

Name Me, River

by Jessie Lynn McMains

i.

Name me woman and I'll open up my chest and show you the wind; April wind, its easterly flow.
Call me man and I'll lift my skirt and show you the fly-trap dogbane,
its poison lilac threading the polluted riverbank. Call me and I'll show you the river,
Kinnickinnic, the mixing-together. All the trash I picked and the fish, salmon and trout, their
return, gathering. Name me gathering-place and I'll show you the place where the freights
screeeee past on the overhead tracks; the androgynous dark beneath.
Call me girl and I'll show you the sunken tugboat full of sailor ghosts, the river rats,
the raccoons in their bandit masks, the little boy who played pirate with a sword-
stick. Name me boy and I'll show you this mermaid, his river; this dark, the wind.

ii.

Name me. I'll open. My chest, the wind—easterly.
Call me skirt and fly-trap, poison lilac. Polluted riverbank.
Call me river, Kinnickinnic. Trash-fish. Gathering-place.
I'll show you. The freights, the tracks. The androgyne. Dark
beneath. Girl sailor. Ghost river. Bandit boy. Who played pirate?
I'll show you this—mermaid. This river-dark. This wind.

iii.

Name me: April, early, lilac. Fly-trap. Trash. Fish-place.
Freights on tracks. The beneath. Place where pirates played
with boys. Mermaid-river. Androgynous dark. The wind.