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Oklahoma Homecoming

BY RICHARD D. KAHOE

When California quakes or Florida hurricanes
eclipse tornado memories,
when Houston unemployment goes ballistic,
when death or divorce dulls the luster
of the Rockies or the Ozarks,
can you go home to Oklahoma?

A pipeline matrix echoes busted oil booms;
“deer crossing” warns where whitetails
were never known before, but armadillos
challenge possums for road kill honors—
as egret immigrants curry beef,
hide-bleached by Charolais DNA,
ears half-masted by Brahman spin-offs.
And turnpike restaurant arches
are gilt McDonald’s gold.

But strangers still hail strangers
as pickups meet on country roads;
Native American faces look up from
highway crews, toll booths, and nursing stations.
Flat-topped elms and spreading cedars
bow to sun, wind, and drought;
mid-day glare engenders crow’s-feet,
while wildly whirling windmills
invoke the psychic ache of steady winds.
Cicada summer roadside songs buzz incessant,
where terra-cotta buttes table over grassy plains;
melon stands overflow from fertile sands,
the fatted wheat gilds June expanses,
and sorghum plush red-carpets August fields.
License plate codes prime dim memories
of county names ingested for Oklahoma History, and
sky blue state-flag fields shimmer over choice sites.
Small town diner menus lean on beef and fries—
“cholesterol” an oath in a foreign tongue.

But it can be.
Eat your heart out, Mister Wolfe,
I’m coming home. ■