

MAKING THE RIVER AN OLD MAN

This river was an athlete sprinting south,
A whistling boy with rhythmic summer stride.
The settlers drew cool sweetness from his mouth,
And made themselves spectators on his side.
Efficiently he relayed rain and thaw;
He grew their wheat and cotton into fame.
His flanks lured merchants, tourists-- all who saw
Unpacked to stay, and daily, others came.
Pure drinking--mallards--trout--were not enough.
Machines re-routed him, they built a dam.
They stole his power, dumped their poison-stuff,
Then cursed him for the filth where once they swam.
Now reeking by, a progress refugee--
He seeks a nameless burial at sea.

Blumen Nollway