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# On the Drowning of Jeff Buckley

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# On the Drowning of Jeff Buckley

## Travis Butterfield

The Mississippi is a toothless old river  
That gums the shoreline and sucks on its banks:  
A wolf's maw. She gently took you as her young,  
Into her mouth, and carried you by the neck  
Away from harm. She licked your face and washed

Your cuts with warm saliva. Within her  
Mouth you slept in embryo for weeks  
Before we found you underneath her tongue.  
Your skin was whiter, looser, more thick  
Than I remember — your eyes were missing lashes.

I recognized your clothes and watch and rings.  
Though your body was puffy and limp with swells,  
Eyes opaque, lips blue and slack, I knew  
You by the song in your throat. It gushed down  
Your chin like water slips from a broken ewer.

You sang things forgotten by seashells, songs  
That mariners heard between the ringing bells  
And sunset, when it changed from red to blue.  
Yours is the voice within the voice that is known —  
The sound within the sounds that are the river.