

## IS THERE SPACE TRAVEL FOR THE HOMESICK?

By Lauren Ladner

Nighttime in the Delta transforms headlights  
into high beams, blinding  
in the rearview mirror—the only light  
for miles on the straight-flat highways.  
These roads cut through towns since passed away  
into forgetfulness, now mere truck stops  
on the way to places that still exist on  
gas station maps, places still remembered  
by the children of those long buried  
in the alluvial loam.

The van bears us across the still waters of  
harrowed cotton fields; half-lit houses  
float on the horizon—  
unbothered by our passing.  
I think of the boats  
off the shore at Graveline,  
and we turn right, towards the beach.

The darkened houses cast their nets  
for shrimp in the early morning  
(or late night, depending);  
green and red lights blink at the horizon  
and we know we are not alone,  
at the edge of the deep-dark  
Sound where the wind  
tears the breath from our lungs.

The van slows, stops.  
We are just outside of Yazoo City;  
two hundred thirty miles away  
from the shrimp boats and the beach.  
A gas station sign stains the low clouds green.  
An automatic streetlight directs cross-traffic  
that never comes, and flashes its green light  
at rows of ghosts.