

SHARING THE WOUND

I like it here, beyond signposts
and summaries, says the painter Clyfford Still
to a friend who's moving to the hill country "forever."
Yes, says Still, we all should disappear
into what we must do.

For my part, I travel, often alone,
as you note, into a wounded opening on canvas
to enter the crater, explore its cause,
how I've been altered, to greet the color
of healing that happens through welcomed exposure.

Among the orchards of the farm where you'll work,
what awaits inhabiting? I no longer care much for labels.
We enter our endeavors to learn.
Let's call this one: "1944-N No. 2."

Farewell, my friend, for you and I
are like two seekers pausing
at the river to dive into the rushing
and parting with the same shared stuff.

ÉDOUARD VUILLARD AND A LITTLE GIRL WITH A HOOP

Dear woodsy girl with wind-shaken pond eyes
under a canopy thick with birth and after-birth
and floral pink rampant on the earth, you burst
to skip with your shoulder-high hoop, yet freeze
as you spot me out here in my artist's get up.

Behind, your family forages for chestnuts
under heavy branches. I have not come to snatch them
which you guess
from how I dress.
Rather I'm gathering
images, arrested by light
across your kin's bent and stooped backs
as pink flames through trees, fattens around florid azaleas.

We stare at each other. Silence narrows us.
Your eyes widen. Words catch in my throat.
Back to spinning your hoop in a blue smock, you're off
forgetting me who did not elbow anyone for a fresh chestnut
loose and fallen from some cracked-open bag

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