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Sifting Through Water

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SIFTING THROUGH WATER

Laura Wasserman

A pain was splitting my head into
forks and grooves as we drove through the
shoving winds of Martinez towards home.

I watched other cars and the
people inside them as my father
drove, and noticed that every face
was almost exactly the same.
Consumed by a need to end up
somewhere, consumed by the lines
painting the road in front of them.

Sometimes a driver would look over at me
and I wondered if it was an instinctual
thing all humans share—the ability
to feel when another person is observing them,
even if that person is ducked low
in the back seat, keeping her head
reclined just so it isn't fully
revealed by the window.

When we arrived home a few minutes shy
of two hours later, my mother shooed me
into the bathtub saying “It won’t kill
you to relax a bit.”

I ducked my head under the soapy water
and the roar of the faucet
thundered in my ears.

I wished I had a portrait of myself like that,
lying in the cream colored bathtub,
in the dark orange and white tiled room,
with eyes clenched tightly and
only my nose uncovered by the water.

Maybe that’s all there is.
Momentum.
To keep us going forward
even when we have no
resting place in mind.

I released the drain plug with
a wrinkled toe and listened
as the water poured itself down the
pipes, watched as the water receded
around my hips, crept down my
fleshy calves, and pooled around my ankles.