

Jon Simmons

Buddhism and Mosquitoes

“In certain sects of Buddhism, insects
aren’t considered sentient beings,”
my neighbor RJ says, slapping a mosquito on his forearm.
He flicks it off, swirls his limeless gin and tonic.

RJ leans on the picket fence
and professes great truths.
“A slow life is a better life.
Everyone is religious, even if they don’t know it.”
I tell him not to generalize.

The sun bows over the plain, orange and distant,
lobbed, slow-pitch softball for Gods.
I’m new to this—moved
to a cotton ball climate from the Pine Tree State.

I repeat the part about Buddhism and mosquitoes,
because I’m confused. RJ nods.
“Everyone goes through a Buddhist phase,
at some point in their lives,” he says.
“Even mosquitoes.”

I wonder who is my Buddha?
Is mine the same as the mosquito’s
that is biting my neck?