Madison Jones

Self-Portrait in a Broken Mirror

Driving out through the fields at dawn,
dry grass resembles the Strofades
out along the bank where the cows wade
in the shallow mud pits,

and here, the glimmering past is just a glimpse in the broken rear-view mirror of that Oldsmobile—at sixteen, at twenty five,

again at the field's edge, hangover thrumming with engine hiss,

spring daylight pouring out like a darkling river, moving from where I know not out toward where I can only imagine.

Once it is gone, it is gone at once into those cracked lines,
where the light veers forward and away—
the wet odor of gardenias

in the oppressive summer heat—a memory eating its tail and sunning itself like the copperhead that writhed along the gravel path, vanishing

beyond the shallow mud pits of the lime quarry
I would deliver pizza to on Thursdays,

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Anthropocene

where the ghostly-powdered ground seemed to ask, *Perché mi schiante? Perché mi* scerpi?

There the cranes howled and the creeks would turn the strangest color of blue, though we would wade in anyway,

drifting with the currents beyond the shallows—out into the glimmering past until evening threatens and herds us back like shadows onto those blue cloth seats with their cigarette burns

and down the darkening highway
out of the cold, clean air that smells
rich with cow shit and honeysuckle.

We won't disappear like the bees, who forget us with open mouths, honeyed like drunks.

The bees who forget, pressing their dusty bodies honeyed like drunks into the dry valleys.

Pressing their dusty bodies into the sky, a darkening dream echoing in the dry valleys with answers we ignored.

Into the sky, a dream darkening those places we were before. With answers we ignored, darkness surrounds us.

Those places we were before became something new from the answers we ignored, forgetting ourselves like a river.

We became something new, opening our mouths, forgetting ourselves like a river. We won't disappear.

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