

## Elder

We don't talk about the south much,  
and it's a shame that my only knowledge  
of elders are names and dates, maybe place –

but not the lives lived in a space so riddled  
with close knit, small town  
buying peaches on market day, blue skies  
fit for watermelon and dandelion  
and nights so black, so lit with stars  
that one could imagine that it's dark everywhere.

When I was nine or so, my maternal grandparents  
drove all the way down, with country on either side,  
bales of hay and time; long after the city had faded  
into oceans of green, dotted with neat rolls  
that reminded me of shredded wheat,  
and I missed home, the bomb-pop man and the  
orange tang of sorbet, looking out over the vastness  
and of homes, so far in the distance that they were  
tiny domes, small top hats on disappearing heads.

My cousin and I, in the back seat of the LeBaron  
half sleep, both hot and sticky under the sweater of June –  
its fumes seemed to rise off the street in little waves  
or invisible snakes that disappeared when we got up  
on em, my fear only foreshadowed by the unknown;

my thinking of the south as a backwater, or so I heard,  
and not knowing what that even meant, and it's absurd  
back/water, as if the only good water flowed from the  
front, where you could see it, where it didn't sneak up  
on you and bite. Our only excitement was  
an occasional thumb wrestle or funny faces,  
our young lives so accustomed to city lights, sirens, and  
chasing girls that the places we ran off to once in Marianna,  
were so far from our world, that we played like we  
were on Mars, its red clay, the days so long and dry  
and stinkin of manure, chicken parts, pigs, and all the  
life walkin around the family farm.

We played with frogs lost ourselves in the fields so  
old, they appeared to be a person, someone we both new,  
individually too, as if I knew just where the pond would be,  
and Jaron could tell you with certainty how many rows  
of corn were in the field, how the grass was a great mattress  
full of the comfort we somehow missed, and we laid there  
lullabied by the strum and hiss of cicadas, and the buzzing  
of little things we didn't have names for, and yet we knew they

meant us no harm, only songs, only whispers of a past that  
never really left.

### Sojourn

It is possible to pack one's dreams  
into a single suitcase –  
bound for the scenery of passing landscapes,  
the horizon in, then out of view.

Fading daylight, clouds, speckled diamonds  
and evergreens that haunt, like all things  
that had to stay – a fixed forest – of memory  
always in the background, paint  
what was lost in the pursuit, make it hard to leave

until the mountains become hills in the distance  
already kissed by the morning sun  
and the birds;  
you've never heard  
more beautiful singing.

The ritual of folding a blanket

is seeing eye to eye  
as we synchronize our hands  
it's a dance  
subtle and quiet we step  
to meet in the center,  
fold it under –  
this flap then the other  
and just like that  
we are blankets distance apart  
only to come together again.

Either of us could complete the task,  
instead, we stand  
with only a comforter between –  
taking this whole thing  
to a place it has never been,  
our eyes negotiating the length  
of a room

the sun setting from the window  
your silhouette  
the room darkening behind me, a shadow  
and I am drawn to your neck

you move then I too  
meet you at the crease.

