



In the long dry valleys of eastern Nevada, where rainshadow rain falls in desert rations and the silence is so deep it rings, water has been in storage for about ten thousand years. These are the waterlogged basins, as they are known to science—the saturated valleys—but if you were to look out upon them that description is the last that would come to your mind. You would, in a glance, take in a million acres with nothing taller than the bunchgrass, the buffalo grass, the shad scale, the white and the black sage in tawny, desiccated boulevards between the high ranges. A daisy-wheel windmill, a cluster of cottonwoods—tens of miles apart—speak of settlement in some of the most austere and beautiful landscape between the oceans. It is a country held together by its concealed water, without which it would become exposed bedrock and dust.

—John McPhee, *The Patch*, 2018



1 Flooded salt flat near Pilot Peak, ancient Lake Bonneville/P'ia-pa (Shoshone for "Big Water"), Great Salt Lake, Utah, 2018













