



Editorial by giovanni singleton

CALLING PLANET EARTH CALLING PLANET EARTH CALLING PLANET EARTH
—Sun Ra

In 2004, I made a self-directed poetry pilgrimage to Hanoi, Vietnam. More specifically, I went to make offerings at the Temple of Literature, a complex of structures built in homage to a time when reading and writing were seen as holy activities. With incense in hand, I offered prayers for the perseverance of artistic endeavors and insight as the world attempts to navigate these increasingly troubled times. I stood for a long while gazing into the Lake of Clarity (more like a pond actually) in hopes of connecting to its purported wisdom. In the Lake, the fish remained in their flow even as my fountain pen emptied of ink.

Next site. A junket on Ha Long Bay, one of the great natural wonders of the world, where some 3,000 rock formations rise majestically out of water. When I tried to capture the essence of my surroundings with a disposable camera, all seem to recede, to retreat. How to hold air, sun, wind, or water in cupped hands?

And thus this issue's theme "nature: human and other" emerged. In the beginning, not much work arrived. As I held out hope for a poem in the shape of an Afro, accounts of weather workers, bird watching manifestos, garden journals, and plantation lyrics, a tsunami killed 225,000 people in 12 South Asian countries, earthquakes and mudslides ravaged the earth, a U.S.-led War raged in Iraq, bombs exploded on London public transit, and Hurricane Katrina uprooted thousands of U.S. citizens, exposing *America, the Beautiful's* true nature once more. *I feel the earth move under my feet. I feel the sky tumbling down, tumbling down.*

Whatcha gonna do about yo ass?
—Sun Ra, "Nuclear War"

From the Underground Railroad, which way is NORTH? The train's whistle blows. From the bottom of a slave ship, which way is EAST? Follow the elephants or flamingos. Way of the ancestors or ancients. Constellations, true consolation and counter to misshapen mapmaker.

A poet's illegible signature resembles a humpback whale. When I look at it quizzically, the poet replies in a pork-filled voice: *I've earned the right to scrawl my name.* Yet, unlike the humpback, he cannot see, sing, nor swim. Boat. row row row your...

Levees & leaf blowers. Poverty & power mowers. What agreements have we struck? What goodwill has been destroyed?

The pages that follow then are a refuge for all who find themselves awake in a world that has taken corn and left nothing in its place.

There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly.

—Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"