

The path to the river has been destroyed.

When I was asleep, I could breathe
freely deep in the water.
I was born there, and then thrown into
a desiccated earth.

And now, patrol boats travel all around,
in my imagination,
shimmering like ghosts.

Imagination or dream,
which is more real?

On my left hand is
a row of fishing boats,
or was.
They are now used as restaurants,
tethered to the shore since long;

to my right are the receding tides,
still gulping at the riverbed.

And I am crouching on the riverbed,
staring at a few empty snail shells
on the ground.

I am ten years old, pondering:

I wouldn't say they were dead—
in a crime scene the body is missing.

Who brought them here?
Who stole them away?
Were they lost?
Or did they even really arrive?

Did they arrive?

My cousin is dead.

My cousin is dead.
It's strange,
that I actually don't feel sad.

The adults found his belongings
by the stream:
a pair of sneakers and a T-shirt.

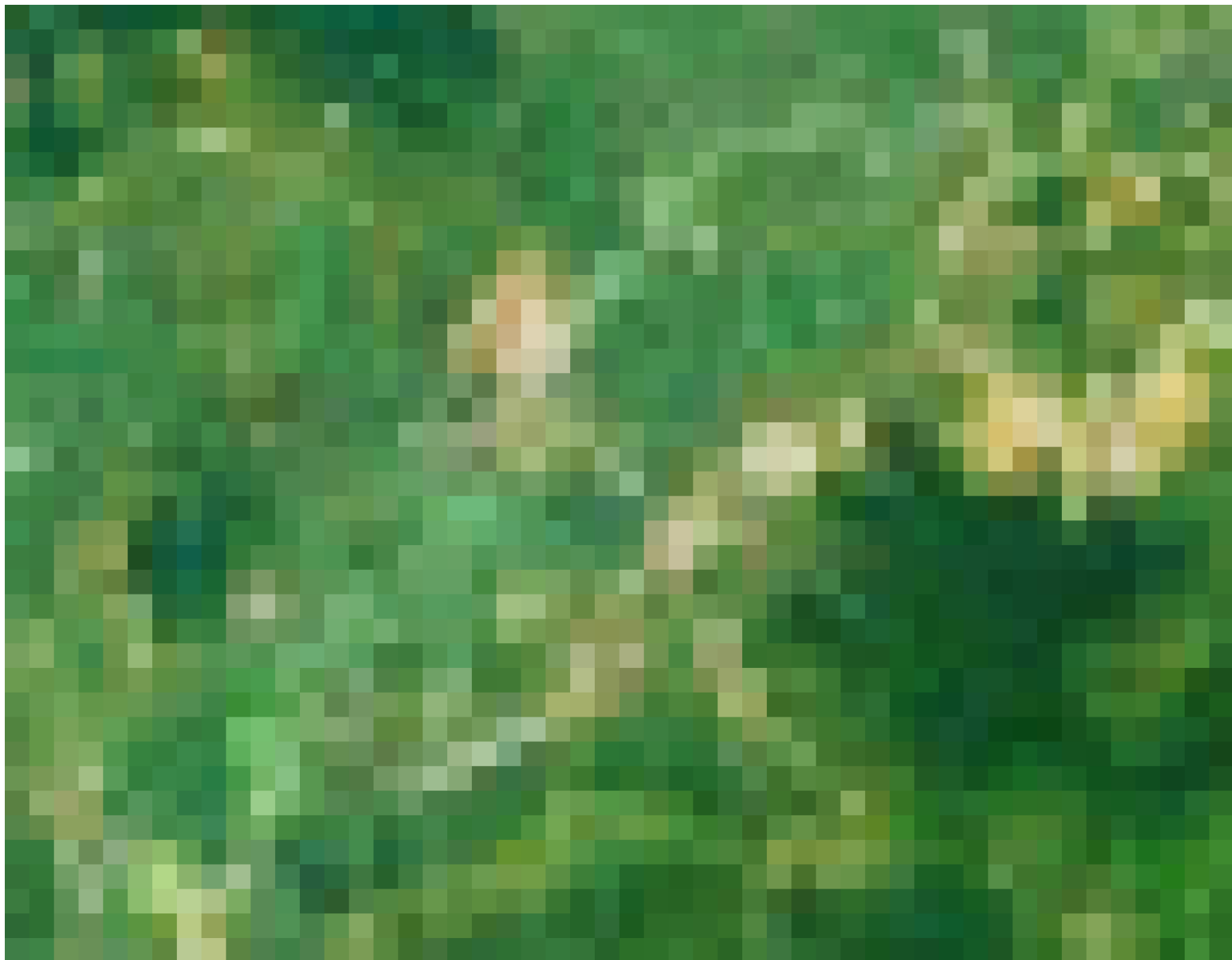
It was mid-summer, they said,
he was there to swim.

The tilted motorbike is panting.
The sweat-stained synthetic leather
saddle is sticky, unpleasantly.

I have to always adjust my posture,
in order not to fall off.
I am waiting...

waiting...

[silence]



In the Memories of Rivers

Yve Oh

Hue: 126°, saturation: 46%,
lightness: 45%, opacity: 90%.

Green is the color of summer,
dense, unstable, stagnant.
Rain strikes down on the earth.

Summer belongs to
the water blooms—

From the Gulf of Mexico
to the Great Lakes,

from the Yangtze River Delta
to the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau,

from the Baltic Sea
to Lake Victoria...

All winter long,
along with the remains of the water
blooms, this toxin sleeps under the
water, inside of the snails.

Green is the color of summer.
When winter comes,
the water blooms must die.

The river is haunted.

cyanophycin
chlorophyll

geosmin

2-methylisoborneol

cyanoginosin

nitrogen

phosphorus

ethanol
ethanoic acid

nitrosamine

butyraldehyde...

Green is the color of summer.
Green is always favored,
but not the water blooms.

Green is a metaphor for vitality,
but the green of water blooms only
suggests that the substances they
exhale are destroying your liver and
brain.

People talk about water blooms,
with disgust, and shame.

Alcohol is destroying your liver and
brain tar and nicotine are destroying
your lungs and that's what we all know

You are killing yourself.

Father.

A river without a name...

runs from the Fushi Reservoir
to the West Tiao River,
then northward
to the Taihu Lake.

She is just one of those
several tributaries.

1. Remove the tails of the snails.
2. Keep the snails in water for a while
until the sludge is discharged.
3. Ginger, garlic, chili pepper,
stir-fry.

(Qingming snails, worth a goose...)

A river with too many names...

4. Pour in the wine, let it evaporate.
5. Soy sauce.

Along the river,
each one of those villages
named after the water is pledging to
become an organ
for the body of water.

Eating snails requires skill:

1. Push the meat inward with
chopsticks.
2. Suck out the entire piece.
3. Bite it off in the middle.

A river doesn't need a name...

My cousin is dead but I don't feel sad.
I can't remember his face.
I've heard that he's been growing fast.

When we were much younger
we used to play together,
chasing frogs in the fields or
catching snails by the streams.
We also killed ants.

The evil of childhood
is nothing about morality.

The evil of childhood
is nothingness.

...Tsingtao...

...Maotai...

...Wuliangye...

...with a little Sprite...

The smell here makes me sick.
The sound here makes me sick.

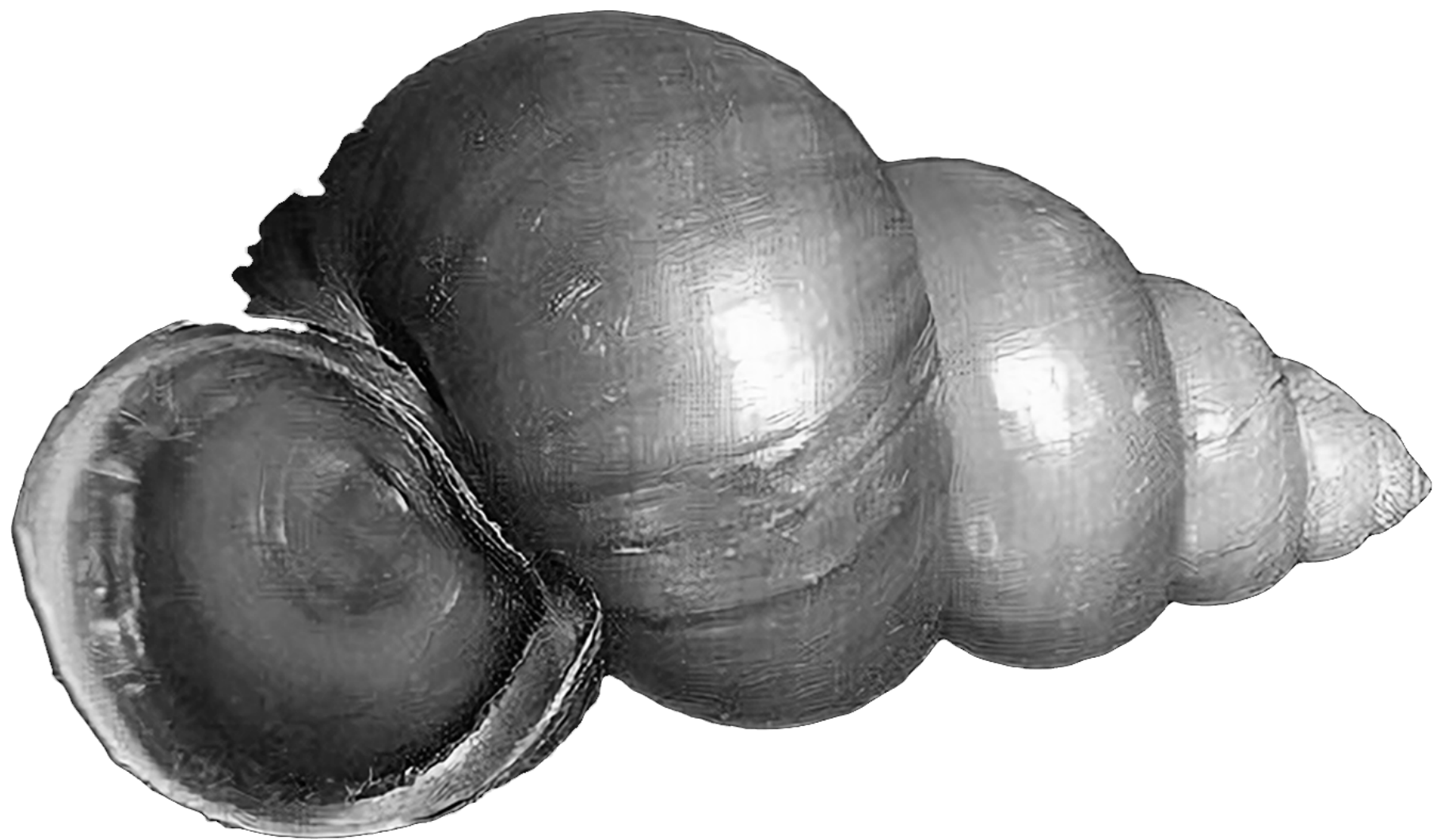
My ignorance of hunger prevents me
from understanding the fetish
for food and pleasure.

The dining boats are crowded.
I'm glad I'm waiting outside.

[silence]

- So, how do you know that the snails on the river bank come from the water?
- People on that boat said that they never dumped food waste into the river.
- But how do you know someone else didn't? Maybe some of the diners? Or their children?
- I just know it.
- But how?
- The snails you found still have their tails. They haven't been removed.
- So they're not food...

[silence]



A river doesn't need a name.

A river remembers everything
without having to be remembered.

Rivers are everywhere.
They're all connected.

In the memories of rivers,
time and space
begin to collapse.

In the memories of rivers,
the actors overlap.

When the tide recedes,
those who are too late to leave
are left on the shore.

Under the exposure to the heat,
they are stripped of their fluid
and end up as empty shells,
along with those
that have already died.

“He's your cousin!”

My father slapped me in the face.
My diary was thrown on the floor,
and it read:

*...my cousin is dead.
It's strange,
that I actually don't feel sad...*

My cousin's body was found.

I didn't get to see him.

My father peeked out from the boat,
carrying a black plastic bag in his hand:
“This is all that's left,
we'll have snails tonight.”
He handed the bag to me and
stepped onto the motorbike.

Before I was born,
my father was a sailor.
But now he rides his motorbike
between home and his office,
just like everyone else.

Living a “decent” life.

The river began to surge up the dike.
Darkness blurs the boundary between land and water.
The waning moon commits its last night to the water surface,
issuing a silent warning:
entry denied.

Here I am.

[long silence]