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The Gorge

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Cover Page Footnote

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THE GORGE

It was hardly worth
calling an island,
that lump that stood
because something had to fill
the space
where the river took a trial separation
for thirty feet or so,
before reuniting
in a stagnant pool.
Mike and I
would find the only flat space
for our sleeping bags,
and lie cocooned and warm,
stolen cigarettes
sending smoke signals to the moon.
Help never came.

At 2 a.m.
we were shadows to each other,
comparing the shapes we saw
in the leafy overlap
silouhettted by moonlight.
These were still moments.
River noises didn't matter,
we understood them well enough,
and I think the island belonged to no-one,
which was important
to two boys who were forever
being chased out of somebody's back yard.

One morning,
we woke and shed our sleeping bags.
stretched our arms
and made for the bridge.
We were young,
but we knew the bridge
was falling apart.
Mike crossed first and safely.
I followed but stepped in a gap
where a plank no longer served.
I almost fell,
and I'm sure I left
some skin and blood on the bridge.
but I crossed over.

Now is many years ahead.
Mike and I are taller than our parents.
The bridge is gone,
and the other side is lost forever.

Richard G. Barrington