

Sitting in the Middle

The sparrows and blackbirds are playing
in puddles--small streams of water trickling
down their shiny heads and backs. They twist and flap
before rising in overcast glory to the gray clouds above.
Dipping, Diving, Careening
breathless flight with such certainty and skill.
They know distances. They know angles.
Swooping perfectly through gnarled branches,
around water-beaded cars, around park benches,
around me. They fly like music through the air
black notes bobbing up and down on a cloud gray page.

But I never learned how to read such beautiful music.

-Christina Smith



First Off

We were with nature
climbing through the river's embankments, barefoot after the mud ate off our shoes, toes gripping
the slippery mud slopes with determination and careful, forgiving steps. It was easier to walk
outside of the river than canoe down it, the river had lost her water, and we were on a search to
find it.

the loons stared at us
disguised in the shrubs, we knew they were there but pretended we didn't, they appreciate that
game (the pretending makes them feel safe, yet not forgotten). Our last streams of water dripping
down our wrists as we carried the canoe above our heads, we were still strong after the first hour.

Do you remember feeling that strong?
The map in our pockets was damp and tearing, it didn't matter, it was too aged and tired to help
the Wisconsin river had moved around a bit in the past forty years, I suppose we all get restless.

How tragic-
Stasis left unbroken.
remember, you gave up before I did, on the third or fourth hour you began looking for planes,
listening for the rush of highways. You gave up on the Eagle, not believing him when he soared
overhead, circling to follow our rhythm, staying close to direct us home. We found the river just
before dark, how disappointing it was, her ugly wide mouth smacking her lips,

civilization, dirty skies
We paddled looking no where, watching our strokes cut through her thick saliva. We paddled
lonely for color, bleached out from our concluded hunt. And we paddled till we hit the bank, and
thought silently as our bare legs waded through rocky water.

Action resumed.

-Allegra Mather