

Fishing in the Truckee · *Jane Staw*

My mind is never where my body is.  
It has always been this way.  
I might admire dusk settling  
like a gray bird onto the Pacific  
and suddenly I miss cornfields  
in Iowa, the way the evening light  
disguises itself in purples and browns.  
Or startled by a sudden rain  
disturbing the leaves,  
I imagine the opposite:  
the silence of a scarecrow in a meadow  
slowly filling with snow.  
It's as if I am always  
outside of what I see,  
and so on the verge of disappearing—  
like a river running away from itself,  
while all around me  
things seem to be holding their own:  
the rains repeat themselves each spring,  
the trees dig in a little deeper  
every year. I consider this  
a failing on my part,  
an unnecessary fragility,  
like buds fooled by an early thaw  
into blooming,  
their edges quickly turning brown,  
so that sometimes I would like  
to shed my body,  
get rid of skeleton, flesh, scars,  
become pure mind,  
no longer an intruder  
in the scenes I travel through:  
the empty barnyard in March,  
its patches of stale hay,  
the skin of ice over the pond.  
Or the block of houses  
with their clipped lawns,  
their scornful roses.

Without body I would no longer brush  
against the hedges as I walk  
making them rustle  
when they would rather stand quietly  
and observe. I would no longer  
force the house sparrows to disperse.  
Other times I'd like to shed my mind,  
become just a body  
propped against a tree  
casting reel after reel into a river  
for trout, the flies buzzing,  
the grass stiff, green.  
And I would not try to imagine  
the smell of woods after rain.  
I would not call back  
the Japanese fisherman, bare heels dug  
into damp sand for hours,  
who left the beach at dusk,  
his pail emptied even of the smelt  
he'd bought for bait.  
Would not listen for the wind  
kicking up piles of discarded leaves.  
No. I would simply lean against  
that tree, as if I were the river bank,  
or a log, part of a landscape  
not conscious of what it is  
that makes it a landscape,  
as unaware as the sun of its motion  
while it eases across the sky,  
or as ignorant as the river of its water  
slipping through its hands  
carrying everything that is the river's  
with it: debris, leaves, sand.