lean inward

as they settle

into embarrassed complacency

---

under the spoils system  
things spoil

these are familiar times  
as economic standstills slow  
construction

the words get stuck  
in cities

or like fish  
in the great lakes receding //

// Adams turned first dirt  
or so the media thought  
truth was, he was hacking away  
at a root:  
nothing would turn over  
save for embarrassment:

after a speech  
there is just no going back

as old technology  
is bought by the new.

by debt  
we have swallowed  
what has been built  
just to find out that  
the B&O Railroad had reached  
Cumberland eight years prior

184.5 continuous miles

prior to us  
knowledge has shifted

// 1824

Patowmack Company

ceded to

The Chesapeake and Ohio Company

by the names will change

depending on their size

the government

will get involved

by the names will change

as technology changes

April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008

body found below Georgetown:

even bloated

he appears to have been in his twenties, but it's always

hard to ascertain the identity of the dead though he

was wearing a white translucent plastic wristband

bearing a faded name, possibly "Kevin."

the body in the water  
is the stump  
we are plumbing

the depths we haven't forgotten about knowing

now that tree is dead as well:  
hackmarks from a shovel:  
evidence held as history //

skirting canals

clothing canals

sharing of the right of way

sharing of //

and vice versa  
a suggestion of compromise

---

---

at first the world drags

a board protects  
a mule from burning

the train would burn

// coal from the Alleghenies  
came blackly down

to power  
more  
in place

we are less  
in place  
than we have  
ever been

the darkness keeps moving  
though uses a new vein  
every decade or so  
    as the price of airline tickets  
    increases  
    common streams of movement  
    will reverse  
they will bring the data  
to us  
    past

Point of Rocks to Harpers Ferry

a narrow passage's legal battle

finally, instead of no way to move  
a complete blockage in the artery

but instead of heart attack  
it would have meant

a lack of stuff  
at the end, a lack of cash  
at the beginning