

## **"Reversing the River"**

*Performance and Installation Explication*

*Robert Eric Shoemaker*

The movement of water powers the globe. Hurricane Katrina haunts the South. Rainwater from fluffy clouds detoxes polluted soil. Armadas sailed to colonize unwilling peoples. A lightning storm strikes a barn. Who is responsible for the destruction of a global climate cycle? Sadness, the loss of normalcy, redefining what is expected from ourselves and from the globe. It feels too much. It is too hard to recycle plastic bags. Loss, blips of sadness, a fragmented archive. A flood in the stacks, washing away peoples. What is a political climate shift? Haunted, the watery archive. Pollutants gather in rainwater and then in the river. A watery grave, a glass of fresh water. A flood in the archive. Lightning strikes but never in the same place twice, never quite often enough. There are too many particles in the river, too many archives, too many sadnesses. What are we afraid of? Where is that book? How many cultures and biomes can be lost, how many archives? What magick can reverse the river?

I began to dip poems in water to watch them dissolve. When the paper was saturated, I took it out and held it and tried to read the faint ink marked across. *What magick?* When we lose something, it leaves faint traces, like our bodies do until we frame them with graves. Can we lose this planet? I wanted to dip every fragment in water and watch it dissolve, but I also wanted to document all of it, all of it, to create a seed bank where one day every memory of humanity could be drawn back into existence. One day, when the lightning struck twice. It can't be right, can't be possible. How many voices will be lost? What magick can reverse the river?

An armada of texts, an archive of seeds, for ecology, for bibliography, for those who won't come after us. A resistance of paper, of memory, against a tide.

*"Reversing the River" Performance:*  
*[Tracing Paper with India Ink poems*  
*dissolved in water in a glass vase,*  
*surrounded by mirrors and lighting instruments;*  
*captured as photographic stills]*

*Documentation/Film Stills*  
*[Performance Stills overlaid and solarized in Photoshop]*

*"Reversing the River" Prints*  
*[Letterpress Embossment & Oil on Cotton;*  
*Letterpress Embossment, Cyanotype Dye, & Trash exposed on Cotton]*