

I am from Loo-siana and Mrs. Sippi,
from the r-uhs and the dub-yous,
from “don’t keep running through my door, be in or be out”.
From persimmon cookies that wrinkled my nose and summer sun tea that melted the winter out of me,
from mustard greens drenched in pepper sauce
and hot water cornbread pressed into the shape of the palm of my Grammy’s hand.
From long kitchen tables and talking and laughing and crying with and over each other
faces hovering over bowls of jambalaya with extra sausage and shrimp,
from “If I buy the crab, will you make me some gumbo?”

I am from the boardwalk.
I came into the world with sand between my toes,
christened in honey sunlight that dyed my hair red
and kissed my skin tan
and beckoned the prayer out of me when it rained.
If you listen closely,
underneath the sound of the waves coming home from war and embracing the shore,
you can hear a boy proposing to a girl in a hotel right off the beach.
Close your eyes and you might hear the click of fate being sealed,
the sigh of the world falling into place.

I am from the lamb turned lion man who feels too far away
And the forsaken, broken Christ who feels too close.
I am from Temple and Hathorn and Jones
who live in the big house
on the river where people go to wash up and wash away,
spiritually or otherwise.
You are supposed to apologize when you go to this river,
I’m not sure to whom,
but I have never been able to.
I am cemented to the land.
I don’t know what it is I am supposed to feel sorry for.
I don’t know who to pray to
Or if they can even hear me.

Sitting on the mantle of my Grandmother’s fireplace
Is a photograph of my thirteen-year-old self.
For the first time in seven years,
I am seeing her eye to eye.
In the split second that I take to blink,
I remember what it feels like to be her.
I can feel the tension in her hands from holding everything in
and pushing everything out.
When I open my eyes,
I can hear the snapping of apples falling from trees.

- to and fro