

midnight, if you can pick it up . . . Phillips, the other day, claimed they never heard of this music out on the West Coast . . . and it makes me think of those places, those cities? I'd like to go there, see what it's really like."

She nodded. "It's a big country . . ." She sighed, and shifted her books from one arm to the other. "You wonder if you'll live here—you know, in Pittsburgh—for the rest of your life."

"There could be worse things," he said, but as soon as he'd said it, he knew it wasn't right. "I don't know—I just feel, what I'm looking for, I'm not going to find it here."

"I understand . . ." she said. "I feel the same thing, sometimes . . ."

In the earlier autumn, the campus had been a beautiful place, a kind of island in the middle of an ugly area of the city. Blaisdell had made comparisons to the medieval universities, the town and gown, in his medieval history class. In a way, it was an apt comparison.

"Maybe I'll go to San Francisco," he said, looking down toward the city in its haze. "You know what they say . . ."

"No, I don't know what they say," Mary Ann said, a bit petulantly, not like her.

He sighed. "They say—Oscar Wilde said—that it's a curious thing, but everyone who goes missing turns up in San Francisco."

She said nothing for a while, and he began to feel uneasy. He'd overstepped some kind of boundary.

"It's a long way, San Francisco. A long way away."

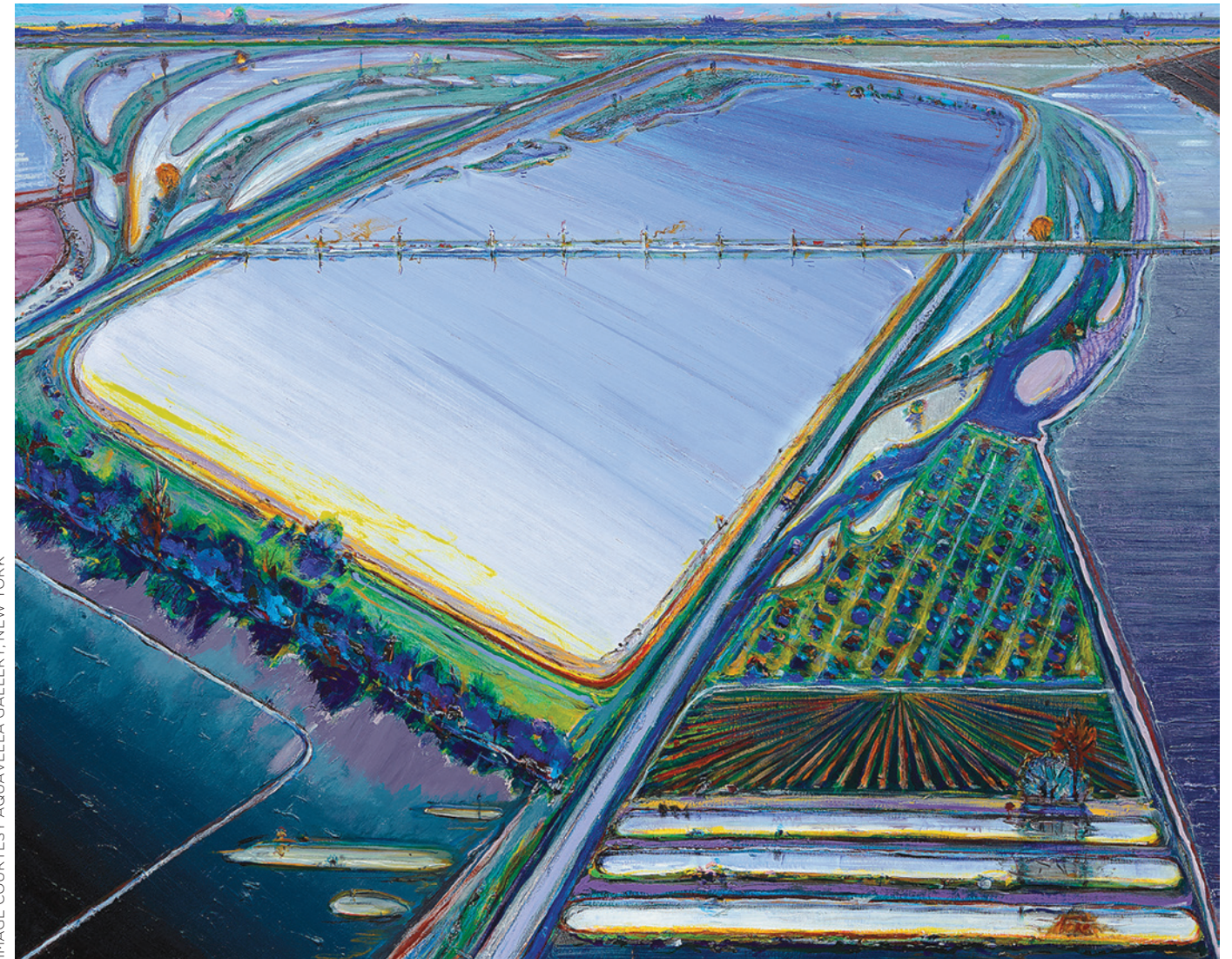
"Yes. It is," he said, and felt his heart contract at the thought of how far it was.

Don Skiles's fiction has appeared in many magazines, including *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *MungBeing*, *Gargoyle*, *Over the Transom*, and *West Branch*, and in two previous collections, *Miss America and Other Stories*, and *The James Dean Jacket Story*. Pelekinesis published his novel *Football* in 2014 and will publish a new collection of short fiction, *Rain After Midnight*, in 2017.

WAYNE THIEBAUD

Flood Waters, 2006/2013

Oil on canvas, 48 x 60 in



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