The Red Wheelbarrow
so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens
I remember the raccoon
who died under the wheels of a car near our mailbox.
I tried to forget him but
The sun wouldn’t let me.
It lifted the memory of the raccoon into the air.
The wind carried it through my bedroom window
and filled my dreams with the smell of rotting flesh.

I remember trying to escape
the snarl of cars sliding across pavement.
I walked a mile deep into the woods. Two. Three.
It didn’t matter.
Their howl followed me.
It smashed through the fragile chirps of birds
and left the trees shivering.

I remember when I found out
you have to wash of fruit before eating it.
I was only six and didn’t understand
that men leave their poison on all things.
Now, I wonder what it would be like
to eat a hundred apples without washing them off.
The bitter tastes of pesticides numb my tongue.
The numbness moves down my body and
creates a cold, dark husk in my chest.

Sometimes,
I walk out behind my house
and collapse under an old maple.
I do 5 thing to remind myself of where we all come from:
I shutter my eyes with shards of bark,
I fill my nose with the scent of wet leaves,
I line my mouth with strips of moss,
I cover my body with the dry weight of black dirt.
and stuff my ears with the silence of the earth.

- Andy Buchner
"Such richness flowing through the branches of summer and into the body, carried inward on the 5 rivers!" - Mary Oliver

5 Rivers I Remember

I remember the deer
I found lying in the snow.
Her nose and eyelashes, coated with ice,
glistened under my flashlight.
The hunter's bullet hadn't made it to her body.
Instead it had hit some brush and scorched her in a flash fire.
Gray lines of gangrene ran through the blackened wound.
The cold had formed cones of frost over her bared skin,
snowcapped mountains dipped in blood.

I remember the fishing trip to Florida.
The sun peeled away my skin for four days
and my pole stood lifeless in my hand.
On the fifth day
the rod bowed to the ocean
and tried to pull me under the whitecapped waves.
I jerked back and my veins wrapped around the line,
my ear pressed against my chest
with each crank of the reel.
The fish flew spinning out of the water
his tail cutting through the air,
as if he could fly away and take me with him.
I grabbed him and felt warm blood
flow up and down the lines on my palm.
I went on like this. Seventeen times.
Until my pole, slick with the lives of fish,
jumped from my hand
and with a thrust of its body
swam down into the sky blue water.
In Walked Monk, Thelonious Monk

A man sat spinning gently from left to right on a bar stool. A flood of light and noise filled the empty club as a new guy pushed open the door, a pack of cigarettes in one hand, his hat cocked to the side. Sliding on to the piano bench, he looked beyond the keyboard, deep into the dark chambers of its heart and began to play. Taken away by that Harlem stride, he forgot he was only on 51st and Jefferson, not the Village Vanguard; stroking the keys, pushing and releasing the pedals, the sound of the hammers hitting the strings - reverberating the passion that bled through his fingers and into his own music. Monk hummed along to this music, the music that pushed through his veins fast and heavy like the sounds of the past, like Art Tatum and all the others before him clinging to the chords and the pumping of their own hearts.

- Meg Goslin

Kawaramachi

These streets and their train tracks lead nowhere; fluorescent lights glare, channeled through the alleys like a flood. The pachinkō's nervous ringing spills out into the streets where karaoke vibrato rattles off the brick walls.

Obachans in kimonos take their precisely short steps; the loud trailing sound of wooden getas follow hookers in denim skirts who take long strides with long legs, search for their reflections in the concrete.

And the children, high school kids dance in their temporary freedom while educated men sweat and spend their money, drowning their guilt in sake.

In a dim light the eyes of strangers meet.

- Andrew Weigl

1Red light district in Kyoto
2Japanese gambling game (pinball-like)
3"Grandmother" taken to mean old woman
4Wooden sandals
5Japanese rice wine
Self Portrait
(for Iris Moon)

The charcoal stained
the tips of your fingers
when you scribbled the eyes,
softening each line
by feeling the paper.
Every eyelash
carefully stroked,
waves of hair crash
into one another,
and your lips,
they rest loosely
having said nothing.

You look in the mirror
trace your face
as if it were a map.
You follow
the creases carefully,
not wanting to lose
your place in the waters
while traveling
east to west.

I could stare until
your stone eyes blink,
or maybe until you speak
one word;
but you are captured
in dimensions.
I want to feel your hair
how every strand
curls widely,
untameable.

Mowing

I am not startled when you slip out of bed while it is still dark and
kiss my toes as you leave. In dreamsleep I hear your heels
thudding down the staircase, shuffling into the garage, pausing at
the mower. I almost hear the gasoline glugging and smell the dead
grass as you change the bag. I don’t have to see you to know you
are in your gray Champion sweatpants and paint stained T-shirt. It
is loud outside the window and I cover my head with your pillow. I
know you mow in rows from left to right, know how your arms flex
and bulge with every push. When you sweat, you will brush your
forehead with your forearm, your whole body will taste salty when
you are done: I will feel like I am drinking out of an ocean. I twist
the sheets around my ankles; I can’t sleep when my feet are
exposed. I know how your strides get longer as you get closer to
being done, before the sun rises. Your mother always taught you
to do it in the morning, after the dew is gone, before it gets too
bright. I fear our neighbors will not like us if you keep this up, no
one wants to hear the grinding blade of a lawn mower at five a.m.
Maybe we should just let it grow. Shard by shard, let it grow into
the bushes and trees, up the sides of the house, cover the driveway
and mailbox, watch it slither into the cracks of the door, up the stairs
and down the hall to our bed, watch it take over our sheets and
smother us with foliage. The neighbors wouldn’t like that either. I
hardly notice when you are done, but am relieved to hear the sixth
step creak and the door pushing open again. I know your cuffs will
be stained, that I will scrub them with Spray and Wash when I get
out of bed until they are gray again. I close my eyes so you think
I’ve been sleeping, so you don’t think I watch you peel off your
clothes. I pretend to sleep so when you press up nest to me,
smelling of grass and perspiration, I can feel small blades prickling
along my back, crawling across my body, until I am covered, lush,
and roofed in a thicket of green.

- Beth Bigler
I touch the charcoal marked paper, hoping my warmth might revive you, but you stay still like before, looking straight into my eyes. All what remains now are the black smudges, the dark birds under my fingers.

-Sheetal Dingrani
Storm

I am sure that last nights' storm woke you up. I am sure that you were afraid at first, that when you heard the thunder again you sank into that deep feather blanket as far as you could, and tried to go back to sleep. I would like to think that after a while, though, you got out of your warm, comfortable bed and watched the storm. If I had been there with you, I would have pushed your body close to the cold glass window and we would have watched the lightning tangle the sky into a web of electricity. When the old oak tree fell into the lake last night, we would have been there to see it go down, watched the explosion it made droplets of water thrown up, felt angry and out of control and glad for it.

I would like to think that there is a place in the world where everybody loves something, where people feed on lightning in the morning and swallow thunder and splinters from the oldest oak trees before they fall asleep at night. Where mothers don't keep their children warm with anything but their own body heat, wrapping themselves around their babies and feeling that young breath alive on their skin. I would have wanted you to turn to me, pulling your body away from the window, and say you felt the beginning, something waking up, a tingling in the half-dead of your limbs.

- Jaimien Delp

Road Trip: North Dakota

In North Dakota, the sunflowers are cultivated but run mostly wild along the side of the road, their leafy necks bent, almost breaking, to catch the sun. Images bleed into one another like I'm looking through rain on the windshield: the cracked sheets of gray pavement, the yellow flowers, like sunspots across a green planet.

I press my nose to the glass, and push my palm against the landscape, longing to disappear in those fields, longing to be rooted somewhere, my feet in the earth, my face in the wind, and I remember the myth about Clytie and Apollo, how she wasted away waiting for him, became the first sunflower, her head always tilted to the sun, her light, the god. I realize I am already like this, my head out the window, slicing through the sky, half-hoping Apollo might pluck me from my seat, then spit me back out, brighter somehow; my skin a fine, incandescent layer, radiating as it flies over the road.

- Calgary Martin
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\(^1\)Red light district in Kyoto

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