

Speculation

By Jenny Brooks

Ikoma, Japan, 1999

In a Japanese bookstore
I bought a map of Tennessee
and hung it on the wall
of my tiny apartment.

Names like Bells,
Friendship, Finger reminded me
of cotton gins, back yards, and oak trees.
Highways I once drove down
took me to Milan, Paris, Memphis.

I looked for Cherokee,
Bird Song, and Cub Creek along
the thin blue line, but the places
where my grandfather and I thrived
on trot lines, crappie rigs, and six dozen minnows
were only oxbows and tributaries.

With no Hatchie River to lead me home,
the Forked Deer was close,
But Smokey Lane wasn't there,
Miss Gladys' pond gone,
Gum Flat not even mentioned.
My grandfather's land was shapeless,
and my house only a speculation.

From my window, I can see
the south end of Mount Ikoma.
Down its steep west side
Osaka lies,
like the murky surface
of the Tennessee,
where a lady
with a lover's name on her lips
rode her white horse
into the swirling eddies below.

The Kintetsu line took me to
Tsurubashi, Tennoji, and Namba
where I bought a map of the lean island,
took it to my tiny apartment,
and taped it next to Tennessee.