



flyway
A Literary Review

Volume 5.3 Spring 2000



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The terms "migration route" and "flyway" have in the past been used more or less indiscriminately, but . . . it seems desirable to designate as migration routes the individual lanes of avian travel from breeding grounds to winter quarters, and as flyways those broader areas into which certain migration routes blend or come together . . .

—F.H. Kortright, *The Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America*

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Daniel Chacón

MEAN LOOKS

"This is why I made it," I say.

"What have you made?" asks Vern, quoting with his fingers the word "made," as if I were claiming too much.

"You know what I mean," I say.

"Vern's like that," says Shelly from the couch, where she watches TV. "A number one asshole."

"Fuck you," he says, checking the numbers on his pager.

We're both sitting at the table.

"Have some respect," I say, looking at my mother and little brother Kevin, who are looking through the glass door of the oven. The Christmas cookies smell warm and sweet.

"Look who's talking respect," says Vern. He's 38 and has a beard with white hairs among the black. His eyeglasses are thick and his dark forehead has sweat beading on it, like always. "You caused more grief for Mom than all of us put together."

"You caused more smell," says Shelly.

"Fuck you," says Vern.

"You're such a retard," says Shelly. She's 26.

"So my friend Paco and I are just kicking it," I continue. "Nothing to do. It's about 100 degrees outside."

"And of course you're wearing your gang banger costume," says Vern.

"It's just how we dressed back then."

"Like a clown," he says.

"Like you dress any better," says Shelly.

Vern looks around the room. "I'm sorry. Did the fat chick say something?"

"I like baggy pants," says my little brother Kevin. He's leaning against my mother. He's eight. I'm telling this story for him.

"I don't like him to dress like a gang banger," says Mom. "Too many bad memories."

"Anyway, it's hot. A hundred and ten," I say. "We're on the corner of Blackstone and Shields, and it's crazy with cars, exhaust fumes burning our lungs. So Paco says, 'Hey, let's get on the city bus.' The busses are air-conditioned, so I think Paco's got something with that idea. What the hell. We had nowhere to go. So we wait. We see the bus rise up over the avenue, coming slowly in the traffic. When it gets closer, we can see through the windshield that the bus driver is this big fat man with a white beard like Santa Claus, and I joke to Paco, So this is