

The Negro Speaks of Rivers

Langston Hughes

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of
human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went
down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all
golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Slue Foot Sue Gets a Pair of Cowgirl Boots

Katherine Hoerth

No cowboy boots would fit her giant feet—
her ankle bones jut out too far, her calves
too muscular to be contained within the shaft,
her toes too wriggly to fit inside
a box. Instead, she custom-made her own—
skinned the Texas sky to make the leather,
stitched the pieces up with barbed wire fence,
inlaid a couple rays of summer sunshine
gathered from the Rio Grande's surface,
used Guadalupe Peak to make the heel
so she could tower over everyone.
She needed something special for the bootstraps,
something she could use to pull herself
back up when she was pushed into the dust.
She reached into the velvet sky one night
and grabbed a comet, sewed the flaming tail
into her boots and sailed across the moon.



Harlem River

For the Union Dead, Hempstead, Texas

Christopher Woods

Some mornings, fog shrouds the world
both above and below ground
so that time and war are hidden.

Not far away, a woman cooks grits
listens to a train whistle that lures her
far from the white frame house
where her husband sleeps.

You too are sleeping, still, dozens of you
Yankee boys who came south to fight,
who never went home.
As if being captured, kept in a POW camp
wasn't enough,
the gods of war had more ominous plans.

Yellow fever took no prisoners,
and one by one you fell from grace,
hundreds sick, soon to die.

Fog of war, of old conflict,
makes the world disappear.
Cows, dark hulks of dawn,
now grace this wide pasture.
Even the crude cedar crosses
that once marked your graves
a memory no one remembers.

The Swing Is Blowing in the Breeze

Glen Wesley Wimberley

The swing is blowing in the breeze,
But not a child can I see.
Ours are grown now and have left the nest,
But what we have is very blessed.
It's now their children we love to please,
And hear the words, "please push me."
I'll push them high and make them squeal,
These sounds of laughter are all too real.
The noise is deafening and warms my soul,
Please bless these kids before they're old.
Higher and higher into the trees,
These tiny bush pilots are tearing off leaves.
Yes, higher and higher because they are tough,
Till mom or dad says, "that is enough."
I'll twist then turn them and watch to see,
How dizzy they are and then let them be.
But all to soon it has to cease and
The swing will be blowing in the breeze.
Now this swing has become a friend of mine,
A perfect pendulum of forgotten times.
For as it sways there in the breeze,
Memories flash back with such great ease.
Great times we've had, great times we've shared,
Great times are coming, it's in the air.
So now if you see me sitting there
Watching the swing with an obvious blank stare,
Walk up quietly, don't startle me please,
For the Lord is swinging it just for me.