The Body in the River

The pollen explodes off the trees in clouds as we walk Highway 149 to town. We’ve done this a hundred times. The road follows the Lake Fork’s winding path, and we always look into the water that rushes over the rocks and gives our walk the sound of life. Two days earlier we’d been to the Grand Canyon where the sheer power of its vastness overwhelmed us. We told Simon to stay back from the edge—all his nine-year-old energy pent up in him wanting to burst out and fly like these clouds of pollen do now as water from someone’s sprinkler hits the pines and releases half a new life. We always look into the water—this year higher and faster than ever. We talk of how hard it will be to fish, if it is worth it.

Tree swallows swoop and bank in the air. A raven glides effortlessly over the gulch, but we always look into the river. At first, he is a large, pale stone and then a deer or a dog, but finally, he can only be a man, stuck on the shallow rocky bar that keeps him from drifting further downstream, the water rolling over him as it does everything else, cold and fast from the melting snow. We do not know that the town has been looking for him, his truck in the river a few miles up the mountain road. He becomes the image we cannot stand to imagine and cannot help but see of our boy who has no fear of cliffs or the bare wild force of a river that just keeps running towards forever.