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Green and White and Red

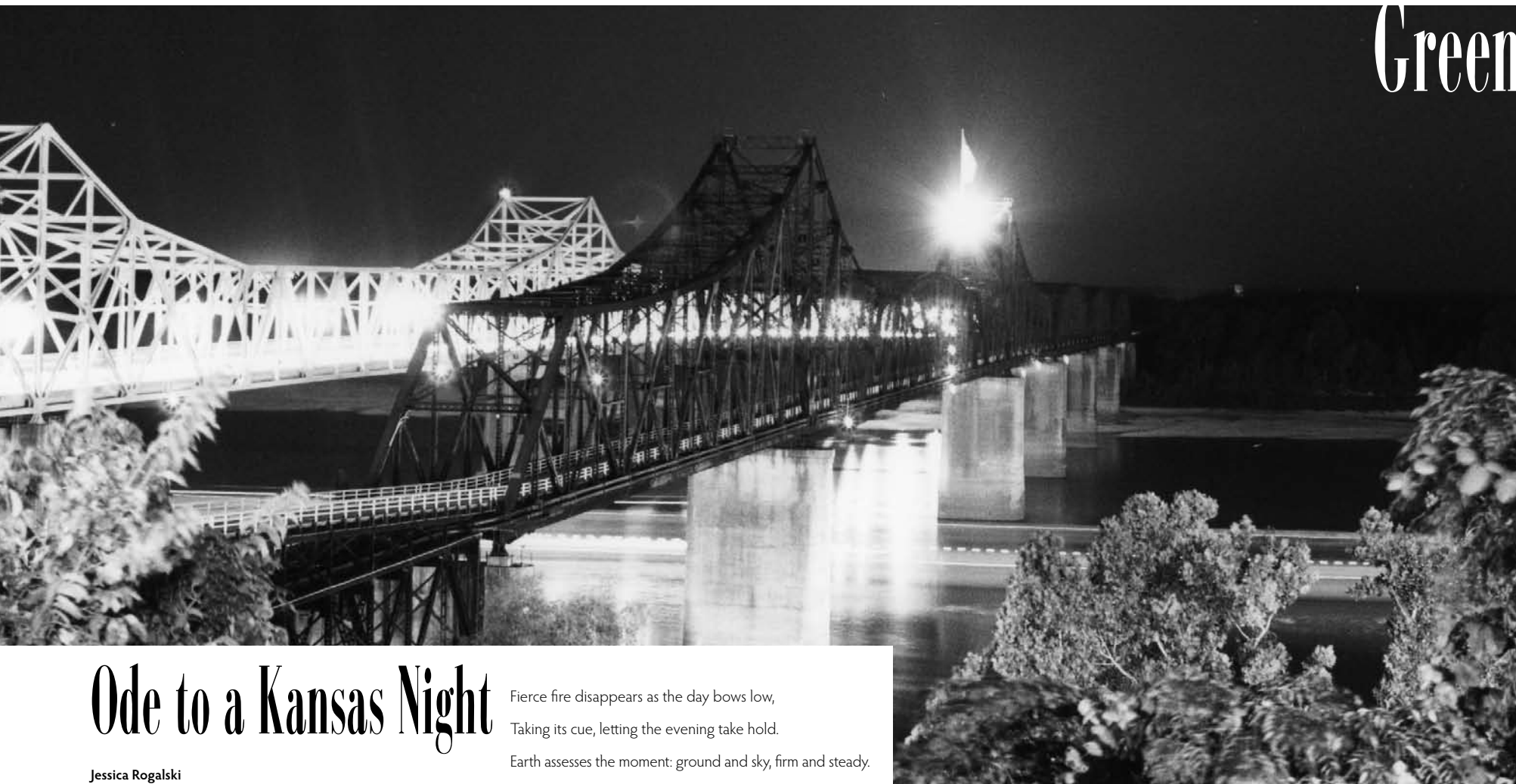
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Green and White and Red

Anum Tahir

AS THE DAWN MIST MELTED INTO THUNDER CLOUDS **THE SOUND OF MOTORBIKES** became a roaring crescendo and a crowd of several thousand surged towards Pakistan's border with India. Mounted police lashed out with bamboo canes and women and children screamed as they were crushed against a gate blocking the way to the 'Wagah' frontier crossing, fifty meters away.

"Pakistan Zindabad!" (Long live Pakistan!) bellowed the crowd, in between cursing the police. One man fell to the ground, blood pouring from his head, searching for his glasses amid a sea of lost shoes.

So began the Independence Day celebrations on the fourteenth of August along the line where Britain hurriedly divided the "Jewel in the Crown." Sixty years ago on that day in history, triggered the biggest mass migration in history.

The prevailing atmosphere was actually more festive than aggressive — the crowds had come to see the ritual flag-raising ceremony by goose-stepping border guards in regimental finery. But the chaos and violence served as a reminder of the bloody scenes that followed Britain's decision to split Punjab, one of its colony's most populous and prosperous regions, down the middle.

Pakistanis celebrated their nation's sixtieth birthday on Tuesday, the fourteenth of August, 2007 with celebratory gunfire and colorful displays of national pride, pushing the problems of recent political turmoil and surging militant violence into the background for a day.

Tens of thousands of people rallied throughout the world's second most populous Muslim nation waving Pakistan's olive-green flag with a white crescent, while others held small prayer gatherings at home. Women daubed their forearms with elaborate henna-drawn flowers in national colors, and children ran through the streets late into Monday night setting off firecrackers.

And there I stood in front of the television thinking . . . Independence Day reminded me of the time when on one thirteenth of August, many, many years ago, our dad brought all of us kids together and told us a story. He told us how he was a young

Ode to a Kansas Night

Jessica Rogalski

Mirthless trees bask in fading light,
Surrounded by earth in shades of pine, amber, smoldering red.
Admiring dying clouds of fading white,
While an indifferent wind snaps around them.

Fierce fire disappears as the day bows low,
Taking its cue, letting the evening take hold.
Earth assesses the moment: ground and sky, firm and steady.
Moon radiates, beaming through fading aura of sun.

Starfire abates,
Swallowed by the horizon.
While hazy sky melts into liquid black,
Star flecks slowly dominate the night.

With a breath, I sink back into the frozen grass;
Beneath the charcoal evening, everything is diminished.