

you are here

the journal of creative geography

Volume 5, Summer 2003



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you are here is an independent, annual publication by graduate students in the Department of Geography and Regional Development:

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by the author, David Lee.

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artwork credits.*

Welcome to the sixth issue of *you are here: the journal of creative geography*. We are thrilled to be with you once again. Each year, we look forward to seeing where our potential contributors tow us off to, where they carry us in their explorations of "place" and the meanings of creative geography. This time, they carry us along an intricate path of memory, artifact, personal and community history; across the juxtaposed landscapes of prairie and coastline, dense cities and their fringes; on flights of circulating wind and rain, snow and fire, smog; and even on the otherworldly, atmospheric leaps of artist Catherine Eyde's "Women in Space."

This issue, like every issue of *you are here*, is multi-textured, both in form and in subject matter. For instance, these pieces demonstrate that the texture of place can sometimes be sensed most strongly in the very air around us – as in the smell of wildfire smoke along Daniel Ostmann's California coast, the sound of hurricane blows against the shutters of David Lee's south Florida abodes, and the touch of the coldest of prairie winds in Kevin Lutz's North Dakota grasslands. At other times, it is a different sort of texture that helps us to recognize where we are – like the layering of place with personal and collective histories accomplished by Lutz's family photographs and recollections and by David Plane's journey through the Berkeley that was his own in 1969.

As much as it is about any other sense of "geography," this issue is about our myriad ways of experiencing a particular place when we embrace a certain self-reflexivity. In some instances – such as Amy Ratto's view from the Oregon coast, Troy Cochrane's photographic journey in Taiwan, or Melissa McCarthy's central London commute – this is a self-reflexivity gained by trying to see where we are through eyes of someone who is absent or even unknown. For others – like Eyde, Plane, and Kathleen Veslany writing about her time spent in Valencia, Spain – the introspection means becoming aware of how our past, future or imagined selves affect our perceptions of the here-and-now.

Whether we encounter a place at a particular point in time or over a lifetime, such an awareness profoundly shapes the experience itself, in-the-moment, as much as it shapes the words and images we choose to depict it.

And along with these encounters and contemplations there come questions when we take a moment to write or snap a photo or sketch or otherwise build our cartographies. Looking outward, as our contributors each prompt us to do: How will we approach the encounter, and how does it approach us? Do we approach it as a familiar resident, a commuter, a studious note-taker, solitary traveler, companion, correspondent, bearer-of-memories, reader, weather-watcher, writer, painter, photographer, cartographer? Or more than likely as some combination of these. That we arrive in some form or another as a "geographer" may go without saying.

These writers and artists have offered you, our readers, much more than I have touched on here. Many thanks go to these generous contributors who dug deep, very deep, when we asked, to the visual artists: "What can you also tell us in words?" and, to the writers: "What more can you show us in images?" Leaping out of our customary modes of representation – I now tend to think that leads to the most creative of geographies.

Over the last year, the journal has become my companion, and its contributors, editors, advisors and other supporters have become friends. I'm grateful that the energy, creativity, and stubbornness of vision of each one has helped to create yet another collective and thickly-layered *here*. We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed bringing it to you.

Emily Dellinger
Tucson, AZ
103° F

Five Tips For Living In Spain

Kathleen Veslany

1 . *A second language is not your friend.*

There will be moments when you believe you're compatible, but in the end you feel worn down by how coy she is, how aloof. A second language is the type to stick her foot in your path, to make a face behind you in photographs, to refuse to tell you when you have a film of spinach stuck in your teeth.

I have to warn you: In her world, you will become a sliver of yourself. A cardboard cut-out. Bid adieu to sarcasm and irony. Goodbye to wordplay. Here you begin to mumble, your voice shrinks in the surprising challenge of new syllables. Getting six eggs, the price of a scarf, a bottle of water from the waiter all feel like substantial victories.

For a person who used to pride herself on picking up references, who cloaked herself in articulation and metaphor, you have entered the bad dream where you're standing naked in the supermarket fumbling for cover. Everyone is watching and it isn't pretty.

Parts of your personality – the big, rich folds of it – have fallen away until you feel laid bare.

Geography is a plane ride, a wordless space. Language is swimming through one body of water after another, with only one arm and in contact lenses, for the rest of your life.



2 . *Know that you will never be mistaken for a Spaniard.*

Here, the old biddies shop at the market in tailored suits and death-defying heels. The schoolgirls run through the streets in pressed dresses, their hair held away from their angel faces with flowing organdy ribbons. Even the babies with all of their potential for mess are wrapped in pink knee-length coats with maroon-velvet buttons, pink cotton tights, pink patent-leather Mary Janes. Some of the dogs are better groomed than you are.

Look at their faces: that skin, those Bourbon noses, the hair in its thick perfected glory. Look at their bodies: the long legs, the voluptuous hips, the proud display of every curve. It's akin to living with supermodel roommates. At first, you might be tempted to compare yourself unfavorably. But you're a smart girl, even if you're not a supermodel. You'll see that comparing yourself to them won't get you any-

where you want to be. When the summer comes and you see that even the grandmothers wear sleeveless sheaths without arm jiggle, it won't be the straw that breaks your back. You know what is and is not possible. One can imitate but rarely transcend.



In these moments pull out your journal and vent in its privacy about cigarette smoke and dog shit and obscene inefficiency. And in the other sweeter moments, use this book to preserve observations before it all becomes ordinary. After all, who would possibly care

about the staircase you climbed last Tuesday, the posture of a waiter, the absence of water fountains? This minutiae will be your greatest souvenir years from now when, out of boredom, you fondle the bookshelves for a good read. Record this. Be a thorough witness. Save what will never again be this clear.

3. Keep a journal with the zeal of a child.

There are going to be times you need to pinch yourself: at the altar of cathedrals, at a café while the tourists saunter past and you realize you're no longer one of them, when you're standing in front of Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights" at the Prado. Then there are different moments that will also require a pinch: when the bureaucrat you've been waiting 20 minutes for returns from her "coffee break" with a dozen shopping bags, when Internet speeds feel like Japanese water torture, when you forget that the bank closes every day at 2:00.

Spain is a country of amazing gifts. Its kindness toward strangers, the punctuality of its train system, the reverence with which people embrace their families. And then when you can't get a carton of milk on a Sunday or the mail hasn't been delivered for four consecutive days or you cannot bear to eat another piece of pork, you are reminded of its challenges.

Even though this really does feel like a year-long honeymoon, flaws occasionally surface.

4. You must expand your palate.

In the market, women lovely enough to be movie stars will hack away at a bird on a butcher's block with the nonchalance required of everyday acts. Their make-up perfect, their hair flawless, their apron dotted with chicken blood.

Here, you will recognize organs previously known only through pictures in biology textbooks: brains, hearts, livers. Poultry hangs with heads and feet attached; eels slither among the fish counters; ostrich eggs are sold with yokes the size of dinner plates. In restaurants, cured ham dangles from the ceiling rafters, still attached to the black hooves.

Food in Spain is not abstract pink filets on Styrofoam. You must collaborate with the butcher in the precise way you want her to cut the steaks off the bone. There is no discre-

tion, no absence of context, no cellophane wrap. You will either learn to be a willing witness and participant or you will have little to choose from at the dinner table.

Learn to trust, to be an adventurer. Embrace eggs by the dozen, dedicate yourself to dairy, sing the praises of olive oil. Try something as cute as a rabbit. And when your digestive track is begging for mercy, discover the abundance and variety of fruit, the uncommon vegetables, the sheer volume of olive options available. For the first time, everything you buy will come from the country you live in.

Still in your weaker moments, you remember popcorn. Then on another evening you'll think of *pastрами*. One drowsy afternoon you'll recall *pad thai*. Objects like these appear in your gastronomic dreamscape for no reason, when you least expect it. You search the *supermercado* a few more times, sure that you've missed an aisle, or possibly, an entire wing of the store. You haven't. This is Spain, not a melting pot.

Revel in the abundance of its pomegranates and blood oranges, a dozen varieties of *pâté* available for a song, all of that *manchego*. Savor where you are, take the culture into your mouth, and fill yourself up on it.

5. Understand that this year may ruin the rest of your life.

People will ask what it's like and you can say things like *lovely* and *architecture* and *history* and *amazing*. You can get closer still with *Mediterranean coast* and *plaza* and *cathedral*. But this year is about the untranslatable accumulation of senses. You hear a Vespa scooter while the sunlight hits the cornice on the day you eat *magdalenas* for the first time for breakfast. Every

day gorges itself on the details, offers up the wordless satiating weight of what this is. A bowl of clementines still on the stem. Hanging laundry on the line in the courtyard. Sitting beneath the cathedral's alabaster windows on Christmas.

Walking to the bakery with your mother during her visit. Asking the same family for artichokes, leeks, red-tipped lettuce week after week after week at the market. Thousands of pleasures in blinding succession.

And even if you can come back, you only get one first time.

You'll go home and be full of some aching you can't name more precisely than *Spain*. *Valencia*. *Calle Almas*. For a while afterwards, you'll be in limbo, among the relics of a world both obscenely large and small. Be happy for what you got. ♦



Women in Space!

Catherine Eyde



Exit, departure
2001, watercolor on paper

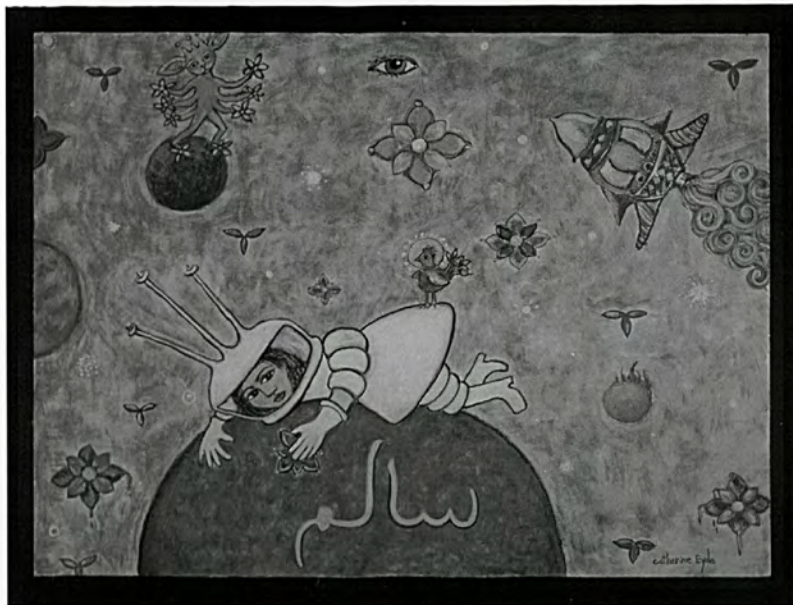
Women in Space!

Catherine Eyde

These pieces are taken from Catherine Eyde's 2000-2001 series of paintings, "Women in Space!" and feature women floating through infinity in the protective armor of spacesuits. Eyde uses "space" metaphorically to describe a physical and psychological journey: life and environment in flux, obstacles removed, new possibilities explored. Each of these pieces bears its title in Arabic script on the paint surface in honor of Eyde's Middle Eastern roots, which are a critical influence in her work.



Solar escape
2000, acrylic on wood



Safe
2001, watercolor on paper

Santa Ana Winds

Dan Ostmann

Power poles are exploding across town and the warships
will leave the harbor as light breaks. Moths
under the streetlight are there and then swept away.
Lean to me like a palm tree about to snap. Blue
flashes on the bellies of clouds as you try to speak to me
through wind, a bad phone connection, leaves scraping
or empty cans in a parking lot; says Malibu is on fire again says
the ships are leaving San Diego. Are you trying
to find me? Can you smell the burnt hills?
I could almost taste it on your lips, on the county's
oldest streets. My back against the car at five in the morning –
I still feel you like a blue shock from the darkening side of town.
I can't stop watching this: there's a palm tree on fire
in the wind and it's leaning out to the ocean.

A Story of Grass

Kevin Lutz



Prairie grass lies down in the wind. The harder the wind pushes, the lower the grass goes, holding firm into the earth with a maze of roots and a flexible shaft that allows it to lean. The grass bends by degrees, segmented by hard bands called nodes that run up the shaft in a series of thick green rings. Bending at the ring, the shaft is able to contort in the whipping wind that often blows from several directions at once. Over thousands of years, it has learned to stand up only when it can, and lie down when the wind pushes too hard. Its survival is maintained by knowing the limits of its own strength, and going deep into cold ground as the topsoil freezes. The lithe shaft allows the grass to bend flat to the ground when the first hard freeze coats the stem, and the head droops flat to the ground. In the winter, the green grass becomes white.

Winter is a time of death on the prairie. The clamor of crickets and grasshoppers is replaced with a heavy silence as the old world is covered with snow and ice. The blades of grass are drained of color and the crowns have sunk into the ground. The warmth of the earth retreats towards the bedrock, where the wind and cold cannot wisp it away. Everything has left, or died. The only sound is the winter wind. Its song is a Eulogy.

We received the call that William had died only 24 hours before, and already the cities and streetlights, the hills and intermittent traffic of South Dakota had fallen away behind us. The slim outline of the moon over the hills had given way to an oppressive darkness that filled the interior of the car like water. Winter wouldn't officially begin for another month, but the air that rushed past the window was 30 below zero. The backseat was piled with blankets and gloves, hats and down jackets in case of an emergency. People die every year on these isolated highways when their cars break down, found huddled and frozen in their back seats. My father, Keith, watched the gas gauge as if it were a lifeline, his silhouette outlined by the green glow of the dashboard lights. His face looked stern, but his eyes were gentle, the kind of depth only quiet men have behind their eyes. They always looked a little wet, as if he had been crying, but he hadn't. Quiet men like him don't often cry, and there are only rumors that he ever has, years ago, when he wasn't so quiet. He raised his hand a little to check the gas gauge, and the lines under his eyes became more visible. He was getting older. He was beginning to look more and more like William every day.

When I was younger I thought these highways stretched on forever, outdone only by the tedium and boredom I felt sitting limp in the backseat, counting the telephone poles as they strobed past the window. But that night, I knew the highway would end, and we'd turn down a little dirt road, the car swaying as it shifted onto the frozen gravel. We would pull up at a house familiar even in the dark, the porch light left on, creating a halo of light that strictly defined the beginning and end of the darkness. We would sit in the car and look at each other silently, then settle our eyes on the front door, the wooden steps, the cracked green paint, and wish we were still on the road. We would long for the hum of wheels against the pavement, the feeling of the heat coming out of the vents

and cold pushing through the window. We would hope that if we kept going it would have never happened, and we could keep driving until it went away.

The first settlers in southwestern North Dakota often expressed a sickness for home, scrawled in charcoal and smeared ink into diaries and letters. The isolation and harsh weather pushed them back into memories of a life more certain and secure. Most came to the prairie without their families or friends, and the prairie surrounded them like an ocean that was perilous to traverse. Isolation set in, wind moaning through cracks in their walls, and they would be as sick for home as the human heart could stand without withering and breaking like August's dried leaves. Sometimes their hearts fell into pieces.

I was one of the first of my family to venture off the prairie. Ten years before William died I settled in a city with a population greater than that of the entire state of North Dakota. The prairie is a place of memory, of history; and my sickness for home reaches past the strip malls and traffic lights, over a thousand miles of fields and mountains. It comforts itself in the tufts of grass and clods of soil. No matter how long I am absent, or how far I am away, the compass of my longing is constantly and unchangeably pointed north towards the mixed prairie of southwestern North Dakota.

Years go by and my visits have become more infrequent. Family and friends are huddling together through the long winters, getting older, and dying quietly. I can hardly hear them go anymore. They just slip away in the early afternoon rushes of wind. They are dust. My past is dirt raggedly clinging to wheat stalks. I am reminded. Frostbite scars turn red and burn in the winter, white in the summer, and constantly reassure me that I have been branded by the prairie, and have betrayed it. Betrayed the century of tradition of small farms and brutal seasons. I have betrayed genera-

tions' worth of struggle. I have abandoned the most important part of my life. The most nagging memories. The long rolling thoughts of clouds and grass.

That night in the car, I knew I had given up my right to remember him. But as we pulled to a stop and I opened my eyes to the grass stems poking through the ice-covered snow, I lost my concentration. The cold wind whistled through the weather stripping of the car door, so cold when it hit my face it felt hot. I took a deep breath of frost coated air, let it fill up the empty spaces, and through the lingering reverberation of death, I felt—home.

My Uncle Jerry's car was parked crooked in front of the house, and light bulbs glowed from every room. He was sitting in the kitchen with his wife Kathy, smoking cigarettes and drinking out of a half empty whiskey bottle. His face always looked sullen, even when he smiled, because only his mouth would move. Jerry and Kathy looked up at us through a cloud of thick smoke, the smell of stale coffee lingering in the air, and he nodded his head, as if he knew what we were thinking; what we were going to say; what terrible sensation had gripped our stomachs and our shoulders. He nodded at the half-glazed look in our eyes, and, as we sat down, he slid the bottle of whiskey across the table. An exhaled stream of smoke fanned from his nostrils as he said, "Goddamn doctors said he would have 10 years after the bypass. He only made eight."

He had been dead only a little over one day, his body just gone cold in the funeral parlor, and I wanted – I needed – to imagine I was going down with him. In my memory at least, he wouldn't have to do it alone, and I could follow the footprints his death left in my mind, wandering and lurching to a place of which I was then not aware.

Walking across the snow-covered field, we feel the pain in our chest for at least 10 minutes before the muscles are to rupture, but we don't know it yet. Our chest feels tight. The pain that shoots up our neck, through our jaw, and into each arm feels like an electric shock, hot and sharp as if we were being pricked by thousands of needles. It is getting hard to concentrate. We keep walking, but we are drowning, as pools of blood begin to run backward into our lungs. We feel nauseous, and our skin is soaked in a fine layer of sweat that freezes on contact with the air. Our feet and legs give out first; they start to tremble under our weight, but we keep walking. We try to tell ourselves it is only the labor of trudging through the snow, but know that isn't true. We are dying. We can't believe it, but this time it is actually happening. Our muscles are quaking, the pain is almost unbearable, and we want to cry but can't hold a thought long enough to do anything. It is overwhelming.

Our footprints are getting closer together as our gait tightens. We fall over – the muscles give out. Our legs are locking up in a pain and tension that has left us helpless. Our face is pushed into the snow, but we are losing the sensation of our skin as blood is rerouted and constricted. The cold in our cheeks slowly fades away as they begin to numb. It feels like after the dentist fills a cavity. The skin feels like it isn't ours anymore; someone else's clothes draped over our bones. We are sick and dizzy, and as the pressure behind our heart becomes too great, it suddenly surges, a last hint of warmth caught by the tips of dying nerves. For a moment we feel the searing pain in our chest. Then nothing.

That night, no one was willing to sleep in William's room, so my father and I slept in the twin bed he had slept in as a child. The old bed was set back against the wall, and creaked as

my father let his weight fall back onto the frame. His hands were on his knees, and he sat there in a t-shirt and his underwear with a bewildered look on his face. A draft of cold air pushed in through the window over the bed. The mattress sagged in the middle, forming a relaxed letter "U," and my body sank into its old down until half of my shoulders were buried in the lumpy fill. Sixty years in that aging house couldn't have left the feathers or foam in very good condition. Images of mold and bacteria rushed through my head. I took a deep breath. The overhead light clicked off, and the room fell dark, save for the thin streams of moonlight that came through the empty spaces left by the loose drape of the curtains.

When two grown men sleep in a twin bed there is a certain amount of overlap. My father had never been one for hugging, but that night he didn't say a word as our shoulders and hips pushed together. His body was warm. We both lay in the small, drooping bed, flat on our backs, shoulder to shoulder, taking deep breaths and exhaling loudly, trying to break up the cantor song of the wind that shifted tones and octaves, at times seeming like a voice, the way things can when you have listened too hard and too long. It was one of the saddest sounds I had ever heard in my life. We laid there, two grown men in a child's bed, both wanting to cry, but neither having the courage to make a sound.

Country mornings come with the sun, so early my eyes were still swollen while I wandered into the hallway. I was not used to being

up at dawn; my muscles ached and my brain refused to fully wake. The warm smell of coffee filled the house as the percolator hissed and gurgled like a water pump. The kitchen was crowded with four people who were rummaging through the cupboards only to find that there was nothing edible in the house. William was notorious for saving food, and his cabinets were like an encyclopedia of boxed and canned foods of the last century. Most of the



manufacturers had gone out of business years ago. I picked up the cans and looked at the strange and wonderful labels covered with flamboyant cartoon characters and colored artists' renditions of happy and satisfied faces.

Most of the labels had faded, and the manufacturers had faded, and thick lines of adhesive could be seen through the whisper-thin paper. William had kept this food almost as long as my father had been alive. For 50 years he had opened the cupboards, seen the same can of stewed yams, and refused to throw any of it away. He would have seen that same can some 10,000 times and decided that he might still eat it. It was something that I couldn't wrap my brain around, even if I tried to imagine growing up starved and skinny. William was determined to not go hungry ever again, and his food supplies would have seemed like an uncontrolled neuroticism to someone who didn't know him.

Jerry was sitting at the table eating a can of peaches. Grief was burrowing its way through him, making his cheeks even looser, and the skin seemed to be melting away from his bones,

draped and pleated with the thick lines of hard-earned wrinkles. He had cancer in his throat and stomach, but wouldn't know it for two weeks. His hand trembled violently as he raised the coffee cup to his lips, the way William's had, and the way my father's did.

I went into William's room to begin to get his things in order. I had not expected to find so much of him here. I had always thought that when someone died their effects were just naturally in order, the force of their death gathering up the small pieces and scraps of their lives. As I was beginning to realize, this was not the case. The dead leave pieces of themselves scattered and buried, things that don't become unearthed until long after they are gone. There was some disagreement over what he would have liked to wear. Whether or not he should wear shoes or a handkerchief in his pocket, if he would have liked to wear an undershirt or tiepin. I didn't think it mattered. He was dead. He was unconcerned with what was against his skin or if his tie was pinned to keep it from moving as he was lowered into the ground. None of this mattered.

After his attire was settled, I was left alone in the house to dig through the deep storage closets in search of pictures and other memorabilia that would be displayed at the wake and funeral. I tried to make my hands move confidently and delicately; holding each article with two hands, even if the item was so small my hands were touching one another. I was not going to break anything important. Everything was irreplaceable; he had touched each thing and owned it. He would never touch or own anything again. This fact did not make the dig easier; rather it made my hands tremble and move in awkward thrusts in and out of piles of coats and bowling ball bags.

Very few people look into their closets and wonder who is going to go through them when they die. I am sure it never crossed William's

mind that his grandson would be waist deep in 70s style comforters and packets of unsent bulk Christmas cards, crammed into boxes, the corners of the yellowing paper pushing through the corners of the box lid. I recognized them immediately; remembered pulling one out of the crumpled envelope every Christmas, its thin paper and candy cane motif almost certainly tearing as the envelope was opened.

I found 12 boxes containing the gloves I had sent him every year for Christmas, each pair still wrapped in the ornate department store tissue paper. I had the idea that William loved gloves because he seemed so pleased as he opened each box and saw the swaths of black leather. But then again, I didn't know what William excited would have looked like, or how he would have looked disappointed. I only knew two looks: the straight face and the crooked smile. I thought he liked gloves, because I told myself he liked gloves...and it was cold outside. Seeing the stack of identical boxes almost a foot and a half high, I wondered if I'd known what he wanted at all.

Deep inside the closet was a time before I was born. There were loose pictures of his second wife - a woman I had never met, rarely heard of, or even thought about - scattered around the floor. I dug back to the time when he still had hair on the top of his head, dark brown and fine as corn silk, and the same crooked smile that made you feel as if he had gotten something over on you. There were green plastic hats with pictures of naked women glued all over that they used to wear at the bar for St. Patrick's Day. There were pictures of him drunk and carousing. A picture of my father and an unidentified puppy. I put this picture in my pocket, leaned forward, and tried to squeeze my body between two busted up vacuum cleaners and an unused ironing board.

Maybe this is where the story really starts, crouched down in the closet of a man I didn't

really know, holding a flashlight in my mouth and trying to blow the dust out of my nose.

I've heard that you die the way you live, and it has always seemed clichéd and trite. But as I thought of William that day, I began to think that in his case it was true, the tired old man dying alone on the prairie, and I wonder if he chose it. If, when his heart first quivered, being over two hours from a hospital, he didn't just start walking. This idea disturbed me, because it meant he had known what was happening, and had had to wait for it alone. It implied knowledge of coming death. He had seen death coming and stepped into its path.

I had a hard time trying not to imagine what that last hour must have been like, drinking coffee over a plate of eggs the doctor told him he couldn't have, when he first felt the pain in his chest. The thought of that first moment of realization haunted me. He sat up straight, his eyes as big as saucers. A thick sheet of winter clouds covered the sun, so the kitchen appeared covered by a dull gray film. He stood up and the pain seized him again, so sharp and exact he knew it wasn't just a muscle cramp. The pain continued to increase as he gathered his jacket and gloves. The throbbing in his chest was excruciating. By the time he shut the door behind him, he had to have known that he would not be coming back again. He would be dead in less than 30 minutes.

The morning of the wake the house was crammed with people. The sun was out and the temperature was in the mid-teens. Baking

ham and beans filled the house with a brown-sugar warmth. All the traces of William's day-to-day life had been cleaned up and put away. The house was sterile and bustling. His life had been pushed into the recesses to make room for

the dozen people who milled about on the freshly mopped floors. William's brother Marvin was standing by the door drinking a can of beer and laughing. He looked exactly like my grandfather had 15 years ago. He had the same face; the same smile and errant strands of gray hair surrounding his bald crown. When he spoke, I closed my eyes and couldn't tell the voice wasn't William's. I tried to stand up straight and appear as polite and friendly as possible. I started to tremble. I wasn't hiding my anguish very well.

My mother used to keep a calendar next to the fridge with pictures and quotations of the prairie. Included in it was W.A. Quayle's, "Loneliness, thy other name, thy one true synonym is prairie." But as I stepped out the back door and cleared the light of the porch, the ice crunching under my feet, I knew Quayle had it wrong. I kicked away the ice and scraped the snow until it was bare soil and sat down. The conversations in the house could be heard between the gusts, and the sound of laughing voices made me rock back and stare up at the stars. Tears were warm against my cheek and I began to quiver again.

My father stepped out the back door and shuddered against the cold wind. He crammed his hands deep into his jacket pockets and huddled his arms into his body. His loafers



couldn't find traction on the ice, and he stumbled a little, but regained his balance and stepped in my footprints. My strides were longer than his, so he stretched and bounded between the imprints. He sat next to me and put his arm over my shoulder. We were both silent as he rubbed the back of my head with his strong hand.

The next morning I stood in my suit, awkward in the middle of a single-file row outside the church. We were marched in behind the priest as if in some kind of parade. The people in the pews looked up at us, studying our faces with as much intensity as was polite. There is a voyeuristic quality to watching other people suffer – to seeing the realization of their loss move through them like anesthetic, their heads drooped down onto slouched bodies. But in this line of people, in this line of blood, pain moved like an unmovable stone, a tenth of a gram of calcium clinging to an artery wall, tightening its grip on the heart. Some terrible, unmentionable memory we had sculpted into kidney or gall stones trapped deep down in our bowels were heavy granite spheres of bereavement. I could feel the weight as I walked. My father's overriding wisdom is, "If this is the worst thing that happens to you, then your life will be pretty easy." When I was 10 and needed 28 stitches across the crown of my head, I had held these words in my thoughts as a mantra, and it was calming.

I had never trusted funerals because they had always seemed staged. I don't think William trusted them either. He thought that making someone talk about you was disrespectful and dishonest. He was never one for ceremonial displays. Knowing this, no one talked or looked around. No one related to William would speak the Eulogy. None of his friends, sons, sisters, or brothers would utter a single word, so a British man who had got drunk with William one night years before his death decided he would speak for us. I had known Wil-

liam for decades, and had been working out the Eulogy in my head, but I couldn't seem to get it right. Given 10 more years to prepare I probably still couldn't have done it. There are things language can't do. Every time I tried to hold his image up in my mind, hold it there honestly, it would be washed away with spectacle and splendor, with grief and ceremony, with what he was, and what I wanted him to be.

As the Eulogy began, I felt my father's arm tighten against his body. The tall British gentleman leaned over the pulpit, and said, "We will all miss William." And it was somehow beautiful. It was the one true thing I had heard. If I ignored the grief, the loss, the years of memory, I could admit it was true – I would miss William. This British gentleman had taken a man's life, the whole messy thing, and summed it up with a story of two guys sitting around William's small kitchen table, drinking cheap beer from the can, and talking about a long, hard life. Maybe this was the truest expression of his death, a confession to a stranger about where it had all gone.

The first night we had arrived, we had been sitting around the kitchen table, in the low light of the hanging fixture. Jerry had turned to Keith and said, "At least he wasn't a bastard like his father." Keith dipped his head and agreed. I had thought long and hard about it at the time, trying to push myself back into his life, but it escaped me. It was a life I simply couldn't understand.

There's an old trail song I sing sometimes, because even if you can't carry a tune, it still sounds alright:

*Bury me not on the lone prairie
These words came low, and mournfully
We paid not heed, to his dying prayer
In a narrow grave, just six by three
We buried him there, on the lone prairie.*

I walked back into the cold wind with a warmer face but the same thoughts gnawing on my mind. I knew there had always been death in the world. The chances of everyone in the church dying were 100 percent. Everyone I had ever loved would die. It was nothing new, but it lay over me then like the immense shadow a thunderhead casts over the fields. The shadow a mouse sees as the hawk swoops down. It was the throbbing, pitiful moaning of the first, final thing I had ever truly known in my life.

The cemetery was covered in snow, except for a mat of fake grass that had been laid out surrounding the plot. The green seemed to glow in the white world, and I had to look away from the throbbing neon blades. There were only about 40 other markers within the boundaries marked by black wrought iron fence. Beyond the fence were hills and hard-packed snow as far as I could see; cows huddled together in the distance. The clouds were rolling east out of Montana, gray and hugging the ground. The prairie rose and fell stoically; fell and rose in the gusts and barrels of wind. The ground that broke out in patches was brown and worn raw. For a moment there was only the sound of wind, then of voices and car doors, footsteps and car radios. The back of the hearse opened and we reached

for the rails of the coffin. Not a single person was crying; there was just the whipping and whistling and moaning of the wind through the headstones.

To tell a story of the prairie, you end up telling a story of death. The wind knows how to moan like a heartsick voice, and we knew the wind would do the wailing for us. The whole of life, it seemed, would stretch out forever into the long gusts of the wailing wind, laying each of us into the ground.

But prairie grass bobs and weaves in the wind; it does not break against the powerful thrust, which at times is overwhelming. The grass does not fight the wind; it lets the current move through it. Its roots shoot so deep, and it clutches the earth with such a steadfast grip, that it survives drought, fire, and the strongest winds. The crown bends to a right angle and the grass lies down, waiting for the wind to let up. If you lie down in the tall grass, the farmland and roads disappear. You can pretend you never left. The wind moans, I lean with the grass, my face mixed with the fluttering heads, and I wait patiently for the unstoppable force to let up. ♦



Four Photographs

Troy Cochrane

I am currently living in Taiwan, while my family and friends are almost half a world away in Canada. I can sometimes be accused of not living the experience because of my compulsion to photograph everything around me. However, it is through my photos that I can draw those who are distant in physical space closer with the stories I can tell through my images.

This is the story of where I am, or rather, where I have been...



Asleep at a Buddhist Temple

In Taiwan, all sorts of temples are found in dingy storefronts, down narrow, crowded alleys, looming large on mountaintops, and rising serenely in other beautiful and not-so-beautiful settings. Taiwanese religious practice is both more devout and more casual than it is in North America. In front of homes and businesses, you will see makeshift shrines to deceased relatives. People from a diversity of backgrounds will stop by local temples to pay homage to gods and other religious figures. Unknown amounts of "spirit money" are burned both at temples and at personal burners. At the same time, if you ask most people, they will claim they are not religious. The man pictured sleeping at the temple is indicative of the at-home reverence people express in the temples.



Billboard Reflected in the Rice Paddy

Canada is a land of open spaces. Taiwan is not. In Taiwan, rural-urban blending is found everywhere. People will turn any available space into a farming venture: a ditch or empty lot becomes a rice paddy, an unused porch is turned into a chicken coop. In Canada, urban expansion is constantly encroaching on farmland, pushing the city boundaries further and further outward. In some cities, you can stand on the outskirts and look to one side at houses and large buildings and to the other side at open expanses of grain fields. In Taiwan, the urban sprawl intermingles with the rural, crowding it, but not crowding it out.



Gei Wo

In Chinese, "gei wo" means "gimmee." Monkeys are magical to anyone from a land without them. However, to the people in Taiwan, that intrigue is replaced with an annoyed amusement at the fat monkeys who steal food and make a general nuisance of themselves. Here a group of monkeys is clustered around a man who has been feeding them, but who eventually drives them away.

Sun in Kaohsiung

As the sunbeams race through the atmosphere to be scattered by the haze, the extent of pollution in the second largest city in Taiwan is made dishearteningly clear. Buildings only two kilometers away are made fuzzy by the suspended particles of dust, smoke, and gas. As the buildings retreat into the distance they grow fuzzier and fuzzier until eventually they cannot be seen through the smog.



Cartography, or In Answer

Amy Ratto



My instinct was to say, 20 miles from the Oregon coast,
the moss wraps the birch branches and the air
condenses, running down the windows.
But who wants to know about these trees,
skinny as foals' legs and leaning in over the creek
like swords at a soldier's wedding?
What would you know
if I said that the rain swollen creek is receding?
I am tired of mapping things for you, saying
this is where and *that was where*.
I can't give you the nondescript town corners,
the swing sets, the maps of cracked concrete
that chart a memory of place. After all,
I think of eating cereal and hard boiled eggs
on autumn Saturdays and call it home.
If you still want something, take this:
I build a fire every morning, touch a match
to the paper twig tower and wait
for the orange to catch, quick as fish
against the knobby bark. It spreads to the edges
of the soot black stove, the orange
going red as wood splits into coals square
as horses' teeth. When I leave, the heat is seething
and rippled as water's reflection. If it's warm
when I return, then I am lucky.

Surface Markings

Melissa McCarthy

I dreamt once—and woke up laughing at the idea—that the colours of the new edition of the A-Z^{*} had been transposed to the real landscape, completely transposed, so that every aspect of the real street accorded to the codified description on the map. I imagined that upon leaving the house I was in, its bricks would be (as they actually were) a salmon-beige colour. But apart from the white road with its name typed evenly down the middle, the entire house, indeed, the whole city block—gardens, lampposts, rooftops—would be the same colour pink registered on the map as “urban, built-up.” And when I got to the Thames it would be consistently, foolishly, light blue. The park would still have ducks, pushchairs, plants in, but they would all be exactly the same colour, with only the outlines of the rustling leaves to help me distinguish things.

It was a dream landscape. But it corresponded with a certain way of understanding and depicting the space in which we live. In fact, the surfaces of London roads are increasingly marked with codified, coloured-in instructions. At most traffic lights, for example, there is a rectangle of green asphalt with a white icon painted in it, indicating the space for bikes. Bus lanes the colour and texture of basketballs proliferate, while yellow zigzags indicate “no parking” outside school gates. And there are many more examples.

I consider this painting to be symptomatic of a distrust in road-users; it makes outdated the idea that people in the street will tacitly understand how to share the space, in favour of telling, more clearly and colourfully, what must go where.

Over-explanation is also visible in the recent redesign of the London bus maps. Planners piloted the new design several years ago, but the changes take a while to work through, so old-style maps are still around. Some people aren't bus-users; here I'll describe the alteration.

Like the prow of a Viking ship, the tallest point of a bus stop is a post at the front topped with a square white pennant marked with the red London Transport symbol. This symbol brings to mind a circular tunnel and a platform across it; a sun against the horizon; a target without the vertical cross-hair; a wheel and connector, as seen on the sides of old-fashioned cow-catcher trains; an aerial view of London with the Thames crossing it left to right.

^{*}The A-Z is the brand name for a set of urban maps in the United Kingdom. Until the 1980s, the A-Z was printed in black and white, which made some of the older and denser parts of London difficult to decipher. This has been replaced by the glossy, colour-printed version.

Under the bus-stop symbol, listed like hymn numbers on a church song board, come the numbers of the buses that stop there. Down closer to head-level on the post are two elements: a notional timetable and an image showing the bus's progress along a route. The route consists of a horizontal black line marked at regular intervals with notches. Next to each notch is a name.

As an important conceptual point, the route diagram simplifies movement along a line rather than over a surface. This line is detached from anything other than its own components, telling you only that if you remain on the bus you will eventually pass through each of these points. No indication is given of where they are in relation to each other or to anything else in physical space.

The only variety in these route diagrams is that different names are spaced out along the unvarying length of the line. What names? Buildings, particularly those related to transport: Westcombe Park station, Plumstead bus garage, St. Thomas' Hospital. Pubs are becoming unstable reference points, with the old, proper names effaced faster than you can say 'George Canning,' and thus rendering it sadly infeasible for a bus route map to include them. When he was a little boy, my dad used to ask for a thrupence to the naked lady, or a child's ticket to the bus stop located directly outside the The Lady Godiva pub. Sometimes the names of roads are used as fixed features, with the bus either crossing or travelling down a segment of the road. And a third category of reference on the route is that of area, although this need not give any indication of what place the name refers to within, say, Tufnell Park.

By using names of areas, transport authorities assume that bus riders know the size of a named location and where it is. This collective knowledge is never precise, but it works. The geographer John Eyles demonstrated this in an experiment mapping people's responses to the question, “What is Highgate?” For each answer he drew an ellipse on the map until the layered and overlapping ellipses described a circle whose middle was Highgate's epicentre. Everywhere near this centre was still Highgate, though to a lesser degree, while towards the circumference lay places inhabitants described as part of Highgate. But the people who lived equidistant yet on the opposite side thought that their own space was still inside Highgate, while those who lived on the far border remained outside.

Planners recently have introduced another new element into the bus system: the pennant above the stop gives the name of that stop and the direction of travel for buses once they leave it (for example, “Whitehall Place, towards Camden”). This is useful if you know the destination referred to and if you can already place it within a spatial framework. But again, this requires a common understanding of location and scale. “Towards Cambridge” would mean little to someone in Mitcham, because much of London is potentially in between the two points. “Towards Trafalgar Square” would be of minimal help written on a stop in Whitehall, because the two are so close that most people, going further than Trafalgar Square, will want to be informed of a more distant point on that route. The intention behind these directional prompts is helpful. But we need to agree on the names of the place, we need a sense of relative location, before we can make sense of this information.





Travelling by bus, incidentally, provides one of the best opportunities for listening to the complex thoughts that small children discuss with their parents, something I recognised recently while watching a pre-school girl travelling on a bus with her mother and grandmother. It seems her dad was in some aspect separate from them. First, as we went past McDonalds, the girl said, "I've been there with Dad!" Her mum remembered and agreed that she had, but the girl added, "We went with his friend. What's his name, Dad's friend?" The mum said she didn't know, at which point the girl was surprised and a little exasperated that the mum should fail to know a critical piece of information about a grown-up. "You know, Dad's friend," she said. But the mum still didn't. Then as we rode above the crowds milling over the road at Brixton, the grandmother wondered if the girl had enough street smarts for someone her age. She said, "Make sure you stick with me and mum when we get off. Do you know where you live?" "I live with Dad!" the girl said. The other two laughed. Then the mum said, "No, I mean, if you got lost, what would you say?" They wanted her to give the address. But she thought for a bit, then replied, "I'm home now!"

This is fantastic: being lost is only an incomplete part of the accepted total process, which is to get back home and declare your return to your family. This is her understanding of space and of an adventure that unfolds over time. Being able to name the location is less important than following the pattern that necessarily ends with a safe return home.

And thus we arrive at the notion inspiring this essay: the bus maps themselves have changed. In addition to the timetable and the route schema, each bus stop used to have a map of the city stuck to the wall, a simplified, graphic representation of an aerial view, just like in the A-Z, and also in colour. Parks were shown in green, train tracks in curving black lines, and undergrounds in blue; most of the city surface was an undifferentiated pink-beige. The river cut a pale blue, and coloured lines marked the concentric borders of the price zones for transport tickets. They were not contour lines to show height and steepness, just price.

Streets were marked, but not all of them. Every road that a bus travels was marked in red. The names of areas—Nine Elms, Vauxhall—were written on the map, as were notable features such as parks and amenities. There was a strong bias in favour of pleasant, culturally oriented buildings, although prisons and the Houses of Parliament were also included. Other roads, ones that buses do not travel, were printed in white. These included major roads and roads that give you a better conception of the streets that cross the city, indicating how to go by non-bus means (walking, for instance, from South Lambeth to Clapham Road). From a bus-rider's point of view, the white roads were out of the remit.

We moved only down the red streets and the bus routes, and we did so by following the numerals printed on that street. To use this map, you started from your location at the "you are here" arrow. Then, you followed the route of any number along the lines of the streets. The numerals pinpointed the track of the bus. So if you first found a '77' next to New Covent Garden, and you wanted to go towards town, you moved your finger up the red track of the street until you reach the next '77,' up on the Embankment. If you reached a crossroads you had to follow every spoke, every option, until you

again found your number. The bus should have taken the shortest route between any two sets of a number, but if there were too many options and room for doubt, arrows would tell you the particular route. A star and a number encased in a box marked the end of every bus route.

This is my preferred bus map, one requiring viewers to follow various lines of movement over a network, with the network itself placed over a visual image of the city. You could see how the bus moved over something that was rather more like the ground itself, as seen from the bus. The map was a miniature version of the city in that the printed number '77' had to move over the surface of the map, appearing in one location, another, 'round a corner, finishing here. A model of the bus itself—the one marked with this number—travelled over the roads and through the town.

That was the old bus map. The new map is rather different, and brighter. In the new system, the route of each bus is depicted in the style of London Underground maps: a continuous line of bright colour, with the names of fixed points marked out. There is no pictorial image of the city overlaid by routes; there's only a gesture towards relative positioning. There is also an additional piece of information now, which runs above the timetables and the route diagram. It's an image of the routes of all the buses that use that particular stop. Several buses might use a single stop (at Aldwych, for example), so the map will show perhaps six coloured lines. All lines converge in the middle, at a point on the map marked 'Aldwych,' and each line stretches from a point along the top edge of the page—which is oriented in portrait direction rather than landscape—down to the bottom edge. This new map style is meant to make tracing the route of a single bus easier: you simply look at where the purple line goes, neatly fitted into the page. The labels inform you that the line starts at Liverpool Street Station and ends at Fulham Broadway, with certain points to be visited along the way.

My complaint about the new maps is that, compared to the old ones, they are both too precise and too detached. We lose the sense that the bus routes touch the city streets; eroded is a sense of movement in patterns and networks over a fixed physical landscape. The coloured lines show you how to move in the abstract, from top to bottom over the same distance, but in a disconnected way. It would be different if the streets were more regular; then a graph might suffice. As it is, I prefer to be reminded of the way the bus is actually taking me through haphazard places and presenting me with points of view that I had not considered. There is a certain laxity in going by bus, which was matched by the old-fashioned maps. They lacked an element of immediacy in their information, and this offered more space to imagine.

And what can be a better use of a bus journey than to be thinking about the spaces that you're moving through? We're faced with so many different renderings of the same physical space, stacks of maps to shuffle around like spinning disks of coloured plastic used to filter the light entering a camera. From the personal landscape of a dream to the reference-points we might share with a family to the larger images of the city that we're all meant to work to, the images we choose tell us something about how we understand and move through this urban space. Although I catch the same bus most days, it's a different journey for me now, pondering these things. ♦



Palm Trees and Steel Bees: Berkeley, Spring 1969

David Plane

Last fall, across a gap of 33 years, a former high-school buddy of mine got "back in touch." Philip Rosenzweig located me through a Web search. And since that day when we popped back onto each other's memory screens, we've been reminiscing via the ethereal medium of e-mail. It seems to me shared remembrances of place have the power to reconnect us across time with the same strange and striking immediacy with which the electronic dust of the Internet has rendered distance frictionless. I wrote much of what follows all those years ago. Doesn't where we were remain very much a part of where we now are? Anyhow, imagine it's yesterday once more, and you're back in that place where, as 16 year olds, you and someone else were together in the briefness of time.

The helicopters would fly up early in the sky, on rooftop seemed like steel bees buzzing in your ears and to roll over and deny day would be impossible for as it was yesterday it is today, O the

Berkeley alarm clocks are in the sky not just your ear, ...and this is Dallas Thompson in New York with the CBS World News Roundup, ...and in the War in Vietnam, ...and in the War in Vietnam, ...say hey, Willie Mays, ...hey Hey HEY! What a good time, the good taste of Kent, was made for a day like to today. So I would out on fresh street dew moist with

brown-paper Pledge of Allegiance covers over schoolbooks to take through city and back afternoon of sitting and swimming in rows of



California West Campus Berkeley High School, would go past corner Kelley Bros. gas station reading *Robbers Rick Pen for Ten???* Fuzz Around the Corner of three-foot block lettering below 32'

Plus Free Tumbler with Fillup along Woolsey Street on Oakland city line where eight blocks behind was National Black Panther white-storefront headquarters of dark leather jackets of dark plastic shades of freeing Bobby Seale of getting with the program feeding Oakland school children breakfasts or offing a strayed brother on dark night, and

the large-curd cottage cheese houses would line up in their stuccoed pastel rows to pass me and fall behind with pop-bottle-shaped palm tree

trunks at better people's corner lots, with Ilona Hancock *Cities are for People* blue-yellow City Council campaign signs staked to handkerchief crab grass lawns sprouting through concrete sidewalk. And I would stretch toward the misty green hills up to the east up to the bus stop with loping sneaker strides hitting regular on sidewalk, while above, the Berkeley alarm clocks, the helicopter steel bees, would wake and herd and wake and herd us to another spring day.

On College Ave. the buses would pulse on their routes toward University campanile 20 blocks distant across Ashby to Durant to Bancroft jerking corner-to-corner and then left-turn at eucalyptus, plywooded windows of Cal campus and barricades of bull-horned police:

This cyclone eight-ft. chain-link fence is being installed here at so-called People's Park by order of U.C. Chancellor Heyns due to the streetpeople having begun digging a swimming pool in the earth and what with these liability laws we can't be too careful and seeing as how we don't want anyone falling into it we is going to keep all you hippies and such ilk as people out from this property which is after all owned privately by the University of the State of California, Ronald Reagan, Gov., and we is congregating campus police, Berkeley police, Johnny Madigan and his Alameda County sheriff's, state troopers, blue meanies, green meanies, gases tear and pepper, salt-pellet-shooting guns, maybe some birdshot but buckshot, and we got us National Guard down to the Marina with I understand some late-model tactical barbed wire trucks (not to mention a tank), plus all the mutual aid police that we know ain't nothing but best cream-of-officers 'cause these men have been so kind as to have volunteered to help us here head-crack again this spring, Thank-you.

The diesel-fuming bus would plow ahead for Telegraph Avenue you could see huddling book and record and head shops and pads and narrow alleyways where a linger of yesterday tear gas still hides and you could see the spe-

cial parking area of Honda motor scooters now lying flat-knocked beaten to asphalt with sparkling slivers of chrome and glass glistening in newsun. And so jerking along we of the #51 bus would be funneled into canyons of business district of storefront cliffs drawing early shoppers clutching hungry children and shopping bags, drawing shuffling office workers and store clerks forward, inward, so eight hours later to be poured backward, outward, homeward, and students, streetpeople, oldpeople, allpeople.

At the crotch where Shattuck joins University Ave. that leads off down to Golden Gate across Bay waters the bus would disgorge its burden with orange-paper transfers to each



and there I would find my friend Phil who lived up in the Hills and his father was an English prof and his mother French and I met him while standing on my gym class number on account of he was 86 that semester and I 85 and he had once had his baseball bat taken away by riot police since it was a deadly weapon while standing waiting for a bus and I went with him to the ballgames at Candlestick and Oakland Coliseum and got old Joe DiMaggio's autograph and ate peanuts and drank hot cocoa

cold and happy in April late-afternoon winds. Mornings before school me and Phil would be careful about catching the right bus although they all went the same place one day we got on what was the black bus which was O.K. being as how this was the first year of Berkeley school desegregation but not O.K. since a kid he opened out a knife and borrowed all my lunch money and was going to throw my white ass out the window but the bus driver he also black said he weighed 300 pound so I got my lunch money back and left through the door instead when we got to school but me and Phil after that we were always careful.

Going down to the former black H.S. just this year being called West Campus Berkeley High the bus would cross the railroad tracks and if on time the morning freight would about be squealing past, neat because loads of kids would come to school hanging onto the sides or standing tall proud on boxcar roofs and just across those tracks is the school which is situated in a most fine place on account of the bakery across the street so throughout the morning everywhere would be that musty warm smell of fresh baking bread.

And so drowsily the school day would pass with only the occasional muffled reports of firecrackers from enclosed stairwells and the false-alarm fires speculated upon from out in the courtyard and the daily late-morning liberating of the French classroom door from off its frame: *Merde!* Mme. Jackson she one take-no-shit teacher would bellow while heaving a chair intent on bashing open skulls of unknown parties responsible. In the between-class periods many in the passing jeaned-jacketed afroed-or-longhaired masses would flash out copies of

Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book* calling out: *Say, hey, Buster Brown, when The Revolution comes which side YOU be on?*

Soon after lunch would come gym class which was Mr. Mendoza he having been in the Marines and where we would play softball on bare asphalt back of yellow-stucco boys gym until the ball got hit down some basement steps since the sewer backed up and crap floated on that water no one would fish the ball so instead Mr. M. would run us from fence to fence threatening but never actually making us "duck-waddle and quack in front of the girls." Meantimes we be peace-signing the guys in the National Guard convoys rumbling past up University Ave.

Going back home the bus would be shunted around the riot streets and all would talk of pigs, of *Berkeley Barb* headlines of taking a guardsman to lunch, of James Rector resting in peace, and from way off down side streets would come muted snatches of chants and strung-out glimpses of barbwire of milling crowds and like in scale replica you could see the snout-masked helmets the wielded clubs of the cordoned blue/green cops, while a toy chopper would furrow the air tail-spraying fogs of awful eye-fog gases. But my bus would gradually lunge away from those scenes and soon I would be loping back down my street on sneakered feet on Woolsey on the edge of Oakland facing westering sun glinting off fog sliding by distant Golden Gate carrying brown-paper-covered schoolbooks past pop-bottle palm trees at corner cottage cheese houses listening to the buzzing of steel bees in quiet late-afternoon Berkeley spring air. ♦

Windows Hate Hurricanes

David Lee

Day by day, year by year in south Florida, the windows of one's dwelling speak a quiet message to the neighborhood. Then, all of a sudden, a hurricane threatens, and the populace rushes to protect their beautiful buildings by reinforcing the most vulnerable spots, the windows. Some folks are fully prepared, and their window treatments are quite matter-of-fact, blasé, and unassuming. Some windows present a defiant face, with armor plates of plywood or steel daring the storm to do its worst. Ultimately, the ill-prepared reach for the roll of tape and apply protective bandages to the windows in a variety of geometries, some simple, some carefully complex, many slapped on frenetically in bizarre, irregular formations. I'll show you what I mean.

Many of the forms of the cultural landscape may at first seem to a Floridian like relatively permanent expressions on the land, unchanging statements that, once put in place, remain indefinitely. At the very least, when you build a home or design a shop, you spend a great deal of time deciding what the building should express. Unlike clothing, which you change daily and discard easily, domestic architecture continually tells the world what you were thinking when you negotiated with

the contractor. Of course, you can change the details of the house periodically through repainting, for example, or erecting a flamingo-shaped mailbox in your front yard. At Christmas, you may put up lights and cardboard Santas. But these architectural features are also carefully contrived. They lack spontaneity. Their very durability forces them to sing an unchanged melody. A house may be likened to a well-rehearsed, carefully considered speech, or to your best suit of clothing. A house, or a speech, or a suit should show you at your best. Considerable time is spent on the details.

What, then, to continue the metaphor, is the architectural equivalent of the unguarded, offhand remark, of Sunday-morning-read-the-newspaper attire, casual and informal, bordering on sloppy? In south Florida, one class of ephemeral and spontaneous alterations to your buildings is the preparation undertaken for hurricane protection, specifically, protection of the windows. What people do to their windows, I submit, speaks volumes about them. Window treatment allows people, for a day or so, an opportunity to see their neighbors from an intimate perspective. Not all, but many of the treatments are spontaneous, temporary, and constructed from a perspective of great anxiety and foreboding. Therefore, they allow humans to look in on their neighbors when their architectural expressions are unrehearsed, candid, and unguarded.

Permanent Treatments: The Blasé Approach

To appreciate the spontaneous window treatments, we first examine those that are not. These are the permanent treatments, parts of the architecture incorporated in the original design. I call these treatments the blasé approach to hurricane protection. Such window treatments communicate the owner's aplomb to an impending hurricane, an air of composure and confidence. The house designer has anticipated the possibility of wind damage, and the house carries tasteful preparations that are easily applied. The key is tasteful, a sort of understated elegance. No mere hurricane will recast this house from its visage of composure. Nothing short of a Category 5 storm can rip these durable barriers from their encasements.

The most supreme expression of aplomb is the roll-down shutter (Figure 1). Permanent shutters remain rolled into neat, discrete, scarcely visible coils throughout the year (Figure 1, left window). The casings for these rolls blend seamlessly into the house facade. Should a hurricane threaten, the shutters are easily and quickly rolled down, many with a turn of an electrical switch, revealing the most minor of change to the house appearance (Figure 1, right window). The house—foul weather or fair—displays the same external confidence. The shutters convey no suggestion of disorder, no frenzied attempt to secure the dwelling from impending doom. Quite the contrary, they suggest that the owners are quite prepared for this disturbance, and by extension, most others as well. The gentleman of the house, we are led to believe, never makes an untoward remark, and he surely reads the Sunday newspaper with a tie on.

Nearly as blasé as roll-downs are fold-close shutters (Figure 2). They also show that the owners can prepare their house with a nonchalant confidence, changing the look of the house only slightly. However, those shutters are more visible than roll-downs and speak out

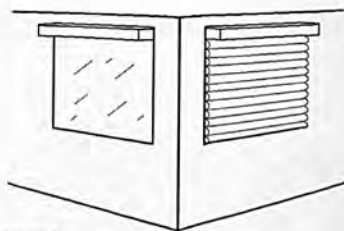


Figure 1.

to the neighborhood throughout the year, revealing that the owner is prepared for hurricane season. The shutters are permanently visible, and summer, winter, spring, and fall, seem to yell to the neighbors, "See, we are prepared for hurricanes!" In south



Figure 2.

Florida, where houses are commonly white, most shutters are the same. However, sometimes the shutters are painted a contrasting color, a splash of aqua or vibrant yellow.

Blasé but less elegant yet are the fold-down metal awnings (Figure 3). When down, they too reveal window preparation that changes the house appearance only slightly. But during the rest of the year, these awnings stick out

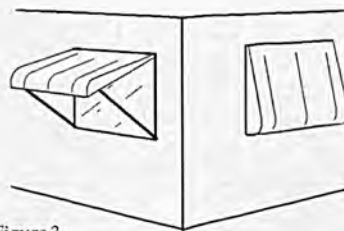


Figure 3.

awkwardly. Unlike shutters, which only whisper "we will be prepared," metal awnings scream it.

Roughshod Defiance

So much for blasé. The second approach is roughshod defiance. The owner is not concerned with tasteful treatments that show an elegant air of confidence. Rather, the owner is quite content to defy the storm with rough-looking preparations, and, at the same time, let the neighbors know that he or she takes no nonsense from anyone or anything, storm or otherwise.

Here we find the ever-popular sheet of plywood (Figure 4, left window). Most are unpainted and far more unkempt than shutters and awnings. But they are not slapdash. They are sturdy and do the job, and appearance be damned. Form follows function, after all, and superfluous decoration would be unwarranted, like wearing a necktie with bib overalls.

But wait. Not all plywood shields remain ungarnished. Some are trimmed and painted, and stored in the garage until needed. At their best, these manicured and painted sheets of plywood seem almost as tasteful as the more permanent treatments discussed above. However, a sheet of plywood is still a sheet of plywood, carefully groomed or not. Some have notes written on them so that the owner can recall which sheet goes with which window.

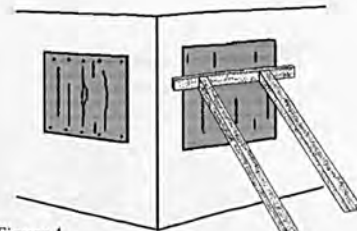


Figure 4.

Some become blank canvases awaiting the painter's brush. A treatment may display a charmingly benign demeanor. For example, a sheet of plywood on a gift shop, decorated colorfully with delightful flowers and vines, shows that protection can be elegant. Verbal comments may appear, as during Hurricane Floyd: "Bring it on, Floyd," "Floyd Tour '99," and "Hurricane History: Floyd 99." The owners are taunting the great storm. Bold talk indeed, but, then talk's cheap when you're talking to Floyd, or Festus, or Fanny, or whatever the hurricane's name.

Some roughshod treatments can reach extremes of defiance. The owners are not content merely to nail plywood to the building. No indeed. Buttresses must reinforce the wood, lest the maelstrom should rip the nailed sheets from their moorings (Figure 4, right window).

Stronger still are veritable sheets of armor. Steel plating is far more impenetrable than mere plywood. The owners of armor-plated houses are telling their neighbors that they are ready for any flying object, be it tree branch, airborne coconut, or who-knows-what. Bravo! we windows say to this.

But too often roughshod applications border on the slipshod and slapdash. Planks and boards may be nailed to the house to protect the window. The treatments are not only ugly, they are also ill designed as protectors for the

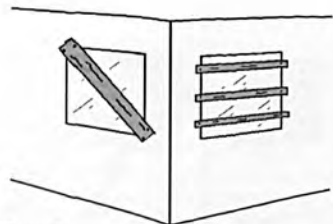


Figure 5.

glass (Figure 5). A couple of skinny 1x4 boards are not going to shield us from much of anything.

The Window Bandage

The third approach is the window bandage, strips of tape applied to the window, supposedly to provide support. These are not nearly as popular as they once were. Local newspapers contend that taping does no good, and shattered windows can attest to that. Still, there are plenty of examples of taped windows yet today. The protective bandage is perhaps the most spontaneous and unguarded comment that a homeowner can make about what the storm implies, namely, that something, anything, must be done to protect from the approaching, but somehow unanticipated until now, volleys of wind and rain.

Taping can be quite varied, and there are many patterns possible. The simple X is common (Figure 6-A). But there are many variations on the basic theme: four X's, X with

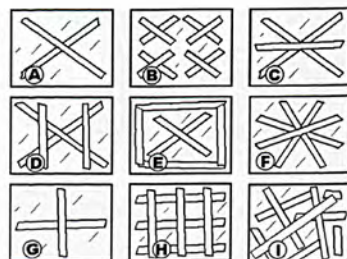


Figure 6.

a bar, X with two verticals, X in a frame, and X over X (Figures 6-B through 6-F).

These and other geometrical, carefully-designed themes are almost classical in their symmetry. Figure 6-G and 6-H, for example, show a cross pattern and one variation. But frequently, the taping becomes much more lyrical, or perhaps dissonant is the better word (Figure 6-I). There is no thought to classical elegance as tape is furiously ripped from the roll and applied in every-which-way on the window. "Oh dear," we say to ourselves in exasperation. "The storm is nearly upon us. Slap some tape on, and be done with it!"

Storms will rage, but then they pass away. Once gone, the shielding can be taken down. Where tape had been, faint outlined traces of tape residue remain. Then, these too are neatly scrubbed away. House facades return to normal on days when protection from the storm is out of mind. Until next time. ♦

the following

PLACES

appear
in this issue

of

you are here

Adair Village, OR	44.67N	123.22W	Oakland, CA	37.77N	122.27W
Alaska, USA	65.00N	153.00W	Oregon, USA	44.00N	120.00W
Berkeley, CA	37.87N	122.30W	Oro Valley, AZ	32.38N	110.95W
California, USA	37.00N	119.00W	Oxford, United Kingdom	51.77N	1.25W
Cut Bank County, MT	48.76N	112.27W	Pittsburgh, PA	40.43N	79.98W
Florida, USA	28.00N	82.00W	San Diego, CA	32.70N	117.15W
Ithaca, NY	42.43N	76.48W	Santa Ana Mountains, CA	33.15N	116.77W
Kaohsiung, Taiwan	22.68N	120.00E	Saskatchewan, CA	54.00N	106.00W
Kent, OH	41.15N	08.35W	South Carolina, USA	34.00N	80.00W
Laguna Beach, CA	33.53N	117.77W	Spain	40.00N	04.00E
Lansing, MI	42.72N	84.55W	Sudan	15.00N	30.00E
London, United Kingdom	51.50N	0.08W	Suitland, MD	38.83N	76.92W
Madrid, Spain	40.41N	3.72W	Switzerland	47.00N	8.00E
Malibu, CA	34.02N	118.68W	Taiwan	23.50N	121.00E
Mediterranean Sea	31.5N	30.00W	Tokyo, Japan	35.75N	139.50E
Missoula, MT	46.87N	113.98W	Tucson, AZ	32.15N	111.00W
Montana, USA	47.00N	111.00W	Utah, USA	40.00N	110.00W
New York City, NY	40.40N	73.58W	Valencia, Spain	39.48N	0.04E
North Dakota, USA	47.00N	100.00W	Vietnam	16.00N	106.00W

David Bower was born in Laguna Beach, California and currently resides in Tucson, Arizona. He studies geography at the University of Arizona when not on his life-long search for Jackalope paraphernalia and the consummate highway rest area.

Troy Cochrane attributes his love of photography to the fact that there are no existing hospital pictures of him as a newborn. Now, he is determined to photograph everything he sees to make sure nothing is forgotten.

Catherine Eyde's artwork has been described as, "a visual diary on the human condition, a log of sorts leading us back through a terrain of thoughts and ideas once traversed." Further, "her subjects—playful and sweet, yet somehow abstruse—embrace life, the afterlife, and beyond." Catherine Eyde was born in Lansing, Michigan, and currently lives in Tucson, Arizona. Additional work from the artist can be viewed online at <www.CatherineEyde.com>.

David Lee, a native of Utah who grew up in California, has spent the last thirty-two years in the Florida humidity. A professor of geography at Florida Atlantic University, he studies how the cultural landscape changes. Papers on the subject have dealt with Sudanese houses, Utah cowsheds, Florida ghetto boundaries, and Hurricane Hugo's impact on South Carolina. Dave is currently working on a book that weaves human geography concepts into the fabric of a mystery novel.

Kevin Lutz has an M.F.A. from Oregon State University. "A Story of Grass" is the second chapter in a book that will be completed near the end of the year. Other chapters have appeared in *Common Ground: A Journal of the Environment* and *Weber Studies: Voices and Viewpoints of the Contemporary West*. He grew up in North Dakota and spent his late adolescence moving around the Midwest. He currently resides in Adair Village, Oregon.

Melissa McCarthy studied English at Oxford and has a master's in urban studies from King's College, London. She works both in social policy research and as an organizer of art projects, concentrating at the moment on film festivals. She lives in London, south of the river. She writes fiction and criticism; her reports on the relationship of surfers to death, the role of film in war and culture, and the obituary as art form can be read online at <www.necronauts.org>. She plays a lot of football.

Dan Ostmann's poems have previously been published in *Ibid*, the journal of the English Undergraduate Association at UC Berkeley. He has spent the last two years as a wildland firefighter with the National Park Service in Oregon and Alaska. He is now a composition instructor and a student in the M.F.A. Poetry program at the University of Montana.

David Plane ended up graduating from Ithaca (New York) High School in spring, 1972. Since then he has continued to await The Revolution in other assorted college towns, most recently, Tucson, where he teaches at the Great Desert University. Along the way he has been appointed a Deputy Sheriff in Cut Bank County, Montana, had a cup of tea with the Emperor and Empress of Japan in Tokyo, received special sworn status (twice) at the U.S. Census Bureau in Suitland, Maryland, and coached or umpired more innings than he can enumerate of Bobby Sox fastpitch softball in Oro Valley, Arizona.

Amy Ratto is currently working toward her M.F.A. in poetry and MA in literature at the University of Montana. She has previously served as Editor-in-Chief of *CutBank Literary Magazine*, and conducts freelance interviews for *Poet's Market*. She recently received the Merriam Frontier Chapbook Prize, and will be publishing a chapbook (as yet untitled) this summer. She has also been awarded a Matthew Hansen Endowment for a research project about the apiaries of Western Montana.

Kathleen Veslany was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her work has been published in *Creative Nonfiction*, *Fourth Genre*, and the premiere issue of *you are here*, among other journals. She lives in Tucson, Arizona, with her husband and daughter.

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