

The Meadow

Holly Welker

My family and I drove hours one Sunday to see a meadow in the mountains of Arizona. We stood behind a split-rail fence. "It's beautiful," my dad said. "It's for sale. If we had money we'd buy it." And we climbed the fence and wandered that acre of wildflowers and ferns, ate fried chicken and picked up our litter, and went home.

This image needs a fence, not to keep anything in or out, but to designate a crossing. Of course you know by looking where the meadow ends and the forest begins, but the act of swinging one leg and then the other over the fence while saying, "This boundary marks but doesn't prohibit" is the gesture I require. The place is neither pristine nor polluted, neither formidable

nor inviting, just matter-of-factly somewhere on earth; despite its for-saleness, the meadow seems to belong entirely to itself. When I decided to give up lying, I made my mind into that meadow; I opened my countenance like a split-rail fence, nothing to hide and no profit to gain except in the exchange of deceit and dissembling for clarity and candor. *Come look, everybody. Climb the fence if you're interested,*

*but when you finish your picnic
you must pick up your trash and go.*
I don't know if anyone takes up that offer,
but I know that since making it my mind
has evolved into a place instead of an essence.
I venture further afield now
and visit my mind for
its changing seasons, its open view.

HOLLY WELKER is an assistant professor of English and creative writing at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College. Currently her work is also appearing in *The Iowa Review*, *PMS*, and *The Cream City Review*.