

you are here

the journal of creative geography



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Volume 8, Summer 2006

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On the cover: "The World's Largest..." by Gina Cestaro,
9" x 12" monoprint, digital print, tracing paper, cotton
thread, and feather. Originally commissioned as part of
Jeremy Frey's chapbook-length poem, "Big Bang."

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Editors' Note

Last year, we entertained the notion of "displacement" as a theme for Volume 8 and, at the time, it seemed especially appropriate. The world had witnessed the mass displacements of people following the Indian Ocean tsunami, after devastating earthquakes, and in the United States following hurricane Katrina. Ongoing conflicts continued to force large scale migrations and, along the U.S. border, hundreds of migrants were dying each year in the American deserts. We expected a lot of people to have displacement on their minds.

But as we sifted through the hundreds of submissions we received, we began to see other possibilities. Among the selections we liked most, a more complex and subtle theme emerged. While many of the pieces we chose do suggest displacement, they even more strongly evoke how our sense of place grows from and through personal relationships and evolving identities. On one hand, we experience places as somehow separate from ourselves—uniquely arranged spaces that we enter, where we exist, and from which we depart. But people (including ourselves) also comprise part of these arrangements in space. Our relationships to places are deeply connected to, if not mediated through, our relationships with people. Our selections for this issue reflect this complex recursive connection between identity, place, and personal relationships.

In Kreg Abshire's "The Fall Line," we find feelings of family enmeshed with a familiar place but also powerful symbols of movement and displacement: the river, and a child's impatient roaming. The Van Werts' poems give us detailed understandings of place that only make sense through the lens of the father-son relationship, and yet themes of migration, loss, and death re-

mind us of the transience in our world. Karen Paiva's displacement from Florida to Pennsylvania to care for her dying mother led her to embrace and embed herself in a new location. In her paintings, people and the landscape seem inseparable. Mark Hummel, offering us part of his "Water Cycle" series, binds place to people as surely as Michael Ratcliffe does in his poem, "Jessup," though the two pieces are, in many ways, aesthetic opposites. In "The Rift," the line between person and place often blurs, with delightful or tragic consequences.

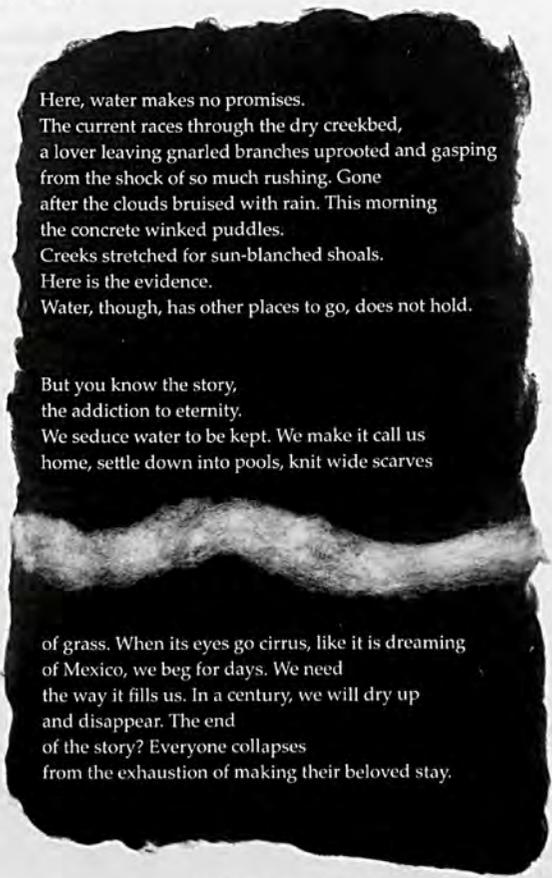
A few of the pieces here dwell more on the displacement end of the axis than others, and these include Eggert-Crowe's "Santa Cruz River, Dry After a Storm," Komives' "Letherhome Bridge," and Goodland's "Place Time." Brian Marks' interview with the Beehive Collective reminds us about people, places, and identities that are often left out of public political discourse. But what all these works share, as we noted above, is a deep appreciation for the idea that place and people are inseparable.

As we move through space, our own movements and existence help constitute place in all the forms it can take. For one, it might be how water in a riverbed becomes a lover to be seduced. For another, it might be how the sound of a young girl's flute echoes the meandering terraces of a deep canyon. For you, the reader, in this issue of *you are here*, it will be all these things and more. We hope you enjoy this edition as much as we have.

John Baldrige
Shoshana Mayden
Tucson, AZ
108° F

Santa Cruz River, Dry After a Storm

Lauren Eggert-Crowe



Here, water makes no promises.
The current races through the dry creekbed,
a lover leaving gnarled branches uprooted and gasping
from the shock of so much rushing. Gone
after the clouds bruised with rain. This morning
the concrete winked puddles.
Creeks stretched for sun-blached shoals.
Here is the evidence.
Water, though, has other places to go, does not hold.

But you know the story,
the addiction to eternity.
We seduce water to be kept. We make it call us
home, settle down into pools, knit wide scarves

of grass. When its eyes go cirrus, like it is dreaming
of Mexico, we beg for days. We need
the way it fills us. In a century, we will dry up
and disappear. The end
of the story? Everyone collapses
from the exhaustion of making their beloved stay.

Artwork by Petra Kuppers, "River" felt panel (80 cm x 50 cm), part of Felt Stories, an installation at Aratoi Museum of Art and History, Masterton, New Zealand, 2006.

The Fall Line

Kreg Abshire

It is early August, the last of summer in the South, where we send our children back to school far too early, weeks before Labor Day. If I ask my son what we should do with the fleeting time available to us before we resume our schoolwork, he always returns to water.

I'd like to think that my son is a transcendent knower in the line of Thoreau or Whitman. They, too, knew of our longing for water, the power it has over us. Thoreau found his muse on the banks of Walden Pond, and Whitman celebrated water as our origin, our gently rocking cradle. Anthony is far too practical for Romanticism, however. Like many eight-year-old boys, he tends toward nonfiction, stating a preference for facts, for reality. He knows, for example, that the human body is 65 percent water and that we can survive for only three days without water in a temperate climate. The South in early August, however, is not a temperate clime. And I find myself impatient with mere knowledge of water, the facts of water. Like the student in Whitman's "Learn'd Astronomer," who after "becoming tired and sick" of the astronomer's lecture, wandered off, alone, "and from time to time, / [l]ook'd up in perfect silence at the stars," I pine for direct experience of the thing itself.

II

Columbia, South Carolina, sits at the point where the Saluda and Broad Rivers come together to form the Congaree River. Like many cities a few hours inland from the Atlantic, Columbia sits on a fall line. Here the land starts its slow, gradual rise from the coastal plain to the Appalachian Mountains. Early settlers forced their way up the Congaree only to find rocks, shallows, and rapids. In the face of these obstacles, they stopped and decided that they had found a great place to build a city, just as other Westerners did at similar points along many other Eastern rivers. Thus, for a time, a line running roughly north and south from Columbia to other cities similarly located below rapids or waterfalls defined the frontier. To the east of this line were flat water and civilization; to the west were rapids and wilderness. The line itself was where water fell between the two.

There's something unsettling about looking eye-level at a mesa of water.



Falling water, however, was no match for canals, dams, or steam. Settlers pushed the frontier further west, and Columbia lost its short-lived place at the edge of things. Yet to be so far from the margin is to be nowhere. We write our stories at the limits, at the lines between here and there, between reason and passion, between wilderness and civilization. Without the line, how would we recognize change? How would we name it?

Protected by a gentle bluff, Columbia's downtown is just east of the confluence of the three rivers. Gervais Street runs in front of the capital, through the trendy Vista district, down the bluff, and across the Congaree. Beneath the Gervais Street Bridge, the Congaree rushes in a subtle show of gravitational force: under its influence water accelerates, forming swift currents, tiny whirlpools spinning out into shallow eddies, and small white-crested wakes opening below each of the boulders scattered down the river. For a pedestrian pausing on the sidewalk above, the river's surface illustrates the structure of chaos, each spiral, line, and dimple resulting from a discernible combination of force and resistance, of falling water and rocks.

III

To put ourselves on the Saluda River, we follow the signs from 126 to Columbia's Riverbanks Zoo. The stream of children and chaperones subsides as we move out past the last SUV and minivan to the end of the parking lot. Two trails present themselves. One takes us south to a worn patch of shady, damp dirt along a stretch of smooth, calm river. Any one of the picnic tables hidden in the shadows makes for an excellent vantage point from which to watch the water slide by. The other takes us through a meadow of knee-high grass cut to make way for a series of high-tension-wire towers.

The end of the meadow trail, the trail we intend to take, is hidden behind a short rise. We can already hear a dull roar, however. Pausing to investigate every rustle and to admire the butterflies we flush out of hiding, we move along at an eight-year-old's pace, an excellent pace for taking in a place that is modest about its beauty. Shortly after we start down the bluff toward the river, we trade the straight-line trail for a jumble of gray boulders and sand. From this point, we can see water falling. An expansive series of steps moves down from the right to the left, broad planes of water shifting from green to white as they spill over or push through rock ledges. Off to our right, the water starts its fall from a level roughly equal to my height; it proceeds over several steps until it seems to be at the level of the ground I'm standing on. Continuing its fall, the river disappears around a bend.

We've stopped. Anthony is studying an odd rock. I am simply stopped. There's something unsettling about looking eye-level at a mesa of water. It's like watching a tiger at the zoo from the safe side of the barrier. Something keeps it from eating me, just as something keeps the river from changing its direction. I know that water flows downhill and that much of me is below much of the river. All the certainty of knowledge and all the similes of experience seem muddled and insufficient. I pause, expecting the river to rush round my knees. Answering a breathless prayer, the river stays put. I wonder: is that what brings me here, the need to offer this prayer?

My son insists that we "go!" Children are helpful that way. Anthony's quick capacity for wonder is immediate, a clear and direct response to what is there before him. It is neither meditative nor learned. It has nothing to do with an understanding of Thoreau, of Whitman, of English classes, of books, of words. It is, instead, a form of perfect silence. And facts, which he has in abundance, cannot obscure it. That's what I am thinking in the moment between his exclamation and his decision to start down without me.

So we go, Anthony leading the way, plotting our course over and around the boulders, moving down to the edge of and then out into the river. We identify a rock suitable for lounging and connect the rock-dots that take us out to it. We pass a comfortable hour eating peanut-butter sandwiches, exploring the neighboring rocks, and staring at the river until rapids slow and blur and freeze, taking on the appearance of an over-exposed photograph.

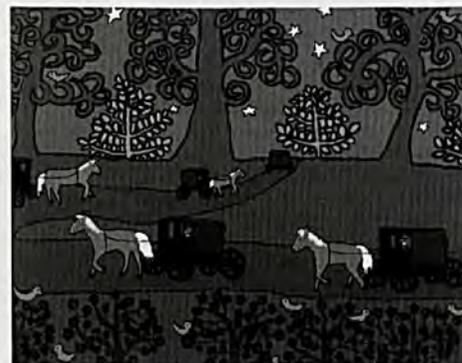
Something, perhaps a train passing on the rusting trestle above the river or the sounds of afternoon traffic picking up on 126, jars everything back into focus. Looking over towards the train and highway bridges, I notice a sign that advises me about the potential for and dangers of fast-rising water. The South Carolina Electric and Gas Company placed it there on a telephone pole in the middle of the river. SCE&G runs the hydroelectric power plant at Lake Murray and, consequently, determines the level and rate of flow on the Saluda River here a few miles below the Saluda Dam. When the dam gates open, the sign informs me, horns will sound, water will rise quickly, and I should retreat back to the safety of the parking lot's higher ground.

Today, though, there are no horns. Even so, perfect silence is fleeting at best. It seems that we are always remaking nature in our own image, bending it to meet our needs. We dam it, admire it, mine it, drive hours to find it behind the boundaries that we have established to contain it. And even in reverence, we set it apart from us, drawing yet another line to feed our desire for escape, for transcendence. There is, I suppose, potential here for despair. I do not, after all, want to find only a mirror behind the curtain. Ahead, Anthony calls. I can only imagine what he's thinking. So we go. ■

Yesterday Located in the Here and Now

Karen Paiva

One of my longest "rush hours" began in fall 1998, when I decided to move from Miami, Florida to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. It ended in January 2000. Parental caretaking and hospice care are roads of love and honor filled with stress. During the last year of my mother's life, a back-to-basics period for me, I eased my struggle from grief and helplessness by taking refuge in art. As Mom rested or as others came to visit, I painted and reflected on the joys of simple living. With no real formal art training, I began my therapy of spirit and, eventually, I auditioned my first painting during this period, *A Lancaster Rush Hour*, for Mom, who absolutely loved it. From her living/dying room couch—now bed—she smiled and urged me on. So in a humble, holy setting began my hospice series. I appreciated more the power of place soon after I buried my mother. Lancaster County, its geography and its people, was a natural balm that eased and enriched my spirit. What began as a healing place became my laid-back, creative setting to celebrate my passions.



A Lancaster Rush Hour
11" x 14", acrylic, canvas board

Rush hour is an oxymoron no matter where you live: rural, suburb, or city. As someone who has traveled quite a bit and who has lived in South Florida, I am smitten by our "rush hours" here in the village of Intercourse. *A Lancaster Rush Hour*, my signature piece, finds humor and pleasure in knowing that by car or carriage going three miles an hour is a "rush" of a different kind. The series mirrors my delight in the relative nature of rushing.



Whooshing You Were Here
16" x 20", acrylic, canvas board

Whoooooosh! A rasping noise outside my kitchen window interrupted my dinner preparations. More inquisitive than startled, another loud whoosh whistling overhead pulled me outside my home. Hovering above a neighboring Amish farm was a colorful hot air balloon. Young Amish teenagers were running to the border of the green tobacco fields. I believe hot air balloons floating through the air currents have a magic about them, and they seem more enchanting as they drift over the quilted farmlands. Smiling, I returned to making dinner while also making mental notes for this painting.



Requiem for Rachel
9" x 12", acrylic, canvas board

I had not seen as large an Old Order Amish funeral for a child as the one in 2003. The "carriage-cade" appeared to stretch for miles down route 772-East and Belmont Road. The child, a young female toddler, had run in front of a car. Children are automatically angels (white doves) in most people's book, so the knowledge that an angel had been re-released tempered the sadness. As an English outsider, I cannot explain why this particular child's funeral touched me more deeply than others. Her name was not Rachel. Had I any talent as a composer I would have written a requiem; instead, I painted.

The Living Room

Daniel Van Wert

*This selection and its companion,
"Michigan," came to us from a son and
the father he lost in 2003.*



Reminisce under dim light
in the half-empty living room
after my father's death
in preparation to move out of my home,
his home of nearly thirty years.
This is where he did his best thinking,
his type-writing after we went to sleep.

He held class meetings here
with his favorite students
over an orange Oriental rug
with burgundy wine and cheese,
and interruptive children
wielding crushes for attractive,
encouraging female students.

This room, where my brothers and I
invented games: "Log," in which we jumped
over rolling human obstacles;
"76ers," where we chased one another
around in a circle, singing the name of the game
with no point or goal in sight;
we took on our dad in 3-on-1 hopeless brawls.

This room, where David and I gobbled chocolate bars,
stolen from our dad's secret stashes,
and slurped the red stripes off candy canes
during Christmas Eve rendezvous.
We sat up late nights leading up to the Holidays
in front of a north star flashing in a circular pattern,
and bubble lights, our father's favorite,

listening to Christmas carols on the stereo
while our father worried about all of the presents
he had yet to half-wrap, leaving ends exposed.
On Christmas mornings, Camille came down
from her apartment upstairs with twenty-five dollar
checks for all of us. David hoarded his presents
for later, amidst intense scolding from Ian

and our dad, trying to persuade him to open them
on the spot. Our father hid Camille's cancer
from us, so as not to spoil Christmas,
took us to midnight mass as if nothing were awry.

We were not perceptive to her gifts,
more plentiful than usual, including a bell
and an intercom with which to call if she needed us.

Our dad made love in this room,
wrote novels and poetry over unsweetened
instant iced tea and cigarettes.
He hid his treasures here, displayed film posters,
cottage photographs and literary accomplishments.
And through difficulty in leaving this room,
without our dad, it no longer feels like home.

Michigan

William F. Van Wert

1

I think of it now
as the lake in late afternoon,
a blister of breeze through poplars and birches
that cluster and rustle
like old spotted dogs.

My father naps in the black felt recliner
and never looks at the lake.

I mark time to the lake.
I mark time by these trips to the lake.
I drive my boys physically into my past.
My memories, the ritual husks of my memories,
are now our memories.

My sons catch fish, play ball, act cocky.
They fight off supper with swimming and laughter.
They fight off bedtime: bonfires in the
barbecue pit, lightning bugs smeared on jeans,
knee-deep in darkness, a clay glaze

over vision. Everyone lies.
Tall tales away from the city.
My father naps in the black felt recliner
and never looks at them.

2

We travel. Mackinaw Island:
the bittersweet smells of horseshit and fudge.
The ferry boat from Ludington
to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, home of bib jeans.
Traverse City on the bay, where migrant workers
from Mexico still pick bing cherries
into July. Houghton Lake, Higgins Lake,
Sault Ste. Marie, Port Au Gres.
Everywhere we look a lake.

Saginaw, Chippewa, Tittabawassee.
Nasal names and no Indians.
The dirt farms spread like an oil spill
with silo or a satellite dish;
the farmers absent from their fields:
fields of corn, summer tomatoes,
John Deere tractors, Burma Shave signs.

Michigan used to be the Midwest.
Now it's the North, far north and forgotten,
as though it had moved.
Everything's for sale now:
houses, cars, pontoons in the yard.

I have these two memories: one,
as a boy, helping my father
install a third kitchen for Henry Ford,
and watching the workers lay in the lawn,
swatch by swatch, brought in from Japan;
the other, this summer, a sign
outside a cemetery: PLEASE, NO RV's.



3

You always get the news of home
away from home. Highway construction
in Philadelphia has caused an exodus of rats.
Thirty-five thousand in Center City.
They laugh on the local news at the lake.
The Modern Pied Piper, they say.
A Detroit firm, Termapest,
has been hired to put an end to the plague.

My father, the snow bird.
 September first to May fifteenth,
 he lives in a trailer in Florida.
 He drives his "boat," shops at Winn Dixie.
 He clutches his coupons with Dutch farmer's
 hands that shudder and lock with Parkinson's.
 Bologna and beer, his widower's lunch.
 By noon he goes barefoot. He kicks back
 and sleeps in a black felt recliner
 and never goes to the beach.

He used to play golf.
 They say that golf is a middle-age sport
 for men who've stopped working,
 but I can't tell. The women
 outnumber the men by three to one,
 the gap still growing. Even so,
 they're still called the "gals."
 The gals tee up at ten o'clock
 and go home at six: lost balls,
 laughter, a good old time.
 They play through the sullen men.

In China, a nation of crackerjack dancers,
 students revolt. They laugh at the lake
 on the local news. They say that Mao
 could shake a stick, fox trot for hours.
 Even as China retreats from the West,
 there's still Chubby Checker
 and Deng Xiao Ping doing the twist.



4

My father turns off the national news
 for reruns of *M.A.S.H* and *Jeopardy*.
 I teach him how to cook for himself,
 but he never remembers. Pesto,
 baked salmon, paprika chicken.
 Ten minute meals. He acts attentive,
 but he never remembers. And still
 we play this charade to the end,
 like a baseball game that's already lost,
 but must go nine innings. He always asks
 about the time: not broiled or baked,
 cayenne or paprika, covered uncovered,
 but always how long.

We dance this dance, two men
 without women. I rub his feet
 till he sleeps and he lets me.
 This touching, this candor,
 sticks in my throat.
 We used to talk, his days on the farm,
 his years in big business,
 my mother's death. But now
 it's all silence, the history of movies
 rolled in reverse. I never think
 thumbs, the pus and the swelling,
 the shape of unshaping,
 how feet fit in hands,
 but only how long.



5

It snows all winter in Michigan
 when I'm not there. Four months
 at a time, the freeze like a flu,
 whole towns boarded up. The crawl
 of traffic, barren birches, brittle cold.
 My sons never ask for the cottage in winter.
 My father won't call from Florida.
 We hibernate, our bodies on hold,
 till birds and baseball come back together.
 Shock of spring colors, smell of fast flowers,
 the asthma of bees, and mornings
 in May with rain at a slant.

It's like an infection.
 My sons stop sleeping through the night.
 They eat at odd hours, throw quick fits
 of rage, righteous impatience
 for school to end. They wait.
 They straddle time like a horse,
 flank full of spurs. Michigan,
 like a carnival ride, waits up there.

Water Cycle: Retreat

Mark Hummel

High up on the Overland Fork, above Mills Park on the old highway that used to service the mining camps and that now offers a backdoor route to the ski towns, there is an A-frame house built at the edge of a pretty pond formed by diverting a small side-stream off the river. The house seems to divide the nearly perfect oval pond into symmetrical halves. Tall pines bookend the house with near symmetry as well. The diversion channel that steals from and then returns water to the river must run deep, for the pond surface is so placid there appears no current and all day the clouds reflect back upon themselves. The mirrored images of pine trees and house and reeds at the shore make it seem an artist's conjuring. The only movement most days comes from the skimming jaunts of water striders or the blossoming circles formed by feeding trout. It is the sort of house that makes you want to take pictures, the kind of setting where you imagine yourself taking naps in the tall grass, sleeping with the dull rhythm of dragonfly wings at the pond edge or where you would want to teach your grandchildren to fish.

My own grandfather spent most of four decades calling it "his place." Now it never was, never would be "his place," for he was a mechanic making mechanic's wages down in Arapahoe Springs where the Overland Fork changes its pace and spills out into the plains, but it was the kind of place he spent a lifetime dreaming about owning. Never once did we pass the little house and pond without him saying, "There's my place." It remains "Grandpa's place" in my mind, and I can imagine him teaching me to fish there with an ease that does not accompany the reality of him patiently untangling my line at a hundred

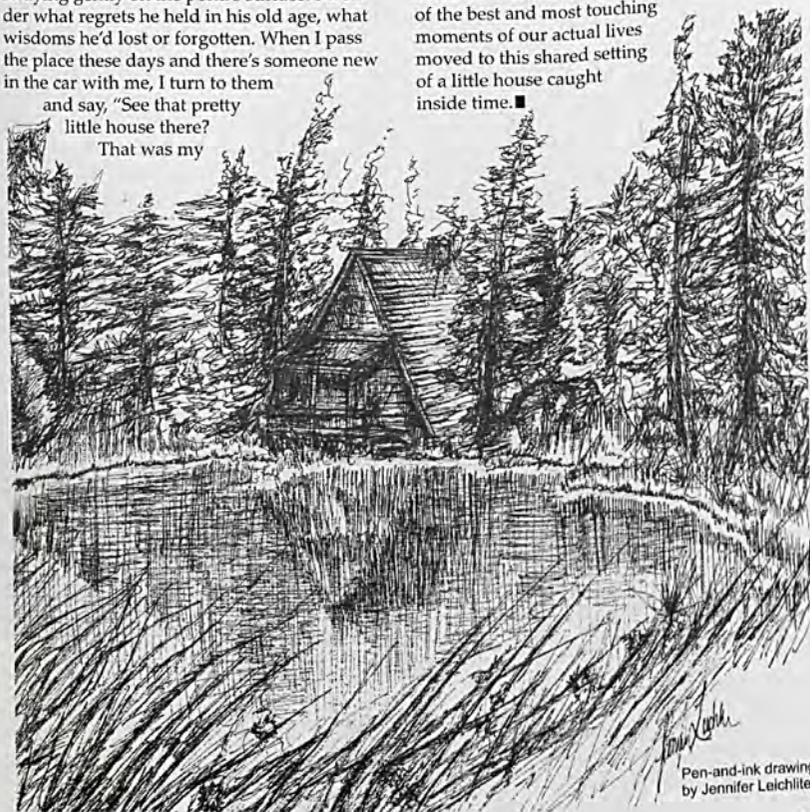
different man-made lakes and old gravel pits set into the hot summer plains. I can conjure the smell of Grandma baking there, too, just as I can imagine the exact floor plan of the little kitchen, see its color scheme, its wallpaper, the knick-knacks of its windowsill though I've never once been closer than the opposite shore.

I still pass the place once or twice every summer, once in a great while in winter, too. Not much ever seems to change there. The place seems magical in that way, like a postcard set down opposite the river, never changing, always perfect in its simplicity and quiet. I suppose if you chronicled the place closely enough, the way my grandfather surely must have done, you could mark the changes in the growth of trees or in a subtlety of change in the paint color or some other incremental alteration.

Mostly the place is an ideal, a dream. My grandfather always said, "That's my place" with a chuckle in his voice, but I know there was a seriousness to his desire as well. For that sort of longing isn't really about a house or a place at all but about the imaginative ability to see oneself there, to believe the self could be different, live a different lifestyle and in so imaging the self different, a larger piece of the world would change too. I'll bet he'd see himself taking his coffee out onto the wooden deck that extends nearly to the shore, imagine himself getting a line into the water before breakfast and while doing so come to believe that he could have a life with more money and less heartache, one where his wife wouldn't have been so sickly, where he'd kept all his children closer.

I wonder how often he closed his eyes at night picturing that little place, the flatness of the water, the glow of the house lamps at night swaying gently on the pond's surface. I wonder what regrets he held in his old age, what wisdoms he'd lost or forgotten. When I pass the place these days and there's someone new in the car with me, I turn to them and say, "See that pretty little house there? That was my

grandfather's place." And if they remark on its prettiness or ask a question, I'm ready with a thousand different stories of the lives we led there—stories, not falsehoods, tales of the best and most touching moments of our actual lives moved to this shared setting of a little house caught inside time. ■



Pen-and-ink drawing
by Jennifer Leichter

The Rift

Evan Morgan Williams

My name is Charlotte. I am fourteen-years-old. I live in the Rift. My hobbies are collecting rocks and gems, playing with my dog, and writing letters. I would like penpals my own age, please.

My name is Clayton. I was fourteen, and I lived in the Rift, too. I was sitting at the kitchen table, eating a snack before starting my chores, when I found this item on the kids' page of a farm magazine, wedged between an article on irrigation pumps and recipes for leek soup and apple pie. I already had a dozen penpals, but I was pleased to make room for one more. Not because I dreamed of life beyond the Rift. No, a good letter contained a life within its margins: I liked to drag my finger along the tightly cobbled words and feel a voice come to life at the top of the sheet, blacken the sheet with hopes and longings, and end itself at the bottom. Maybe the girl, Charlotte, felt the same.

Across a gulch from my family's orchard lived Tomoko. She was also fourteen. She lived in a house too delicate for this country—paper walls, cedar roof, slender beams jutting over a cliff. The house clung to the rock like a bird's nest. That afternoon, as I worked the terraced slopes of our orchard, refitting stones that had loosened and slipped, Tomoko dragged her music stand to her deck and practiced her flute. I stopped to listen. The melody seemed to wander, untethered to a home note, like a leaf on a swirl of wind, unsure where to set itself down. I stole a long look at Tomoko—white sweater, plaid skirt, straight black pony tail. We could have chatted across the gully in normal voices, but when she glanced up from her music stand, I looked down at the rock in my hands. It had squirmed loose from the terrace. I would have to jam it back. At this moment, a pear fell from a branch, rolled in a circle, and stayed on its

ledge. I thought about the penpal, Charlotte, and I decided to write her.

The sounds in the canyon flowed around me: water gurgled in the earth, stones clattered down the slopes, and arpeggios from Tomoko's flute floated across the gulch. I had given up locating any restful place in her song, and I let her music, like a ribbony flock of bats, stream into the graying sky.

The sun dropped behind the black cliffs, and the long twilight began. My chores were over, and I walked down the terraces toward home. It was hard to see the way, but I counted my steps and turns from memory. I thought about the penpal, Charlotte. I did not care whether she was pretty or plain. I wondered about her voice, the sound of her words on paper. Aware of a silence welling around me, I looked across the gully to where Tomoko had stood on her deck. She had gone inside. Her silhouette slid along the papery wall of a lighted room. Skirt, sweater, ponytail. She was putting her flute in its case. The light went out.

谷

The Rift was a hundred miles long and a mile deep, a great crack in the plateau. Many of the families in the canyon were Japanese; the Rift had swallowed the hopes of prospectors and ranchers and

sugarbeet farmers and anyone else who had tried to plant a dream on the crumbling slopes, but when our

immigrant grandparents tried this place, they found the conditions perfect for growing a delectable variety of pear. There was a trickle of water, a skin of fertile soil, and a breeze that felt like breath.

My family's orchard was a thousand terraces, cobbled from a million grumbling stones. The terraces held back soil, water, pear trees, and an urge to settle, slouch, and fail. It was care never-ending. Canyon walls did shift, and you listened for the terraces to react. In the middle of the orchard, our house leaned on wooden posts that twisted and strained under their load. We ate suppers in silence. A dribble of pebbles we knew to ignore, likewise the gasps and hisses of sand, but a loud pop was an alarm, and we would flee the house and get to work. Bulging stones, we hammered back. Broken stones, we pried loose and gave to the drop, the shattering clack, the silence.

As a child, I never played marbles.

My sky was a strip of blue, a slit of milky stars.

I spoke few words, good words with long gaps between them. Words were hard to fit together; brittle stones gave me less trouble.

Like any child who grew up in the Rift, I kept a roster of penpals, and I wrote in a slim vocabulary that was colors and sounds and textures and smells. No word for joy. I kept my letters in

a cedar box, the habit of one born on steep slopes in windy canyons, who needed the things he loved to stay in place. Growing up among rocks that ached and popped and cried to wrestle free and fall, I believed that the box where I stored my letters was the one solid thing in my life, and I believed that by writing to this girl from the Rift, I would be sounding the walls of my world, not for a way out but for an echo.

谷

That night, I sat at the kitchen table and wrote to Charlotte. I filled the sheet edge to edge with words. Thrashing water, caught in a slough, dragged to a terrace, fed to a tree: did she know those sounds? Lichen, yellow flowers, morning sky, evening sky: did those colors seep into her thoughts? My word for hard was rock, and soft was skin. What were hers? Did she sleep snug between grumbling canyon walls, or did she sleep afraid? Was she bothered by the stray odors of pinyon and sage that spilled from the plateau into the canyon and muddled the air like radio static?

Charlotte, you may want penpals from Florida and California, but same as you I live in the Rift. I know the sound of a stone flung against the opposite wall, ricocheted, rattling to the bottom. When the stone hits the dry creekbed it is a rain of shards.

谷

A winter passed. I did not hear from Charlotte. I forgot about her. One Saturday, late in spring, Tomoko and I climbed to the bottom of the canyon. It was a safe time to go; rocks that had sprung loose during the freeze had already done their tumble and shatter. At the bottom we found a swirl of stale air we had been inhaled

ing and exhaling all our lives. We set up a picnic blanket among the remains of rocks, some that I recognized from the orchard, some dashed to smithereens. Lichens and pale flowers perched where the sun could reach them, but except for a slice of direct sun at midday, we sat in the shade of canyon walls. Tomoko spent the afternoon gathering a fist of green pebbles, which she trickled into a pile, scooped up, and trickled into a pile again. The pebbles plinked together with a bell-like sound. I saw no purpose to it.

"Let's go home, Tomoko."

Earth twisted into night before we were halfway home. In the darkness, our feet slipped on shards as noisy and brittle as glass.

"I want to tell you something," she said. "At night, I can't sleep. I can't think."

"What is there to think about? Just listen, and think about what you hear."

"I think about running away. My sister ran away. When I get older, I am going to find her."

Most of this story I already knew, but not all of it. Tomoko described her sister's fearfulness, how she used to hide in her blankets in the morning, then trudge into their orchard weeping and covering her ears to block out the canyon noise. She would test every footstep to make sure it was safe. At night, she read slim books, dreamed in slender fits of sleep, and when she began listening to her dreams, that was the end: one morning she was gone. A gate was found open at the top of the road. I did not understand, but I believed Tomoko did not either. In the silences given to us to hear the clatter of stones, there was no suggestion that we listen to anything else.

"I am going to find her."

"You don't know where to look."

"Not down here."

As we neared the top of the canyon, we did not speak. The wind was its own talk: fruity scent of Tomoko's shampoo, earthy scent of lichen, odor of iron water that seeped from cracks in the cliffs, wispy perfume from yellow flowers that threaded the cracks to get the water. During

a gust of wind that spoke of a rockfall spilling in a faraway canyon, I heard a nearer sound. Sniffling. Tomoko was crying. Wisps of her hair clung to the wet tracks on her face. I took her hand.

"This is hard for me." She pulled her hand back.

"Don't say anything. Just listen."

"That is the hard part."

As Tomoko spoke, I clung to the silences between words that, to me, felt empty as sky. In the canyons, I knew to listen well—to dodge rockfalls, to fix a broken terrace—but also to hear lulling home notes in a breeze that threaded the canyons and left them ringing. Apparently, Tomoko did not feel this way, and when I took her hand again, she gripped back, smiled at me, then walked down the homeward path, mushy gravel underfoot, her voice humming her restless song.

"Tomoko!"

"What?"

"Count your steps. You'll get lost. You'll fall."

"Silly boy."

As I lay in bed, I considered: she had gripped my hand, but she had also pulled her hand away. I thought of her warm skin, her long hair, and her breasts outlined beneath her sweater. Then I thought about her music, the green pebbles she had stacked purposelessly, the silence she said was hard, and I knew these mattered too, but I didn't know how. Sleep clouded my thinking, but I knew, as I lay within the murmuring walls of my bedroom, that as Tomoko and I grew closer, I was becoming more alone.

谷

A rumpled letter in the mailbox.

I read the letter walking switchbacks home. It came with a photo of a Japanese girl and her dog. The text was dense, the margins narrow. The handwriting was pressed into the page so deeply I could have read it blind.

Thank you for writing to me, Clayton. My name is Charlotte. If you live in the Rift, I am nothing

new to you, a voice you already hear. Like you, I know the difference between copper and iron on my tongue. In the flesh of a pear I can taste how far into the strata the roots have dug for water. I can split open a geode as cleanly as a coconut and chip out the sparkling flesh inside. Clapping my hands, I can mimic the sound a rock makes, pinched loose during a freeze and tumbling from the notch where it will never fit again.

There was only so much to say about the narrow sky, the echoing rockfall, and the strata whose sequence in the rock was solid and unchanging; by the time I reached home, Charlotte's words had begun to repeat themselves. But that did not matter. I knew those words. Absorbed in the letter, I walked past my house and had to scramble back.

I should not confess this. I chip at the terraced walls of our orchard. I pick at them with a mallet, and I polish the promising stones that I find. My lapidary machine grinds through the night, and by morning the rocks that had seemed muted gleam and glimmer brightly. There is a liquid texture to a finished stone. It glistens like water, and when I set it on my palm and roll it around I imagine it pouring away. I can mail you some rocks that I polished. Maybe you already have them. Maybe you know their era and formation, but maybe reciting these facts calms you. If not, toss them over the edge. The point is that I'm reaching to you.

A wind throbbed down the Rift. From the thousand terraces, the twisting canyons, the crush of detail I itemized in my sleep (because tomorrow it would shift and urge itself at me again), I wondered how to sift her voice, a gem from a fist of gravel. The edges of the Rift were fractured with brittle clefts, and the clefts glowed with kerosene lamps—farmers working late, shoring burst terraces. Charlotte was fifty miles away. I could not see that far, but gripping her letter, I did not have to.

Words were hard for me, but blank paper was worse, and in the questions that I forced into ink and sent to Charlotte, I came close to spelling out a longing. Had we met? Did we share a common friend?

She said no.

On your orchard, water weeps from the walls. A single flower, lodged in a crack, is enough to pry a rock from the cliff and send it hurtling down. You find, tracing the rock with your fingers, veins of gold, slick and thin and sharp as wire...

I replied.

Your house is cobbled from porphyry; you sleep cocooned in purple stone, and you breathe air old and familiar and tasting of juniper...

You live deep in the canyon, where days are short, and you burn coal in smudge pots to thaw the trees. The smoke hovers, too heavy to float away...

Your canyon is a maze. You lose yourself there, for hours exploring the terraces; by nightfall the darkness is inky in your hands but you are still going, until the terrace thins to a ledge over steep nothing. No matter. Knowing where the world ends, you don't have to stay awake at night worrying...

You hear the loud ache of the canyon walls. It is your world closing in on itself, a surrender, a yearning of rock for the bottom.

Charlotte, our letters echo each other. I forget who sounded the first note.

I read the letters in bed at night, again and again, and after I had memorized every note, I folded the letters and stored them safely in the soundless cedar box.

I was sixteen. My dad was paying me to move water among the terraces, flooding the highest levels first, spilling water to the next, the smooth blanket of murmuring water slithering down until, at the deepest levels of our orchard, only a drizzle survived to wet the soil.

Some afternoons, while your neighbor's flute song uncoils like smoke, you follow a meandering path among the terraces and seek stones tired of their role. They do not jam back, and you let them go. The stones and soil spill to the next terrace down, and you try to stop the creeping damage there. If you succeed, what flows to the bottom of the canyon is a trickle of pebbles in a dry river bed.

After my work, I would visit Tomoko in the orchard, but as I listened to her stories, my head was turned away.

"She was a disgrace to my mom and dad. They burned her dresses, but some of her things they set before me. A flute. A calligraphy set. A telescope for stars. Have you ever seen what lies in the night sky, Clayton?"

Her voice was a whisper. I was listening for something else. A rockfall. A gust of wind.

Her father goes away on trips, and he brings home thundereggs and amethyst, little crystal palaces which she puts on a narrow cedar shelf against a milky paper screen.

Tomoko gathered another pile of pebbles, and as she spread them with her palm, she spoke of stars hidden beyond canyon walls. She gave them names in Japanese—the few she knew. She promised millions more. "Late at night they twist into view. We can go see them, Clayton. We can take your dad's truck, bring the telescope, climb out of the Rift, and see..."

Your friend wants you to leave the Rift. She says, "Why is this so bad? To see the sea of stars, and in the morning feel the sunlight on the plateau?" Of course, you and I know what will be lost: the good hum in the earth, the layers of warm rock that shelter us. Clayton, as you gaze at stars, notice the blank spaces you lack words for, the stars too numerous to name.

"You have your driver's license, yes?"

I am sad for her. The path of your friend's words and the path of a rock are the same. She will never leave the Rift. As a rock tumbles down, her moment of awareness will not be a sweet sound but a hard fall.

"My parents want me to stay. I am the only daughter they have left..." Tomoko began to cry. Between tears, she listed her obligations. Study hard. Honor her mother and father. Marry a good boy. One by one she threw her pebbles over the edge.

She doesn't know herself. Her words for colors are the names of rocks. Her hands, like ours, reach for walls to hold. Canyon smells are locked in her nose. She talks too much, too long, yet the soft plunk of a pear, dropped from a tree, still makes her flinch. I believe her longings are all wrong: a flute can play a wrong note.

"I play the flute because I am sad."

Your friend needs to accept the words the wind supplies in her ear. She needs to taste canyon in her mouth after she drinks. She needs to sample the echo of her voice and be content with what the cliffs give back to her. The details that barrage her to distraction are the very things that make her alive.

"You're not listening to me!"

Nobody in the Rift feels joy.

"Clayton!"

It is time for us to meet.

Tomoko pulled her hands away.

I told Tomoko that I wanted to be alone.

"No one wants to be alone," she said and crunched down her gravel path. Before she disappeared I heard not her song, but sobs, and between them, numbers. She was counting her steps.

谷

Charlotte, my dad is loaning me the truck. Do your parents need me to do some work for them?

My mother packed coppery rocks and foil-wrapped pears as gifts, and I left early in the morning. Charlotte's orchard was fifty miles as the crow flies, but the road through the Rift was all twisting canyons, knife ridges, and switchbacks. Day fell into shadowless twilight before I reached the end: a house of jumbled purple stone, clinging to a slope more crumbly than ours. I shook hands with Charlotte's parents. They were older than I expected. Her mother spoke only Japanese. Her father walked with a cane. Brown spots on their hands.

"Charlotte doesn't talk much, but you're all she talks about when she does. She's down in the orchard. This way."

We counted our steps, up and down terraces that slumped with the weight of watery soil and trees that sagged with unpicked fruit.

Charlotte's dog was pacing back and forth, yelping and whining. A mallet lay on the ground, and beside the mallet, a stone that had slipped from the wall. On top of the stone, a half-eaten pear was turning brown.

Peering over the slender ledge, I could just pick out, tumbled deep into the canyon, a small broken body, arms outstretched, its fall arrested by a slough that carried water to an orchard far away.

I had borrowed the truck to stay one night, but I stayed for seven days. Long enough to help Charlotte's father build a cedar box, dangle it from a rope into the canyon, load her curled body inside, and drag the box—banged and scratched and splintered—a hundred terraces to their home. Charlotte. At night, as I lay on her bed that smelled like lavender, I gripped the little box where she had kept my letters, and I remembered lifting her body, curled in a ball, as though she were sleeping. Eyes closed, lips

Knowing where the world ends, you don't have to stay awake at night worrying...



just touching. Lulled to sleep. What had she seen and heard and tasted in her final moments, and had those things comforted her? I wanted those things to comfort me.

My last letter to Charlotte: *When I imagine your voice all I hear is murmuring water, gushing wind, and exclamations of shattering stone...*

谷

I was at the kitchen table, sorting through Charlotte's letters, trying to understand, when I heard the meandering notes of Tomoko's flute. I set down the letters, went outside, and listened. The oldest notes of Tomoko's melody still echoed around the canyon, refusing to give up, and to these she added new layers of melody, until the air swirled with restless music. Through the darkness, I picked my way up and down the terraces, across the gulch to Tomoko's home, counting steps in a route I had memorized long ago.

Tomoko stood on her deck. She saw me and let a breathy note expire.

"I wasn't sure you'd come."

"Your song never settles. I don't understand."

"My song is melancholy. I am setting the feeling free. Listen."

谷

I turned seventeen. For long parts of the day, I could put Charlotte out of my mind, settling into the rhythms of work on the terraces, stifling the groans of rock, plugging trickles of water scheming to burst free.

There came a weekend when Tomoko's parents went on a trip to town. Tomoko and I lay on their bed, listened to the squeaky paper house around us, and studied each other's eyes across the distance.

"That day when you were fixing terraces, that day when I went out on the deck and played my flute..."

"Yes."

"I only did it to watch you. I got dressed up. I wanted you to notice me. I was sad when you looked away."

"I noticed you."

"I thought you didn't like me."

I kissed her.

"Clayton, I want to show you something."

Tomoko led me to an opaque paper panel and slid it open to reveal an atrium bedded with green rocks as smooth and rounded as eggs. From this bed grew a vine maple that meandered towards a slit of blue sky. The rocks were from a riverbed, and they lay in a jumble as though spilled and tumbled by the current.

"The rocks," I said. "There is no order to them."

"That's not true. I carefully placed them."

"It doesn't look like it."

"Well, I placed them to look that way. Now you are the one who needs to listen."

谷

One evening, I worked later than I had meant to. I found myself in an unfamiliar canyon, its contours rumpiled with odd terraces, some wide enough to support a grove of pear trees, a level space in my thinking, others no wider than a few cabbages would need, a footprint on the way somewhere else. All my life, I had learned to get around by memorizing my path, the or-

der of steps and turns, winding among pear trees, up and down terraces, words and numbers mumbled under my breath. On this day, the sequence frayed in my thoughts. The lay of the terraces seemed to shift. I hurried on. The wind was strange to me, and the sage and pollen that spilled into the Rift displaced the mix of smells I was used to. I tried to put the static out of my mind and focus on the lay of the terraces, on finding my way home at the end of the day.

I was startled by a falcon tearing through the sky after a flock of rockdoves. Flapping, snapping wings. A dozen echoes. I lost count of my steps and tried to turn back, but the terraces had become a maze. I grew dizzy and sat on the wet soil far from the edge, gripped a fruit tree, and felt the canyon sway.

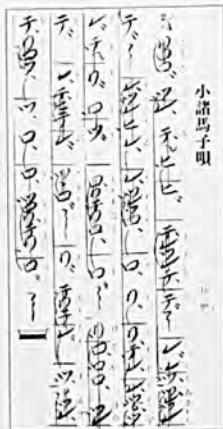
The rule, if you were lost, was to climb down. The land would simplify to broken rock and stunted trees. You would be calmed by the warmth of the earth around you. Hungry for this comfort, I let go of the fruit tree, shuffled to the edge, and began the long descent into the heart of the Rift.

The sky drained of light, the canyon walls narrowed. The crisp echoes of my footsteps assured me that I was nearing the bottom. I was ready to stow the evening's panic in a place where it would not bother me again, when I rolled my foot on a fallen pear and slipped from a slender edge.

My body smacked the next terrace with a mushy thud. Wet gravel stuck to my face. I tasted blood.

You taste the canyon in your mouth.

I thought of Charlotte falling, leaving the warmth of stone, falling for so long, then meeting the hardness again. Her body had been curled into sleep, but she would never awak-



en, and the question of whether she had been comforted in those last moments did not matter anymore. The Rift, which had seemed so warm and safe and sheltering against the empty sky, was just a press of smothering detail: fluttering birds, clattering rock, drip of water, hiss of wind, grit in my mouth. I added my voice to the noise. "I want out."

Surrounded by the groans of walls ready to burst, I climbed. I closed my eyes, listened only to my breath, smelled only my sweat, touched rocks only to spring to the next. By early morning, the walls in the upper canyon abandoned me, and I stood on the plateau. The sky widened to stars I had not cataloged before. The wind across the plateau was a blanket of odors thickly woven, and I could not separate the strands. It was new information, undifferentiated background noise. It did not have to fit, and I saw for the first time that neither did I.

I lay beneath the roof of sky—stars I let spin namelessly. I wanted to hear Tomoko's flute song that never settled and longed to float away. I imagined that I could see, far below me, her paper house flicker and glow. Her silky silhouette against a paper wall. And though I knew that Tomoko's heart held a deep and hollow sadness, I imagined this space could equally fill with joy.

I stumbled home by late morning and slept through the day. I dreamed that bits of canyon crumbled and left gaps of widening blue.

谷

Tomoko and I live on an older street in town, among narrow brick buildings, beneath cracks of sky slashed with trolley lines and fire escapes. Each morning, we lie in bed and soak up the sun on our faces, sweat and oil gleaming on our skin. I turn to the wall and see the world that will tower around us for the day.

The air outside is a swirl of cigarette smoke and leaves and bits of trash. Odors that, as children, we had ignored as background noise surround us now, and out of habit we list them on our

fingers with the same attention we used to note the smells in the canyon, but instead of twisted juniper and slippery rock it is steam from the puddled pavement, odors of greasy cooking.

We are still careful where we set things. When Tomoko lays her flute on the music stand, her hand hovers until she's sure the flute won't roll away. Hands skimming brick, windows, mirrors, our bodies, the thick air.

At night, the rumble of trucks, the roar of planes, and the wail of sirens leave us embracing. We could go back to the Rift whenever we want to, but we stay in each other's arms because we choose to, and that is the point.

My parents write and tell me the Rift is closing up. The rocks that tumble down are boulder-sized. I imagine Tomoko and me walking the edge of a cliff once jagged, now rounded and softened. I listen for echoes long faded, hear only a silence that I equate with Charlotte's voice, and I understand that all those years of rumble and clatter and hiss just masked that silence. I will never go back.

We will find Tomoko's sister one day. She must live in the old part of town, where air stagnates in canyon-like alleys. She sits on her fire escape and chats in Japanese with neighbors across the alley. Tomoko and I live in the same neighborhood. You can only untether yourself so far.

Sometimes I read Charlotte's letters. They are brittle and brown, and they flake and tear when I unfold them. First, I carefully pile the items that slide out on their own: swatches of fabric, dried lavender, poems, photos, drawings of her little dog. A lock of shiny black hair. Then I breathe the scent of paper and trace the tilt of her letters and the smudges of her fingerprints. I follow her description of a canyon wren, whose fluttery cascades of song come close to confirming a kind of joy but also restless sorrow. Then I fold the letters up. I will never throw them away. They belong in their stack, in order, in their little cedar box, with me. I slip them under the bed. Although Charlotte gave herself to the Rift, I am exactly where I belong. ■

Jessup

Michael Ratcliffe



The air a mix of diesel and spices
at the concrete and asphalt corners
of Routes 1 and 175.
Commodities flow in and out
of the road-bound harbor,
from container ships in Baltimore,
unloaded in hours by man and crane
(a job that once took days and hundreds),
to trucks laden with seafood and produce
for the restaurants of Washington and Baltimore.



This is the harbor in suburbia,
truck stops and warehouses,
wholesalers and cheap motels,
and the shipping channel moves down the interstate.

Here is where the spices are packed
that once were packed in Baltimore
when its harbor filled with ships
from Asia and the Caribbean;
Central American banana boats;
buy boats filled with oysters and crabs
and produce from the Eastern Shore.



Here is where the sons and grandsons
of longshoremen who worked the boats
spend their days in warehouses
driving forklifts in and out of trailers
for barely a living wage,
or spend their days behind iron bars
and the razor wire fences
of the penitentiary
(another extension of Baltimore).

Here is where the prostitutes
work the lot from truck to truck,
where drivers find a home-cooked meal
and a quick fuck.

Here are the suburban slums—
trailer parks and cheap motels
where families crowd a single room
rented by the week; and next door
lovers tryst on the half-day rate;
children play amid the diesel fumes,
suburban dreams a world away.

This is Jessup, where we find
the city's rhythms in modern form;
the flow of goods in and out,
the city's dirt, sights, and smells,
banished from the old harbor
now washed clean and sanitized,
a playground for suburbanites
who cannot stand the thought of Jessup.



Place Time

Giles Goodland

This place is but a forspekyng and not a river that passith by this place is very still water I see it plain. Here in this place is writ: Homo fuge! from Bloud and Plots this place is free, And calm as Diversion; and this place is called Amusement where he remains. And this place is that which we call the high way of riding most used in this place is on assback the more remarkable as this place is so much to the South in dry seasons, and at this place is 200 yards wide this place is consecrate; to Death and Life this place is a residue of a wreck of nature the temperature of this place is not fitting to your fine but the chief trade of this place is slaving him! exclaimed Ellen. 'But this place is lonely the atmosphere of this place is saturated with the odour of dead trees in Sandy Bay; this place is now so utterly desert of the night when this place is clear and shut, we read divination; and this place is accursed. The landlord learning of its inmates. This place is not named, but may tarry not here, but fly! This place is under his curse you're made of! To stay in this place is beyond me being so far out back this place is a little world in itself this place is full of pissmires And woodlice whose hatred for this place is second only to his old shoes as this place is very muddy and manurey you know what this place is, don't you, sir this place is Pickup City tonight! gently mildewing in this place is the lively response lost in your memories. This place is lethal on weekends you know, boss—this place is a friggin' menagerie all that matters about this place is what we've just done in fields. And, you know, this place is on a ley line. Maybe a bit of sleaze, but this place is cheapskate sleaze after me. If they don't this place is gonna turn into a total hip, young museum, this place is perfect for a rainy day Niles: (to Frasier) This place is going to hell arms raised in good-bye. This place is called a salt scald mate, this place is crawling with summer muff and this place is on a topo map, so it can be

How a certen cytson of this place was hastily preuent of dethe when faire Pastorell Into this place was brought and kept small losse we susteyned in this place was multiplied upon them. In the midst of this place was a stone, not unlike a Tomb called Hell. Formerly this place was appointed a prison for the by what I perceive, this place was built by the Lord of the water seen trickling down. This place was so fit to stir? I feel this place was made for her near this place was cut a vista through the interpreter. This place was supplied by one of the procured. The yawl at this place was anchored some way when I sent for him to lay this place waste for me; having read I then asked if this place was the one I had heard of at the yard gate (for this place was like a well-doing farm) brought a good price; but this place was utterly stagnant and so near the town of Louth. This place was afterwards the philosophy act, but this place was successfully claimed a call to London? If this place was on a manual exchange the racket in this place was just what she remembered a dream kitchen. If this place was smartened up a bit it seemed to Thomas that this place was a sort of paradise the last time I looked this place was a pisshole, not fit food, but it was plain that this place was not really up for counterculture types, this place was an opportunity to not grow in the meantime, this place was an accident waiting tables. Froggy was right, this place was bush country ten years ago, this place was clean, yeah? There was

The LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace as possible, as my stay in this place will not exceed a few days greatly endear it to me; but this place will always have one claim here in this place will I set down how that Texas in my talk; Oh, this place will be my ruin, Ki-yi-yip-pin and it is a safe bet "this place will really be cranking" way, someday this place will be everywhere.

The Bees

Brian Marks interviews the Beehive Design Collective

In the last issue of you are here, we introduced you to the work of the Beehive Design Collective, a group which uses complex pen-and-ink art to educate people about globalization issues in North and South America. In this issue, Brian Marks takes us inside the hive to discuss the Bees' ideas about everything from cartography and Coca-Cola to mythology and mainstream education. You can learn more at www.beehivecollective.org.

YAH: What are your central goals in doing this work?

Bees: Basically, our goal is to be as useful as possible with these materials. The topics we've made graphics for are because there are movements acting on them. We make these graphics as a sort of 'solidarity tool,' a bridge between those movements. For example, for the upcoming food system poster (a depiction of the North American food system based on several agricultural commodities), people at the ends of the system like producers and consumers might be able to see from each others' perspectives.

YAH: Do you see your work as a kind of mapping, and how does it differ from other kinds of cartography?

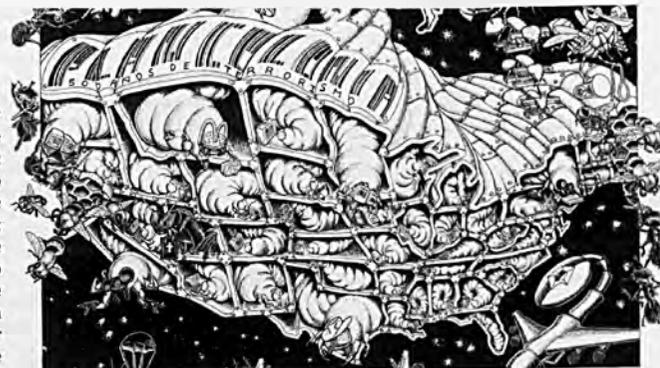
Bees: The graphics are a tool. They navigate people through really complex issues. So in that way it has the same components as mapmaking. For cartography as a tool of imperialism, there are clear things like the Northern Hemisphere being on top of world maps, America is named 'America' after Amerigo Vespucci, an Italian. If we're counter to that, it means we're mapping the undercurrents, all that's been drowned out in 500 years.

The really important part for us is the fact that there are tons of public visual representations of our culture devised in the advertising think tanks that are now serving as the dominant

visual teachers of our time. As a result, this overriding consumer culture is very intimately known and the effects of that culture and alternatives to it don't make it onto the popular radar. In the past, those who had the most power were able to censor and decide what would be visually represented on maps.

There was a kind of mythos of old maps, they used to say 'here be dragons' because they couldn't know what was beyond a certain point. Myths are a way to control people and make connections. So for example a corporation could link joy with a soda in an ad or confidence with a hairdryer. We're telling a new mythos, especially in the trilogy on Latin America. It's highlighting things that aren't shown. Not having maps of important things, that makes people afraid. Having maps of that 'other' makes them less fearful. In terms of fearing the unknown, especially United Statesian people think about what's to our south, they think of beaches and women or drug wars and violent insurgencies, they have no idea of the truth about Latin America. That dual mythology is exploited; a dominant consciousness of people in the United States is to think of Latin America as a place to use rather than know.

YAH: How do you represent in your graphics the perspectives of the people you collect stories from and those of the many audiences you are trying to communicate with, considering how different and diverse they may be?



Bees: We are really careful with the imagery we select to incorporate into our graphics. We use symbols that are recognizable and meaningful to all. The images we use get put through a process in our group to make sure they're respectful

to all concerned, that we're not propping up stereotypes. When we go somewhere, like to Central America, we ask the contributors of stories how they want to be depicted in illustrations. We are also careful to use native plants and animals from the bioregions we're depicting. We try to make sure symbols we use are cross-cultural. We imagine how a symbol could be useful to high schoolers in United States or Latin America, or farmers here and there.

We think that our role in making graphics is that we're translators. We use pictorial language so that the message is universal. The objective is to unify resistances—to reach many audiences. We think that pictures are better at bringing people together than using words. Our target for the Western Hemisphere trilogy is to use the graphics as tools of popular education, particularly in the United States, where people aren't directly related to what's happening in Latin America. They're not directly experiencing and aware of the situation, so it's difficult for them to relate.

We are always channeling information. Facilitating people's stories across differences is an intensive process, it's exhausting but it's impor-

tant and worth it. It's a really organic process, how it's produced and then used. Everyone has a piece to share, our role as facilitators is to convey and tend to that process so people can have their say, be welcomed to tell and use the story for their own purposes. It's important and really hard to make each stage collaborative—there's so much intricacy in the graphics. It's not a uni-directional process, it's so many directions all at once. It's really consuming, but it's amazing for what it produces.

The people gathering stories to make the graphics are being educated while they do it, the people educating with the graphics are doing research when they present it. Only 15-20 percent of the *Plan Colombia* banner's information was intentionally there from the initial drawing, the rest was brought in through the educational process. For example, when we put the 'Coca-Cola mosquito in that poster to represent water extraction, we didn't know how tied Coca-Cola was to coca production historically.

We have different goals in choosing what information to use. We take a lot of time balancing representations of 'the big picture' with

images of extreme detail, what's happening on the ground. Part of the image is someone's microcosm, and this is balanced with the larger systematic end. We gather those 'big picture' stories, for example, from NGOs we talk to. We're trying to connect those microcosms to a big picture and vice-versa. Showing the specific experiences of either of those examples in a visual, map-like way takes it in a different direction than a linear interpretation could. It takes the competitive edge away because there doesn't have to be two sides. Maps can be a web of affected parts of life that weave in and out of each other and pose trade-offs and intricacies that cannot always be seen at first glance.

YAH: When you're doing this facilitation work of balancing perspectives, how do you decide on the scale that the poster takes? What influences how those perspectives are arranged on the poster and how they're seen?

Bees: The question of scale, like with representation, is important. We discuss the furthest point in a graphic to incorporate, the limits of what we look at. In this too, we're trying our best to convey the stories that we collect faithfully to how they were told to us. For the *Plan Colombia* poster, we included the perspective/scale from outer space after we had many comments from Colombia about satellite and aerial surveillance as part of the Plan. Nobody has that perspective, of a satellite looking down at the Earth, unless you have access to that information or are under it, being watched by it.



Using visual work as a medium in itself gives out the message that there are other ways to digest the stuff that is often only thrown around in a lecture setting or as written work. This message addresses mainstream educational attitudes and approaches. It looks at how people learn as opposed to what specifically they are learning. It can cross a lot of borders, cultural and geographical. As a result, people might say that they could do a graphic, too, because they can see that it's possible.

The beehive graphics are like elaborate notes, they are notes that have been gone over carefully before studying for an exam, they are notes that have followed each thread of story to its root and placed it accordingly. In our case, they are the notes of a group of people digesting stories from many groups of people. The responsibility for the information in the graphics is exponential, so many people inform the graphic, the metaphors are like the dolls that each have another inside, just a little smaller. People document their experiences differently, they attribute more weight to different factors of a topic, so different pieces inside the graphics stand out for them. So their note taking, their collection of a particular story, whatever they are trying to understand in more depth, is a sort of map that they construct out of the graphic's parts. It is a type of organization that makes sense for them and for the information they are working with. Anyone can tell their story. Anyone can take notes.

YAH: How do you intend the posters to be used? How does the design of them reflect this?

Bees: We use very different modes of working than some forms of art or education. It's important to break things down into digestible pieces, using visual material in ways you can break down and work with. You can see the interconnectedness of things as opposed to them as isolated. One of the main reasons we use symbols of everyday life, from nature, and corporate logos in our graphics is people look for what they identify with. People love to feel that affirmative culture blanket sometimes, they like to know that they are part of something and sometimes their minds are only open to looking at things they identify as well-recognized symbols.

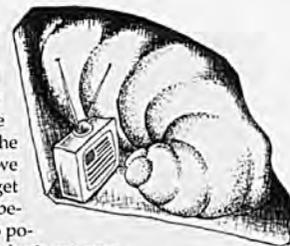
There's this concept of world mono-myths—in each culture there's these stories, such as a fire story. They may have different cultural meanings but the symbols are universal. The new version of that, such as say Coca-Cola, everyone knows what it is. You can talk about it because the corporate logo reaches across cultures. Because Coke is an understood symbol it's easier to explain concepts like resource extraction with it. If you approach communication and explanation as image instead of words, you unite people instead of dividing them and take people off their guard where they'd be defensive.

YAH: Describe how people use your graphics.

Bees: It's democratic. It doesn't take a lot of training to use them for popular education, it's a more equal process than the typical educational process in high schools or college.

Comparing the beehive to other political art with one really quick message, it's a strong contrast. We're about a longer process of looking between the big and little picture. It's about creating such a complex form of the graphic, not just a simple one. The gap between how we approach this and how others do is very apparent and frustrating in the United States/Canada. It's different in Latin America, where there's a popular

education tradition. We hit a brick wall at first with art groups in the United States. The genre of stuff we do, we don't get support as art because we're too political, and we don't get support as politics because we're too artsy.



There are different perceptions of our work, how people use the graphics. Some people look at them as backdrops. To not take two seconds to look at them, or put them up in a bedroom, it's not public art. Doing presentations with people, especially in small groups, is better. We're trying to figure out a popular education model that works with what we do—what are the most effective ways to analyze and make use of the graphics. As there's no real tradition of popular education in the United States, people buy posters as wall decorations, as commodities, not popular education tools. It's hard to not see them as pretty things to hang up in a commoditized culture.

I'm about honing our popular education strategy, but there's also this magic process with these graphics. There's a lot of political art that's about one person or thing, and that singular focus encapsulates the message around that point. The Free Trade Area of the Americas is not one thing; it's a whole process, as are Plan Colombia, biotechnology, etc. With the beehive posters, the subject matter, how it's presented, the means of distribution through tabling at events and mobilizations, it's sinking in in ways we can't measure. It's a crazy magic trick that involves people looking at the graphics and picking out pieces here and there. We find people won't just throw away the posters, they're too big or special to want to throw them away. So even if it's sinking in slowly, they're having an effect. ■

Letherhome Bridge

Bob Komives

Deborah went away today.
 We wished her well,
 as we did before,
 and the befores before that.
 Deborah laughed,
 said she will not be back.
 We try to believe her now,
 as we tried before,
 and had tried before that.
 Hernán Cortés tries to tell her
 to burn her bridges,
 burn them behind her,
 as he had burned his ships
 so he could not go back to Cuba or Spain
 until he conquered Mexico.
 But speaking as one of her bridges,
 or perhaps the hull of her ship,
 I have no desire to burn.
 Why should I suffer
 just so Deborah can conquer Mexico?
 In truth,
 she would rather conquer the Extremadura,
 back in Spain,
 a counter conquest of Cortés,
 an adventure that I support,
 as I supported her adventure before,
 and each adventure before that.
 How would my burning further her venture?
 Even if she conquers Extremadura,

or Lisbon,
 or Brattleboro,
 she will want to come back to brag about it.
 She will need a bridge
 even for a short visit.
 So, I propose a compromise.
 Hernán,
 will you get out of her psyche
 if I let some weeds grow up,
 some bushes to hide me from a distance,
 some erosion to my approach?
 Let's agree that these are worth a try
 —alternatives to my burning.
 They will discourage her return
 until she is rich and famous
 or in desperate need of a warm bowl of soup.
 When the time comes,
 I can paint up and fix up,
 clear the landscape
 so she can see her way back.
 For my effort,
 I might earn a new plaque.
 Or, I might polish up the old one
 as I polished it before,
 having earned it before that.
 With luck,
 the old words will still read well:
 Here sank the ship that let me away.
 Here rose the bridge that let me back.

the following

PLACES

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 in this issue of

you are here



"Fence," Penelope Starr

Appalachian Mountains	36.00N	82.67W	Lisbon, Portugal	38.73N	09.13W
Arapahoe Springs*			London, England	51.50N	05.00W
Baltimore, MD	39.28N	76.60W	Louth, England	53.37N	00.02W
Brattleboro, VT	42.85N	72.55W	Ludington, MI	41.87N	77.82W
Broad River	32.52N	80.83W	Machias, ME	44.70N	67.45W
California	37.00N	119.00W	Mackinaw Island, MI	45.85N	84.62W
Canada	60.00N	96.00W	Mexico	23.00N	102.00W
Caribbean Sea	10.65N	66.97W	Miami, FL	25.77N	80.18W
Center City, PA	39.93N	75.10W	Mills Park*		
Central America	10.00N	80.00W	New Jersey	40.00N	74.00W
China	35.00N	105.00E	Oshkosh, WI	44.02N	88.53W
Chippewa, MI	46.30N	84.48W	Overland Fork*		
Colombia	04.00N	72.00W	Philadelphia, PA	39.95N	75.15W
Columbia, SC	34.00N	81.03W	Port Au Gres, MI	44.04N	86.68W
Congaree River	34.00N	81.05W	Saginaw, MI	43.42N	83.95W
Cuba	21.50N	80.00W	Saluda River	35.12N	82.63W
Detroit, MI	42.32N	83.03W	Sandy Bay, England	50.62N	3.41W
Extremadura, Spain	39.25N	06.25W	Santa Cruz River	31.48N	110.58W
Florida	28.00N	82.00W	Sault Ste. Marie, MI	46.48N	84.35W
Hell	42.43N	83.98W	Seattle, WA	47.60N	122.32W
Higgins Lake, MI	44.47N	84.72W	Spain	40.00N	04.00W
Houghton Lake, MI	44.38N	84.08W	Texas	30.00N	100.00W
Intercourse, PA	40.03N	76.10W	The Rift*		
Japan	36.00N	138.00E	Tittabawassee, MI	44.08N	84.30W
Jessup, MD	39.13N	76.77W	Traverse City, MI	44.75N	85.62W
Lake Murray, SC	34.07N	81.48W			
Lancaster County, PA	40.25N	76.25W			

* denotes an imagined place

Contributors

Kreg Abshire's work has appeared in *Colby Quarterly*, *The Columbia Journal of American Studies*, and *Lost Magazine*. A few years ago, he received a Ph.D. in American literature from the University of South Carolina. After three years in New England, he is heading west to live in Denver, Colorado, and teach English at Kent Denver School.

Gina Cestaro received her BFA from Massachusetts College of Art in Boston (1998) and her MFA at the University of Arizona in sculpture (2006). Her mixed-media works have been shown nationally and internationally in Bulgaria, Australia, and New Zealand. She is a current and founding member of Plugged Video Collective based in Tucson, Arizona.

Lauren Eggert-Crowe is a second-year poetry student in the University of Arizona's MFA program. She has been published in *New Growth Arts Review*, *The Twenty-Sixth*, and *Puerto Del Sol*. She also writes a 'zine called *Galatea's Pants*, which was included in the San Jose Museum of Art's "Art of Zines '04" exhibit.

Giles Goodland is a writer and poet located in London. His poems often use large numbers of other texts as material. His last book was *A Spy in the House of Years* (Leviathan, UK, 2001) and his newest book, *Capital*, is due out from Salt Poetry in November 2006.

Mark Hummel's fiction, poetry, and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in *Fugue*, *The Bloomsbury Review*, *Talking River Review*, *Matter*, and in the anthology *Please Stay on the Trail: A Collection of Colorado Fiction*, among many other journals and reviews. "Water Cycle" is one of several vignettes that are featured between chapters of a new novel of the same title that focuses on

the fictional Overland Fork river as its common setting.

Bob Komives has worked as a land-use and environmental planner in Colorado, Central America, and other great landscapes. He spends much of his time these days writing poetry and drawing—often drawing upon his experience with diverse land and people.

Petra Koppers is an associate professor of English, theatre and women's studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She created the 'Felt Stories' installation during a residency at New Pacific Studio, New Zealand, in response to local stories gathered in a wildlife center. She uses fiber arts, storytelling and performance in her community arts practice.

Jennifer Leichter is a junior at Colorado College majoring in biological anthropology and with a minor in art studio. Her father, Mark Hummel, commissioned her to draw the imagined landscape in his piece "Water Cycle: Retreat."

Brian Marks is a geographer at the University of Arizona who studies the political ecology and economy of fisheries, particularly Louisiana shrimping. He interviewed some of the Bees while they were on tour in the summer of 2005.

Karen Paiva, Ph.D., resides in Inter-course, Pennsylvania. She is both a scholar and an accomplished folk artist whose ongoing project is the study of myth and reality intersections. For the last seven years, her artistic style has hinted at "magical realism," through which she finds joy in contemplating the juxtaposition of place and space within the fuzzy boundary of Amish and "English" social frameworks.

Michael Ratcliffe lives in North Laurel, Maryland with his wife and three sons. When he is not writing poetry, he dabbles in census geographic concepts and criteria. Other interests include growing okra, canoeing, and teaching population geography.

Penelope Starr is a visual artist working in mixed media and photography who took a turn to the arena of performing arts a few years ago and founded Odyssey Storytelling (www.odysseystorytelling.com). Now she tells stories in addition to creating them on paper.

Daniel Van Wert graduated from Florida State University in 2002. He is an up-and-coming poet, screenwriter, and actor from Philadelphia.

William F. Van Wert was a professor of English and film at Temple University for thirty years until the time of his death in 2003. He is the author of several books: *Memory Links*, *What's It All About?*, *Proper Myth*, *The Invention of Ice Skating*, *Stool Wives*, *The Advancement of Ignorance*, and *Don Quickshot*. His writing can also be found in various literary journals and film reviews. He is dearly missed by his family, friends, colleagues and students.

Evan Morgan Williams has published more than twenty-five stories in literary magazines, including *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Northwest Review*, and *Blue Mesa Review*. He has stories in the current issues of *The Fourth River*, *Pinyon*, *Strange Fruit*, and *Alimentum*. He lives in Portland, Oregon. His website can be found at www.pahoehoe.edublogs.org.

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