

The End of the World

By Dana Gioia

"We're going," they said, "to the end of the world."
So they stopped the car where the river curled,
And we scrambled down beneath the bridge
On the gravel track of a narrow ridge.

We tramped for miles on a wooded walk
Where dog-hobble grew on its twisted stalk.
Then we stopped to rest on the pine-needle floor
While two ospreys watched from an oak by the shore.

We came to a bend, where the river grew wide
And green mountains rose on the opposite side.
My guides moved back. I stood alone,
As the current streaked over smooth flat stone.

Shelf by stone shelf the river fell.
The white water goosetailed with eddying swell.
Faster and louder the current dropped
Till it reached a cliff, and the trail stopped.

I stood at the edge where the mist ascended,
My journey done where the world ended.
I looked downstream. There was nothing but sky,
The sound of the water, and the water's reply.

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