

you are here

the journal of creative geography



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Spatial Imaginaries & Imaginary Spaces

Poetry, Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, Art & Photography

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Tyra Olstad, *My Island. There is an Island in Alaska*, digital photograph.

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EDITORS' NOTE

Spatial imaginaries. Imaginary Spaces.

What thoughts, feelings, ideas and stories do these words conjure? We asked contributors to engage these twinned concepts by considering their utopian, fantastical, cultural, environmental, political, aesthetic, visionary, or other dimensions. The responses were overwhelming. The selected pieces demonstrate the diverse ways that people creatively (re)invent, (re)define, unravel, and explore imaginary spaces and spatial imaginaries.

Each contribution to this thirteenth issue of *you are here* reflects a geographical imaginary of places and spaces. The pieces traverse a mysterious island in Alaska, the magical landscapes of Yellowstone National Park, and mystical rivers of Mexico and India; they include visual (re)representations of home and written stories of neighborhood life; they reveal traces of extreme weather, concealed tree-ring histories, abstract images encountered on the road, and the emotional spaces of our most vivid memories. As cartographies – without boundaries – they explore where imaginations and spaces collide, where science and art interweave, and where the lines between past, present, and future become ambiguous. From the surreal interconnection of people in distant places via modern communication technologies to the imaginary spaces within futureworlds, these pieces expand our understanding of what place is, what it can be, and how interpretations of place are shaped by our own life experiences.

Geographical imaginations is a term that describes the similarities and differences of individual or collective perceptions of space and place. As students, we have both been advised to explore this concept for understanding different interpretations of places like “the forest”, “the city,” or “el norte.”

As editors, we chose the theme spatial imaginaries largely due to our own fascination with the concept. The theme seemed even more relevant to us when we learned that, years before, we both lived in the same small town of 2,000 people in the tropical dry forest of southern Mexico at the same time. Yet we never

encountered one another there. Although we walked the same streets and had similar feelings about this shared place, like all people, we each came to know the place differently, through our own senses, emotions, friendships and adventures. As a result, our geographical imaginations were unique. Over long conversations about our connections there, we have created new understandings of that place -- as real and symbolic moments, collective and personal experiences add new dimensions that somehow transcend our individual imaginaries.

In this issue of *you are here*, we happily present how contributors interpret this concept in their own ways: theoretically, creatively and artistically. Our contributors brilliantly expand the possibilities that these words imbue among academics, artists, authors, poets, geographers...even surfers.

We hope you enjoy our thirteenth issue and invite you to explore the imaginary spaces and spatial imaginaries contained within these pages, as well as the other spaces both near and far. Following the challenge posed by Derek Gregory in his book *Geographical Imaginations*, we hope this issue helps us all to “find new ways of comprehending these other worlds—including our relations with them and our responsibilities toward them—without being invasive, colonizing or violent”(p. 205)¹.

106°F,
Anne-Marie Hanson, Co-Editor
Jamie McEvoy, Co-Editor

¹ Gregory, Derek. 1996. *Geographical Imaginations*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

THERE IS AN ISLAND IN ALASKA

Tyra Olstad



There it was – just a spit of land – a few chunks of weather-beaten rock, barely enough room for a half-dozen trees and a patch of scraggly brush. I saw it and felt a click in my mind or a thump in my heart and gasped with a little oh – magic.

I had come to Southeast Alaska – Prince of Wales Island in Tongass National Forest – looking for adventure – Mountains! Bears! Caves and muskegs and eagles and, well, really, I had no idea what to expect, but was sure it would involve adventure – an *island!* In a *rainforest!* *Alaska!* I had no idea I would ever be most enchanted and inspired by this little lump of limestone poking up out of El Capitan Passage. (Names, names. Prince of Wales, Tongass, El Capitan – don't worry, I didn't know them either until I arrived mid-May and began pouring over maps and field guides, desperate to learn the local lore, memorize toponyms and taxa and oh the calls of the birds, the colors of the sky.) After two weeks of orientation – rugged vistas, check! Wildlife spottings, check! Rain rain rain, – I was ready to head out to my Ranger Station at El Capitan Cave. There, on my first walk down the

bumpy dirt road that separated me from the nearest semblance of civilization, I discovered this little islet; it wasn't on any maps, had no name.

The islet was just to the east of a thin peninsula, not even a half-mile from where I lived and worked. I spent the next three months walking out to see it every morning, every evening, and perhaps several times in between --whenever I had a break from my rangering duties. I saw it in the rain, in the sun, between clouds that caught on the shores and swirled across the water. I saw it from the peninsula, from the mainland, and from a little delta about a mile east. I saw it populated with seagulls, with an eagle, bare and lonely. Even when I was crawling through El Capitan Cave and, on my days off, traipsing around Tongass and Prince of Wales, I saw my little island in my mind, in my sleep, was haunted by its profile – the cedar, the spruce, the hemlock, the nest in the crook of a branchless trunk, the fallen log that swept down toward its own reflection, the bedrock stretching down into the sea.

My island. I came to see it as a symbol of all the mystery and magic that exists in the cold, dreary, misty world.





And, sometimes, I could see my island wasn't really an island; a little isthmus would appear twice a day, snaking between the main peninsula and the nameless knob. When times and tides conspired to fill me with delight, I could tromp through green flats of glasswort and squish and squeak across slippery beds of kelp and cross over – actually walk to my island, step onto the enchanted earth, touch the cedars and stones and secrets. (How many people can say they've walked to an island, touched a mirage, known a vision to be true?) I would say *that's* adventure, but the excitement was in the return – the mythic integration back into the solid world. More than once, I become so engrossed in exploring this tiny little place – crawling around on my hands and knees looking at lichen, circling round and round the circumference, or just sitting on the outcrops, staring across the water, listening to loons in the mist – that I lost track of time and forgot to watch as the tide flowed back in; then I would have to wade across a cold, salty stretch of water, ankle- or knee-deep in reality. After doing so, I would clamber up onto shore, then turn and look back – back at the rocks the trees the brush just to make sure my island was still there, that it hadn't dissolved into the channel or sublimated into the clouds. Or perhaps was never there at all.

In some ways, that's why I took these photographs – to be sure the place is real, to confirm its existence, to have it with me always. Yet these are but images, too – static representations, soundless, lifeless, nameless. Unless you go to Southeast Alaska too – Prince of Wales Island, Tongass National Forest, El Capitan Passage, in the summer, at low tide, – you'll just have to believe me, believe your eyes. There it is. Mystery; magic.

BROWSING THE INTERNATIONAL TREE-RING DATA BANK

Hanna Coy

I found your Himalayan chronology:
a comprehensive set of cores
from a ski area in Kashmir.

I know you were there in 1973
and you likely felt the stay of November,
before snow slams down

the airplanes -- mountain-shine
through long blue needles, shadows
and cores fresh on the snow in stripes.

I can picture the measurement, later:
Ashok bringing in tea, sweet, gingery,
goat-milk thick and held far

from the calipers. You drank
the first half in 1790 between the earlywood
and latewood. In 1600, you remembered

the rest of it but it had a skin by then.

The oldest pith came from a seedling
in the year of Babur's first arrival,

complete with court painters to capture
wild Hindustani beasts. (There's a moment of privacy
before uploading data onto the Persian vellum

of the internet like a miniature painting
before the gold leaf.)

TELECONFERENCE ON THURSDAY

Ben Nordolilli

The man with the Greek name
Guides us along with his accent
Taken from a youth in Australia

A woman's voice from Georgia
Interrupts to ask about payment,
If we have to fill out invoices still,

He answers, yes, and the man
With the Midwestern tone
Tells her it was a good question.

I participate in the meeting
By following the drift of cursors
Over the system we are dissecting,

In Seattle a distant woman curses
Over milk and coffee spilt,
Then apologizes for the words,

No further questions come
So the Greek-Australian continues
To demonstrate how to save work.

We come to the end of the hour
And everyone announces
That they are going back to work,

Then I talk, with an American voice
Despite an Italian last name,
Typing in the shadows of the capitol,

Saying goodbye and pretending
Along with everyone else
To be half-master of the online device.

This is the story of the past century,
A march against boundaries
So we might be perplexed together.

17° 20' 20" S 62° 30' 41" W & 39° 15' 22" N 76° 35' 19" W

Bonnie Kaserman

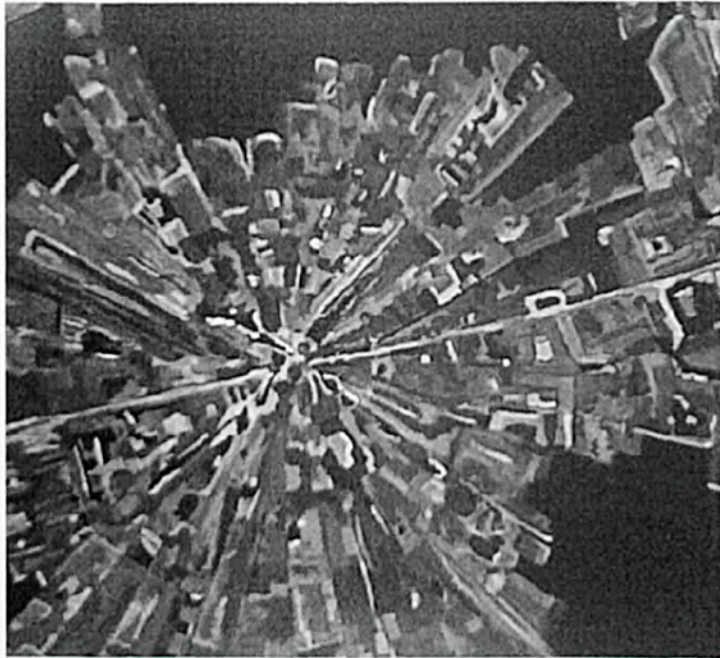


Figure 1. 17° 20' 20" S 62° 30' 41" W. Acrylic on canvas. Photo credit B. Kaserman. Image produced with built-in MacBook camera



Figure 2. 39° 15' 22" N 76° 35' 19" W. Acrylic on canvas. Photo credit J Giesecking. Image produced with digital camera.

These images represent two paintings in a series based on earth resource satellite imagery. These paintings make their way into others' homes and the owner takes a picture of the painting, which is sent to me and reproduced. The questions that drive this project are: With the proliferation of scientific images offered as art, how do we imagine the boundary between art and science? How does this shifting boundary coincide with how we imagine landscapes? Earth resource technologies are part of a racialized and, often, militarized history of landscape painting. How does the ease of accessing and reproducing these images at home, and of home, position us in relation to this geopolitical history?



Caleb Izdepski, *A Wildfire's Future*, digital photograph.

IN FUTUREWORLD

Pamela Villars

In Futureworld, I won't need
to take a single step; I'll squeeze my eyes,
and then (perhaps not gingham-dressed,
but flighty just the same), I'll land with
gentle bump upon your meadow.

You'll wonder who I am, this tiny
braided thing - feet first, nose high -
your fancy,
and if the light is right, you'll won't
sweep at me or snarl.

In Futureworld, you won't need
to read my mind, for we will be connected:
silver nets that stretch elastic,

knotty,

visible to all.

TRACKS SERIES

Laura Vernon-Russell

Everything leaves tracks. Each being, each event moving through time and space, leaves its mark. This is true of bacteria and birds, wind and rain, water flowing across the flats and comets hurtling through the solar system. Tracks are also, by nature, temporary - though, as in the case of dinosaur tracks - some last longer than others.

I discovered, while preparing these images, that the tracks that most attracted me were those of water. I gravitated toward the strong line and fractal pattern created by incoming and receding tides. While searching for the tracks of animals and birds, I found my camera filled with images of sand and mud and shadow.

Hurricane Isabel, in 2003, brought with it a 12 foot storm surge which changed the face of "my" beach that, only now is starting to look like its former self. The trees that made secluded and shaded bowers, where I had once sat motionless one summer solstice eve as a northern water snake crawled across my foot, were flipped backwards and their freakish roots laid bare to the light. The topsoil was scoured from the lower reaches and roots lay tangled across the ground - still holding fast but exposed. The high shoreline was eroded away overnight creating a "butte" of clay, topsoil and grass. These were tracks of the hurricane - water tracks on the grandest of scales.



Laura Vernon-Russell, *Upturned Beach*, black & white photograph.
Tracks Series, 2003.



Laura Vernon-Russell, *Roots*, black & white photograph. Tracks Series, 2003.



Laura Vernon-Russell, *Root Skin*, black & white photograph.
Tracks Series, 2003.



Caleb Izdepski, *A Momentary Distraction from Nature*, digital photograph.

THE NATURE OF WORDS

Chavawn Kelley

Except for the order to which they belong,
I do not know the names of the butterflies I follow.
Some words like *Lepidoptera* delight by their flutter
Demulcent, evanescent, ephemeral, fenestration, moraine.
I do not pin them down or make demands

If I find a word to love, I explore with drunken wonder
Under the covers the convolutions of its typography.
If I am a lover of words, are words my lovers?
Lenticular, gravisphere, arête, paternoster lake.

Who am I with this one? Do I associate with another?
With some, I procreate, turning tender thoughts their way,
Giving birth in springwater. But words can be undisciplined.
Perhaps not innately bad but brought up to slip one by.
Split estate, water rights, the elk harvest in the fall.
Blame their fathers, who act without shame.

They engineer the tongue to click, to claim
through contrivance, to make it stick. Question these words,
call them into account, bust the teeth of despotic jaw
Eminent domain, terrorist threat, hegemony, original sin.
Codified perception is the jail of tiny laws.

HOMEBODY

Katy Darby

Cherry works at the petrol station. She likes it there. She likes the fact that people come from far away and go to distant places. But they always stop off between here and there, and when they stop, they stop at the Bluston petrol station because it's the only one for miles and miles and miles. And as Mr. Jacobs says, people will always need petrol.

"Until the oil runs out," she said once, and Mr. Jacobs looked annoyed. She's not supposed to say things like that. She's not even supposed to think them. They upset her. But since Mum died last year and Pete doesn't come down so much any more, she thinks about all sorts of things, more often than she used to. Too often.

Cherry works the night shift, which gives her plenty of time to think. She starts at eight in the evening and finishes at eight in the morning. Mr. Jacobs drives her to and from work. He lives in the next village. Mr. Jacobs will always need petrol, but Cherry can't drive. It's very difficult in the country, not to drive. You have to rely on other people to get you around, to take you home. You have to trust people not to drink and drive. That's one of the things Cherry isn't meant to think about.

Instead of thinking, she likes to arrange the shelves and count the stock. By four a.m., everything is always in perfect order, the tubes of Pringles all facing the front, the Mars Bars stacked neatly near the till, the crisps alphabetised by flavour. When her head is bad, she does it at home, too. It makes her feel better. Mr. Jacobs understands her system now. He lets her do all the stocktaking and some of the accounting now that she's shown him how good she is. She always knows how many boxes of Kleenex and bottles of washer fluid are left without looking.

After midnight she serves people through a grille, cigarettes and snacks mostly. She knows all the kids from the towns round about by name and by sight, and by age as well. When they ask for cigarettes she tells them when their birthday is, day, month and year. They can't fool her. That's another reason, Mr. Jacobs says, why he's lucky to have her. She has an amazing head for figures. She likes things to be right.

When she's not serving or tidying, she reads magazines. She tried the celebrity gossip ones but they bored her: she doesn't know who these people are. She wonders why they don't do magazines about local people who everyone knows. There's the Bluston and Widdesford Advertiser, of course, but it's not really the same. It would be much better if it had glossy pages and colour pictures. Mrs. Allerton from the Pit and Prop in a daring jade-green plunge-neck gown by Roberto Cavalli, with matching shoes. John McCann from Garrow Farm in a dinner jacket, sharing a joke with George Clooney, whoever he is.

But there aren't any magazines like that, more's the pity, so instead Cherry reads travel magazines. Conde Nast Traveller is too full of adverts for perfume and pictures of people she doesn't know, but Wanderlust and Adventure are good, and the Sunday Times Travel Magazine always has beautiful pictures. Her favourite, though, is National Geographic. They don't sell many, so Mr. Jacobs lets her keep the old issues. She tears out the best photographs and Pritt-Sticks them to the wallpaper in her room, beside and above her bed, over the ceiling even, so that when she goes to sleep at nine in the morning she is cocooned in Paraguay and Paris, Macchu Pichu, the jungles of Thailand, the Australian outback and the monochrome, snow-laden forests of Sweden. Mum would never have let her do that when she was alive. She didn't even like drawing-pins in the walls, let alone Pritt-Stick. Another thing Cherry shouldn't think about.

Cherry's days off, her "weekend", as Mr. Jacobs calls it, are Tuesday and Wednesday, when it's not so busy. That's when Pete visits, if he can make it. He has to work in the week though, and the drive up from Bristol takes three hours each way, so he doesn't come very often, and he always seems uncomfortable, since Mum died. Cherry has kept the bungalow exactly as it was, apart from the pictures on her bedroom walls, so she's not sure why Pete doesn't like it any more. She keeps his favourite food in a special cupboard, just like Mum did, and always cooks it nicely for him, but he never finishes it. He looks tired and sad, these days, even more than he used to. He keeps apologising for everything.

Today is Tuesday, the first day of her weekend. The date is marked in red on the National Geographic calendar because Pete's coming tonight. He'll be here by eight. Cherry has a bath and puts on her blue dress. It's very old and a bit worn but it's her favourite. Cherry doesn't throw anything away. She likes familiar things. The blue dress is criss-crossed with her own neat, tiny stitches. She's a good seamstress. When Pete comes she always offers to do his washing and ironing, like Mum used to. He always says no.

It's nine o'clock when she hears his car in the drive. She goes out front and stands there, smiling, waiting. He trudges up the gravel path and kisses her on the cheek. He smells of smoke. He said he'd given up. Of course, Pete is allowed to buy cigarettes, but he shouldn't. Mum never liked him smoking and always made him stand in the garden.

They sit opposite one another at the dining table, which Cherry has made nice with a cloth and the good cutlery and the company glasses. There is a spray of silk lilies in the crystal vase in the middle of the table, dusted and rinsed and brought in from the living room for the occasion. They drink Appletise because he's driving and because it looks a bit like champagne. He asks her about work and she tells him about the boys who tried to rob the station for cigarettes and vodka.

Pete pales and asks her what she did. She says that she recognised them by their voices, and so she told them their birthdays and that she wasn't allowed to sell alcohol to minors, or after 11pm, and they went away. Mr. Jacobs was very proud of her cool head, she tells him, but he doesn't look pleased. She asks him about Annie and the children, her niece and nephew. He looks down.

"Let's not talk about me," he says. "Let's talk about you. Are you all right?"

"I'm always all right," she says, puzzled.

"I mean ... is there anything you need? Can I bring you anything next time? It's your birthday soon, isn't it?"

"In three weeks and six days," she says. It's marked on the calendar. She will be forty-seven, the same age as the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has two active volcanoes and a large area of rainforest, and plentiful wildlife including the white rhino, the okapi and the mountain gorillas that grin down at her from her bedroom wall.

"I don't need anything," she says. But Pete persists.

"Is there anything you want, though? Something nice?"

She thinks. Is there?

"I'd like to go away," she says.

"Come to visit, you mean? Down to Bristol? It's a bit difficult at the-

"No," she says, "away."

"Where?"

"To the Democratic Republic of Congo," she says. He looks startled. "Or Sweden. Or Florida. Or Antwerp. Antwerp looks nice. You could drive me."

He starts looking upset now, like he does when he's about to apologise. Sometimes he cries when he apologises. It embarrasses her.

"I'm sorry, Cherry, I can't -"

"Or London," she says. "We could go for the weekend. For a holiday. See Big Ben. The Houses of Parliament. Piccadilly Circus. Annabel's. Chinawhite. We could go to a glamorous premiere."

"It's a long way away," Pete says, staring down at his cold sausages. "I don't think you'd like it."

"I would. It's the most fabulous, exciting city in Europe. Conde Nast *Traveller* said so in their May issue."

"You can't, Cherry."

"Why not?"

Pete shakes his head. His eyes are red.

"We've talked about this. You've got to stay at home. Where you're safe."

Cherry remembers the last time she went to London. She'd been to stay at a friend's from her gap year. They'd met in Goa and gone round Asia together, then come back up by train through Europe. There was a party, a big travellers' reunion. Pete came to pick her up and drive her home. He only had one glass of wine, but it was a big one. The police said after that it put him over the limit. That was a long time ago. He'd been much happier then. She doesn't remember much about that time, but she remembers that.

"I suppose you're right," she says, and starts clearing the table.

When he kisses her goodbye, he hugs her so hard her ribs squeak.

"Drive safe," she says, like Mum used to. He stops jingling his keys abruptly. He starts walking towards the car, and then stops and turns, appealing.

"What about your birthday present, Cherry? Anything at all? Just say."

She thinks, trying to please him. She can't say anything from the travel magazines, he'll only be annoyed. Her head is starting to hurt. She touches the long scar at the back of her skull, lightly, nervously. Something nice. Anything at all.

"Can you get me a daring jade-green plunge-neck gown by Roberto Cavalli, with matching shoes?" They probably have one in Bristol.

His eyes fade. "I'm sorry," he says again.

"That's OK," she says quickly, before he gets upset. "Maybe some travel magazines? National Geographic?"

"Yes," he says avidly, "yes, I promise. That's what I'll get you. Or a travel book? With plenty of pictures?"

"That would be nice," she says.

When he drives away, the smell of petrol lingers on the air. She stands on the front lawn watching his red brake lights get smaller and smaller, smiling and waving, until they're gone.

CARTOGRAPHIES OF HEART

Catherine McGuire

They encourage you, these maps –
as if the vast windy plains, the broken cliffs
the indigo refrain of night could be caught
in lines on vellum, tamed by topological
assertions – even dragons drawn
into ebony warning marks. Here Be...

As if.

Compulsive cartographer, the world
does not exist to be defined by your pen.
Adventuring just to pin down – what?
You can not tell them anything
who have not travelled here.
Sparrows know more, even, than you –
know in their hollow bones that lines
do not exist, anywhere, that passage
from one place to another comes
in the pulse of a heart, the beat of a wing.



THE SURFED WAVE AS TRANSIENT CONVERGENCE

Jon Anderson

Lessons from the place of the surfed wave. Places change over
time: they ebb and flow, they flourish and decline. Places are not
stable but constantly changing, processes of convergence may
seem to endure but are always becoming something else. There is
movement, re-emergence and divergence. There are mergers and
emergings. We interpenetrate, coalesce and form; yet do so only
temporarily. This is place as transient convergence.



Original Photo: Gecko, featured in Selway, B. 2009 'I want Samoa',
Wavelength Magazine, July 184 p64-72.

POST

Christina Lovin

Martha Simpson leafs through the stack of new mail pulled from the rusted mailbox on her front porch. There is the usual junk mail—flyers from Wal-Mart and Big Lots, a *Have You Seen This Child?* postcard with photos of a three-year-old girl next to a computer rendition of what she might look like now, eight years later, at eleven. The colorful corner of a slick postcard catches Martha's eye and she tosses the remaining envelopes on the hall table. A tranquil scene of a Japanese garden, complete with statuary, covers the surface. Martha flips the card over to read the short message scrawled in Frankie's boyish hand:

Dear Mom, I'm fine. Hope you are, too. I miss you more than you know. Japan is great. Lotsa rice. But no gravy! Love, Frank.

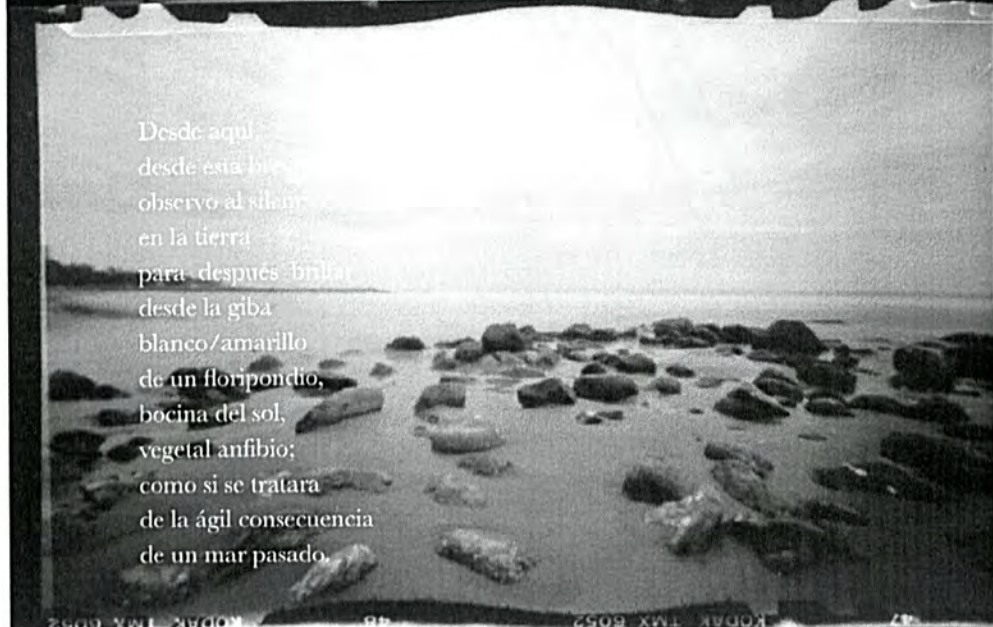
Other than the lopsided frown he has drawn next to the word "gravy," her address and the military postmark are the only other markings on the backside of the card. How she misses that boy! She still finds it difficult to walk into his room, papered with posters of country stars and littered with the usual teenage clutter. She has refused to touch anything, waiting for him to return to his life—her life—just as he had left. Martha Simpson sighs and rearranges the dozen postcards attached to the refrigerator door with cellophane tape. Like the torn off pages of a calendar, they have arrived each month over the past year—each from a different port of call, all from Frankie.

In another part of the world, in a small, dim room with a heavy metal door, Seaman Frank Lee Simpson opens his own mail. The large manila envelope slipped through the plate-sized opening by some surly guard contains only two items: an empty white envelope, folded in thirds and addressed to his Navy pal, Mitchell, at an FPO onboard the *USS Stargazer*, and a postcard with a garish night scene and the words *Hong Kong* written out in what appear to be chopsticks, the backside totally blank. *Gawd. Mitch could have done better than this.* Frankie holds the card up to what little dingy light filters in through the high, grated window.

He peers at the card as if transporting himself, mind and body, into that photo of a place he's never been. The ship he should be on, were it not for that packet of primo hash he pocketed in Singapore and took on board ten months ago, has continued on its way without him. *See the world, my ass!* Frankie lies back on the musty bunk and covers his eyes with his forearm. It is not his mother or his home he conjures, but the streets of Hong Kong, sprung from four-color gloss into these sixty-four square feet of dankness. He rolls over on his stomach and pulls a pen from under the edge of the mattress. "Dear Mom," he writes. He pauses. Continues. "I'm fine."

EL RÍO ES UNA SOMBRA

Néstor Bravo



Desde aquí
desde esta línea
observo al silencio
en la tierra
para después brillar
desde la giba
blanco/amarillo
de un floripondio,
bocina del sol,
vegetal anfibio;
como si se tratara
de la ágil consecuencia
de un mar pasado.



HIGGONSVILLE & THE GARDEN OF VICTORY

Lisa Annelouise Rentz

In the beginning I once told my brother the story of the Garden of Eden, where four rivers emerged and boundaries were clear. I told it like a story, not religion because I knew it would be wasted as a story if I gave it to him as an explanation— why people wear clothes or how knowledge was procured through taste buds. As I told it in simple phrases with made up details about the color of snakeskin and the puppylove of Adam and Eve, I saw that the Eden story teaches that people don't make their own neighborhoods, that people don't deserve good neighborhoods, and that when a good one is disrupted, there's no going back.

We lived in the neighborhood of Higgonville. I had grown up there a decade before my little brother did— I call him Little Bomb, after Thomas Merton— and Higgonville was still a garden of victory, good for running through and tangling with vines and lolling in lush greenness. The neighborhood was, as always, a minefield of air conditioning units in bedroom windows, and it was forever on the flight path of squadrons going to and from the air station where my father served; it was, most finally in the form of the brick-walled National Cemetery, a ceremonial burial ground. Our kick-ball streets were the crossroads of the living, the killers, and the gravediggers. Living residents seemed unconcerned with anything but the daily chores of habitation. The killers killed so far away they had to fly there in jets, but the gravediggers knew where to report to work.

This place is where my parents had been able to buy a house, and it's where in our tiny bedrooms I told Little Bomb more bedtime stories: The Slipskin Hag, Gullah Man and the Mermaid, stories with rabbits and fruit, the saga of Math Class Sitting Behind the Broad Back of Lyalls Nemille. None were restful stories, but my little brother didn't need much to fall asleep. The stories weren't restful for me either, because I told them to him in sign language, the language of bending arms and tackle poses. He paid attention so contentedly that I felt like— but only like— I had answered many of the questions that must have occurred to him that day. *Why did Tracy Frederick move away?* he had asked for

a few weeks. I was filling in for the soundwaves he was missing, even though his other senses were supposed to be compensating in some biologically miraculous way. I was sure he needed more information than what he asked for; there were a lot of people he could get nowhere with. Because of this he was a deeper listener, I am sure, sensing the bustling flocks of birds and other common sounds of our street.

His real-world questions (*why is the crossing guard so mean?*) started when he went to school, and saw the rest of the town beyond our neighborhood. So I explained it all to him with sugar and neighbors and flight zones.

"This neighborhood grew in the light, up with the vines" said Mrs. Smalls, who was part of a long line of local begats and carried herself as if she was the progenitor. She was old like any good source is, and she had yelled this origination over to me because no one was allowed to cross her property line. Mrs. Smalls sat inside her property lines every day with her tied-up dogs where there used to be a house. Parts of the house were still on her lot. Her mailbox still had a street number. She had sorted the bricks and the wood and other parts of her house into piles. Low branches helped form a railing-size fence of mismatched boards that was just as step-stopping as a brick wall.

"This property came out of the sea" Mrs. Smalls explained as she piled weeds by the side of the road for pick up. "That's why things grow good here, and the rain drains down through the sand." From the street, I could see that she had different things going on within her lot, different spaces for sitting down and for tied-up dogs, and for rubbish and her collections of plumbing and cloth-coated wiring, and a few unidentifiable tall things that had become the color of tree trunks but weren't.

Each week when my mother baked a poundcake it was considered special, being an expense, and richness and comfort. She tinged it with rose water which sometimes I could taste and sometimes I couldn't. One day she didn't have enough sugar and

our car wasn't running so she asked me to go get some sugar from Mrs. Phillips way on the other side of our neighborhood. I was trying to find another job (through the backfire-acious process of explaining my experiences: babysitting, a good grade in Anatomy & Physiology II class, a lesson learned from a rerun of Tool Time) and I realized that a weekly cake wasn't a special event or even the comfort that we needed. I realized I could have skipped a week, and that no one else was willing to. I was able to say no.

"Go get back my pink sugar bowl," my mother replied. She always had five considerations to my one. "I lent Mrs. Phillips some sugar last month," she told me, "Get going." I had been sitting in our front window, watching a woodpecker work on a limbless tree trunk that stood between two other trees. The woodpecker's sawdust was so fine it drifted through the air. The tree was so rotten it probably wasn't wood anymore, just the particles that make up wood compelled by no reason to stay stuck together, with no different molecules than a snake.

Sugary Mrs. Phillips was way on the other side of my neighborhood. Four rivers, the Ashepoo, Combahee, Edisto and Broad, converged on this iodine-laced garden twenty minutes from the beach like drawstrings being tugged to tie up pants. From the river banks, the marsh spread out, the pluff mud was revealed twice a day, ships slid by, a few with fog horns, and then trees stood on the other side, looking nothing like the sounds that came across the Broad River from there. The woods over there were full and unbroken by houses, and lined the perimeter of the Marine Corps Air Station.

When their jets flew over, I could see my neighborhood better, because their height made sense of 4th grade topographical maps, and reminded me that power sees creatures like me — as I lay in the front yard, as my neighbors washed their cars — in degrees of navigability and conquerability. Their decree was on a big sign down the road out of town that explained, *That Noise You Hear is the Sound of Freedom*. The flow of our earthly boundaries was easy for pilots to trace from way up in the clouds. The whole

landmass, the whole infrastructure, the whole population. The air base was so close-by that the jets were always at taking off- and landing-angles. My father, with no follow-up quizzes, made their technology identifiable: C110 Transports, FA18s, A10s. Their fumes were not measured, but were sometimes questioned in letters to the editor. When full-bellied passenger planes pattered in, I speculated on who might be arriving, and why he wasn't piloting his own plane.

"We're all under the same sky" hollered out Mrs. Smalls. I walked more slowly when I passed her property, a full square block in our neighborhood, so we could talk. These conversations must have been about what she was thinking at that moment because she was always ready. But not for any answers back from me.

Egrets flew around too, they liked our neighborhood since it was so dead end and marshy. Their long necks looked good working through the sky below the jet paths. Our houses were near their nest-homes. They gathered in a big waterfront yard that was set back from the road and crowded with trees. The most buffered and sunken area was their rookery. That neighbor with this big yard was lucky, the way the egrets flew to his house every night, drifting lower to their nests.

"There's no keeping track of the days" Mrs. Smalls announced. The jets made torrid scraping thunder as they flew their exercises. My father, Tech Sergeant Atkins, had explained jet turbine engines and the hours that pilots are required to practice. In our sky the jets were like growling cubs, practicing what they'll do in other skies. Pilots are trained so much they don't have to reason. If a preacher described a pilot flying, he'd say "the wings are made of steel, but our men fly with the grace and blessings of the Lord." The officers' wives would express how far and how close their husbands get, getting a twinge of motion sickness. A person on the wrong ground, a person who didn't live with safe flight paths dependably overhead, would not be able to think and would not be able to control at least one orifice.

To get to my mother's sugar and pink sugar bowl, I walked through the nicest streets where chromed cars rolled along so sedately that they seemed like beasts more civilized than people as they went up their long driveways into drolled up double garages. I think that's why my little brother always stopped and stared at the smooth cars, his open mouth and tshirt dirtier than their windshields.

The day before my mother's sugar shortage, Little Bomb had kicked off his shoes, one arcing into the teapot on the mantle. It had been a tall long-spouted pot, blue ink sealed into the fire-whitened ceramic. The pot was old, recognizably but meaninglessly antique, and it wasn't a big loss to our kitchen doings. I didn't even get mad and shove him or clean it up or force him clean to up. He was flustered that it had broken so easily. He had probably eaten all the cake sugar by trying to make Coca Cola from scratch or some other made-up experiment.

I walked through the beast-patrolled and jet-misted streets. I looked at only the best views of the far bank through the sideyards of the houses, keeping an eye on the tree line. I hardly ever saw the people who lived on these streets and who filled up those cars and paid the insurance bills. Little Bomb didn't hear the smash of shoe and pot, or the frequent cloud scrapings, but he still cleaned up the shards and pointed at the jets.

Over the ball field a flock of turkey buzzards circled way up there, so I walked inland two blocks to pass by Mrs. Smalls's lot, to check to see if she was giving the buzzards a reason to be there. Her dogs barked at me, and I saw that she was raking her paths between the piles and the stick railing, so she wasn't it.

"Animals come along and are allowed in here" Mrs. Smalls said. "Woodpeckers and hummingbirds, the raccoons bring oysters. Not men."

Mrs. Phillips' sugar-storing home was two houses up from the boat landing, on the bluff away from the road behind trees. She

had a wide view of the river, and a tabby wall between her and the road. I was looking forward to that pink bowl of sugar and maybe whatever she had cool to drink. I was planning to ask her for a plastic grocery bag to carry the bowl back in. I was barely hearing the pings of my own thoughts when there was a new sound, a veining crackling big enough to echo off the pavement and the clouds, followed by a soft gust as I turned the corner, close enough to see Mrs. Phillips' house through the trees. I didn't go any further than her garden wall. The driveway was empty, and the biggest tree in the neighborhood had smashed into her house, smearing it so that it looked like a brick bean bag.

Other than a flash of woodpeckers and bombers in my mind, I didn't think about what had knocked over the tree, the clues didn't matter, I turned around and ran, back down through some of the same streets. No sugar bowl for me to break. No hope for a glass of cold ginger ale. I made my way out of there like the downfall was chasing me, I created my own vapor trails in the humidity, blurring the colors of the houses, and heard the voices of my alarmed neighbors as they reacted, to me or catastrophe I don't know. Their adrenaline noises made a piercing sense to me— then I finally knew the origins they had settled on for themselves:

The lady in her housecoat: This is finally my house. I was born in Sumter and this is my fourth husband. All the groomsmen in my first wedding were shot down. They were helicopter pilots, and now I live here. I used to have an apple tree, right over there.

Mrs. Smalls: I was born in this house. My father built the addition when I was four, and when I was working at the hospital, my parents died. Now that the house is in these piles, I keep everything straight and I sleep at my niece's. I used to have an apple tree but it burned too.

Mrs. Reynolds, an old neighbor who dresses nicely: My husband and I moved into this house forty years ago and I am sure I get more walking done-- I walk everywhere-- than any other woman

in town. I used to have an apple tree but my son got a new chainsaw one Christmas.

A new neighbor living in her old family home that needed some paint: My brother died when I was fifteen and I am looking for more work. I live like this because I have no money. I used to have an apple tree, but it stopped growing when it was this high.

The neighbor closest to the egrets: They were here in those trees when I moved in. And the geese found us too. This property should stay this way. I used to have an apple tree but the big oaks took all the light.

The man by the ball park: I planted all this here, these plum trees too. The house needed some shade around it. I work a hard job, but I keep up this yard. I used to have an apple tree, but I didn't like them.

In my house, turned away from these people so that my view is distant and beyond: apples and clothes and vines are all I have.

Instead of sticking to the slave path-roads, I ran away from the water, up the other side of the ball field, and cut into the alleyway behind the brickwall of the cemetery. One time, when I was walking in the heat there, I had walked past a Marine in full dress carrying a bugle, then a girl pushing her legless grandmother in a wheelchair. The beaten dirt road was empty now, the brick wall was long, and the expansion section was sun-baked. At the old back entrance, a fancy gate they locked every night, I stopped to catch my breath. The rows of palm trees and live oaks and cold soul headstones were as orderly and stretching as ever. Little Bomb was standing next to the closest obelisk. He was pointing his stick gun and firing away with no sounds effects. The gravediggers in their green workclothes were walking towards him, and then Little Bomb turned around and ran towards me. I didn't know if this was his game or theirs. I grabbed his arm once he was outside the gate, and ran him so fast back to our house that he couldn't breath. We fell on the ground of our own

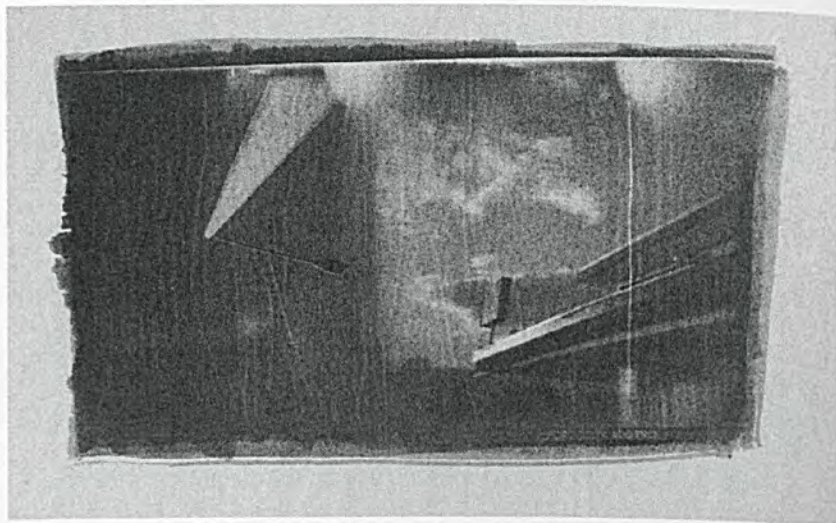
yard, were enclosed by the jumbo elephant ear plants, kicked off our shoes and laughed at our neighbors, the people of flowering, fading gardens.

"I don't rest" Mrs. Smalls said. "And I don't give out explanations. Who needs an explanation has no sense. Who doesn't take a bite doesn't know."

As her voice came down over the property line, her wormy dogs sent out their hoarse barks too. Her intact front lawn was mostly tidy, with saplings and musket palms placed almost like a landscaper would. Around the foundation of her house, lantana thrust its candy flowers into the sunlight streaming down through a high-up opening in the tangled canopy of leaves, vines, and limbs.

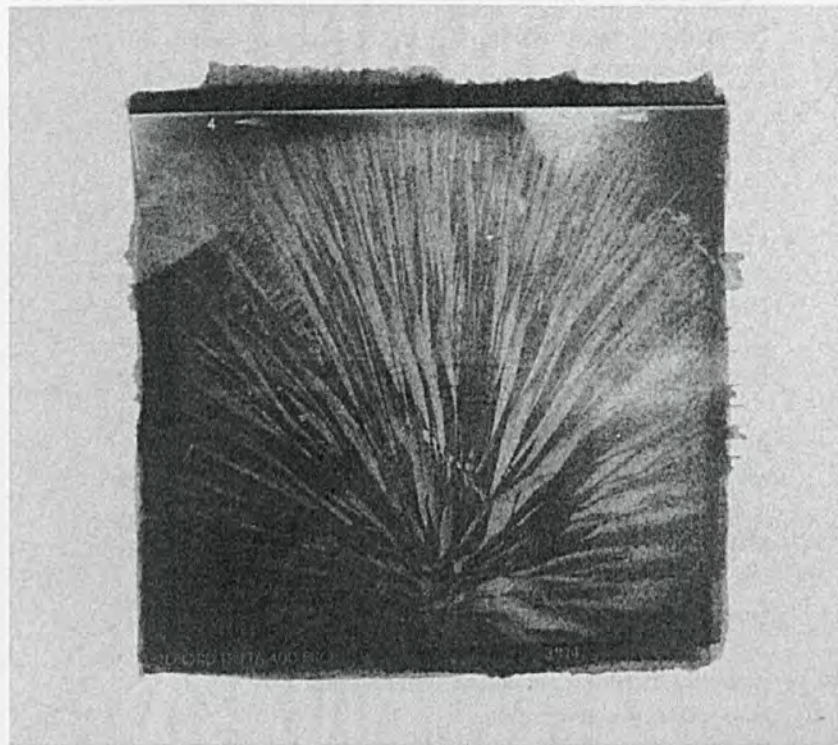
FROM THE ROAD

Sathya Honey Victoria



These images began because of a photograph that I took practically by mistake and from the feeling that I got from it. It was my first roll of film in that strange little plastic tank of a Holga. I didn't really take notice of the pictures, much less find them interesting. It was over a year later that I re-printed the negatives. Once the first image was on the paper, it became something - a million things, really. It was a story book, it was a window, it was me looking out into the world, me rolling by so fast the whole world became blurred by my eyes on it. It was my childhood on the road, it was the fairytale that went with it and the safety and comfort of that age. It was movement, speed, change, road, travel, the not-staying-where-you-are genes that I have inherited. That single image spoke to me of leaving childhood and the safety that I now associate with it and it spoke about physically moving from one country to another and of how I increasingly link that process to loss, either when I move away from my country or when I eventually leave the new one to return 'home'.

It's taken me quite a few frustrating rolls of film trying to replicate that photograph to realize that maybe it was a privileged moment - was it my mood? The speed at which we were traveling? That specific bit of road? The precise combination of all of those?



I think now that I have realized it takes more (or is it less?) than a road and my intentions to make that image, I have accepted the fact that as long as I'm looking for that picture again, I won't find it. However, that doesn't feel like a defeat. Now that I have come to terms with this, I am free to chase the image, chase it, chase it... and see what else I find lying by the road on my way there.

EXPLAINING OUR TRIP TO NORTHERN MISSISSIPPI

N. A'Yara Stein

For George

It's where I was born and where I grew up.
I'm just going through the motions.
No one there knows me now.
You talk with no one.

It is for old times' sake.

We get out and stand around.
I tell you a secret even I don't know
Showing you the succession of great-greats
On tombstones that begin to begin in 1753.

Family, order, class.

By summer's end the boys in these towns
will molt, farmer's tan and all, into men.
A tiny mass of Latin rattles in my brain;
Wasps scribble on the surface of a pool of water.

Genus, species, variety.

In the old kitchen we cut onions from the field.
Some places you never reach.
We eat in silence. You say you love the food.
Everybody does.

We are both crying tears we don't mean.

GETTING LAUNDRY DONE IN RAMPUR

Hanna Coy

Dobiwallah, please take my socks;
these ragged trousers and shirts;
and the shalwar kameez I bought
in the town upstream of here
between one bus and the next.

Beat them clean for me. Hurl them
into the cold waters, against
sharp-edged volcanic rocks -- don't let
the fear of crowding, the stupid words
spilled as answers to strangers
stay in their cloth. Hammer it out.

If a button comes off the shirt,
let it float all the way past Agra
(if they let such a tourist
so close to the Taj Mahal for free).
Let it come to Delhi and be gathered
by a hand glad for one more thing
the river brings. I will follow.



IFMiller, *Lobster Cove*, digital photograph.

LOBSTER COVE

IFMiller

The gulls and I watch
the rusted hull slowly return
to the One Who Made Us All

as tourists take pictures,
children play captain
in the storm that brought her here.

I try to conjure the day it happened
but the sun is too warm,
the air too soft.

Instead, I think of Pop
who never liked the sea.
Perhaps he remembered
his drowned grandfather
or fourteen days in steerage.
I think of Cape May beach at sunrise,
where we drank beer and hoped
the fish weren't biting,
remember running out of gas
in the middle of Peconic Bay
with a storm coming up.

I think about the cove where the gulls
and I ponder the rusted hull
and wonder how it is
that we came from the sea
yet cannot return to it
lest we drown
or wind up wrecked upon the rocks.

BIOGRAPHIES of OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Laura Vernon-Russell, *Game in the Sand*, black & white photograph. Track Series, 2003.

JON ANDERSON lives in Cardiff, UK where he works as a Lecturer in Human Geography at Cardiff University. His research focuses on the relations between culture, place, and identity and he is particularly interested in the geographies, politics and practices that such relations produce. He is also interested in the variety of ways these relations can be articulated and relayed to different audiences. He has recently published a book *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places & Traces* (2010).

NÉSTOR BRAVO lives in Tepoztlán, Mexico where he is a professor of semiotics and photography. His work touches on various themes including war, landscape and environmental degradation with images from Cuba, Mexico, Quebec and Venezuela. He takes in the style of portraits of Emmanuel Levinas—understanding a facial profile as the horizon from which one can observe infinity. Currently he is combining his photography with his budding work as a poet.

HANNA A. COY received her undergraduate degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Arizona in 2002. She has since spent time as a research technician and a painter. She is particularly interested in the public perception of water issues, which she explores through both painting and writing. Hanna is currently seeking a graduate degree in Ecohydrology and Watershed Management while working for the U. S. Geological Survey.

KATY DARBY grew up in England, Holland and Belgium and now lives in London. Her work has been read on BBC Radio, won various prizes, and appeared in magazines including *Stand, Slice, The London Magazine* and *Mslaxia*, as well as anthologies from Arvon, Fish and Tindal Street Press. She has a BA in English from Oxford University and an MA in Creative Writing from the University of East Anglia, and her plays are published by Samuel French. She edits the literary magazine *Litro* (www.litro.co.uk), teaches short story and novel writing at London's City University, and by night runs the actors' and writers' live fiction event Liars' League (www.liarsleague.com).

SATHYA HONEY VICTORIA was born in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1986. She is a photographer, a writer and a traveler. She studied Art at the University of Guadalajara and is currently attending the University of Arizona, where she studies Photography and Translation and Interpretation. Her photographs have been exhibited in Guadalajara and Tucson. Her most recent work explores the use of Russian plastic cameras in combination with 19th century printing processes.

CALEB IZDEPSKI practiced photography while traveling to agricultural communities in Central America alongside the underfunded though charismatic nonprofit SOS (1993-2007). Native to New Orleans, Louisiana and presently working as a field ecologist in the lower Mississippi River Delta, by hobby photographs the meeting point of nature and human creation.

BONNIE KASERMAN painted the images featured in this issue while living at 49° 15' 45" N 123° 8' 10" W. Her interest in the tensions between science and art began while working as an undergraduate in a spatial analysis research lab. From that point on, she began to note when remotely sensed images were displayed for their aesthetic value. Beyond this interest in science/art, Bonnie writes about graduate school culture for *Academic Matters*; her blog "(un)becoming academic" can be found on the magazine's website <http://www.academicmatters.ca>.

CHAVAWN KELLEY lives at 7,200 feet in Laramie, Wyoming. Her poems, essays and short stories have appeared in *Creative Nonfiction, Quarterly West, Hayden's Ferry Review, High Desert Review* and *Terrain.org*, among others, and in numerous anthologies. She has received fellowships from the Wyoming Arts Council, the Ucross Foundation, the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation and Can Serrat International Arts Center (Spain).

EMMA KLEINER is studying History and Art History at the University of Arizona as a Flinn Scholar. She serves on the staff of *Persona*, the undergraduate literary journal, and is active in the Undergraduate Art History Club. She is an intern at the

University of Arizona Museum of Art and previously worked as a research assistant for a professor of English at the University of Arizona.

CHRISTINA LOVIN is the author of *What We Burned for Warmth* and *Little Fires*. A two-time Pushcart nominee and multi-award winner, her writing has appeared in numerous publications. Southern Women Writers named Lovin 2007 Emerging Poet. She has served as Writer-in-Residence at Devil's Tower National Monument, the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest in Central Oregon, and most recently as inaugural Poet-in-Residence at Connemara, the NC home of the late Carl Sandburg. Lovin's work has been generously supported with grants from Elizabeth George Foundation, Kentucky Foundation for Women, and Kentucky Arts Council, including the Al Smith Fellowship. She currently resides in Central Kentucky.

CATHERINE MCGUIRE is a writer and artist with a deep interest in philosophy, the big "Why we are here?" questions. She has had more than 150 poems published, including on a bus for the nationally-known Poetry In Motion project, and has a chapbook *Joy Into Stillness: Seasons of Lake Quinault*. She lives in Sweet Home, Oregon with her chickens and large garden.

IFMILLER was born in New York City and currently lives in Chicago. He was educated at New York University, Purdue University, and the University of Michigan. He taught and administered programs at Polytechnic Institute of NYU, University of Illinois at Chicago, and University of Akron. A casual poet for most of his life, he began writing seriously in 1995. His work is primarily free verse, inspired by the memories evoked by his surroundings. His work has appeared in *Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, *The Aurorean*, *Poetica Magazine*, *Free Lunch*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, in several group chapbooks, and on several websites. His solo chapbook, "Moonburn", was recently published in the Big Table Publishing Company Chapbook Series.

BEN NARDOLILLI is a 24 year old writer currently living in Arlington, Virginia. He has been published in *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Perigee*, *Elimae*, and the *Poetry Warrior*. His poem was inspired by a very real set of events from his job, working for an online encyclopedia. Ben maintains a blog at mirrorsponge.blogspot.com.

TYRA OLSTAD is a Doctoral Candidate in Geography at Kansas State University. Having spent several years wandering around beautiful wild places in the West, she has nurtured an interest in human perceptions of the natural environment. She uses her work -- which includes creative non-fiction essays, photographs, and hand-drawn maps -- to explore the process of place-creation.

LISA ANNELOUISE RENTZ lives and works with her husband Irby on the South Carolina coast in an inspiring neighborhood full of limb-dropping trees, armadillos, and grave yards. After spending her formative years moving around the United States, studying German, and reading good and trashy books, her work can be found in galleries, combining visuals and text, in publications from Philadelphia to Australia, and in rural Beaufort County schools where she defines creative writing as any writing that is not boring. She archives her literary and teaching artist work at www.eatgoodbread.com.

N. A'YARA STEIN, born in Memphis in 1971, is a Romani-American poet and writer living on a chicory farm. She holds an MFA from the University of Arkansas and is a grant recipient of the Michigan Art Council and the Arkansas Arts Council and was the former editor of the arts quarterly *Gypsy Blood Review*. She's published in *America*, *The New Orleans Review*, *The Birmingham Poetry Review*, *The Oxford American*, *California Quarterly*, *Chiron Review*, *Crossroads: a Journal of Southern Culture*, *Great Midwestern Quarterly*, and *Poetry Motel* among others. Ms. Stein lives near Chicago with her husband and sons.

LAURA VERNON-RUSSELL'S fascination with the natural world is her constant companion. Her series of photographic works have such titles as *Making Tracks*; the award-winning *Avian Landscape*; and *A Study of Urban Crows*. Her recent series of encaustic paintings, *The Hidden Forest*, combine the elements of photography, drawing, and painting. She received a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art and lives, not far from the Chesapeake Bay, in Baltimore, MD with her husband and son.

PAMELA VILLARS lives in Austin, Texas and aspires to be the female Dog Whisperer as well as a poet. Pamela was born in New Mexico, traveled in childhood throughout South America, and has driven across most of the continental US. To treat her non-profit burnout, she started writing; she uses dreams, media, and angst as inspiration. Pamela has been published in *Integral Yoga Magazine*, *Tiny Lights Flash in the Pan*, *Drash Pit*, *Scalped Magazine*, *Wanderings Magazine*, and *Literary Mama*. For additional work, check out Flutter and Muse (<http://pamelavillars.wordpress.com>).



Tyra Olstad, *Island and Mountains*, digital photograph.

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