



# Telling the Map

*Christopher Rowe*

## **Telling the Map** Christopher Rowe

There are ten stories here including one readers have waited ten long years for: in new novel-la *The Border State* Rowe revisits the world of his much-lauded story *The Voluntary State*. Competitive cyclists twins Michael and Maggie have trained all their lives to race internationally. One thing holds them back: their mother who years before crossed the border ... into Tennessee.

**Christopher Rowe's** stories have been finalists for the Hugo, Nebula, World Fantasy, and Theodore Sturgeon awards, frequently reprinted, translated into a half-dozen languages, praised by the *New York Times Book Review*, and long listed in the *Best American Short Stories*. He holds an MFA from the Bluegrass Writer's Studio. Rowe and his wife Gwenda Bond co-write the Supernormal Sleuthing Series for children, and reside in a hundred-year-old house in Lexington, Kentucky.

## **Telling the Map Details**

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Author : Christopher Rowe

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## **From Reader Review Telling the Map for online ebook**

### **Andrey Shchekin says**

"The Voluntary State", which I read before this book, is one of my favorite stories ever — each time I reread it I discover some new small details, and yet it tells just enough. This style comes through in the whole book.

I started to make a list of highlights, then realized almost every story is a highlight to me. One special mention is "The Border State", which manages to add more details to the world of Voluntary State without spoiling the other story.

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### **Kimberly says**

Collections of short stories are not usually my thing, but these inventive stories hang together in a way that describes a strange, post-apocalyptic world without actually placing them all explicitly in the same universe. Religion, transportation, maps, and the earth of Kentucky (of some Kentucky anyway) wind their way through the tales in a unsettling but satisfying way.

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### **Etola says**

A gem of a collection, full of imaginative sff. What really struck me was the magical-realist style of the stories: we're plopped into these worlds and some of them are more familiar than others but there's always something weird going on that makes it suddenly and beautifully strange. Some stories are more tragic or beautiful or weird but all feel very real, populated by sympathetic characters and grounded in a Kentucky that is both familiar and alien. But even though the stories all share Kentucky as a sort of base setting, the stories are all very distinct.

Definitely worth the read if you're a lover of truly imaginative fiction.

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### **Suzi says**

Not sure if I can describe in any way that would do them justice how splendidly weird and wonderful and heartrending these stories are. The collision of the mechanical and natural worlds, the collision and collusion of the world of humans with the creations we/they make ... the ideas are tremendous and the execution gloriously painful and right.

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### **Lee Ann says**

This collection of short stories is as clever as it is strange. See my full review on [cabbageblossomreview.com](http://cabbageblossomreview.com).

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## Cheryl says

Have you ever read a book that even if the subject matter is not something you usually read, you love the book because the writing is so good. This is one of those books. It is a book that is not even close to anything else you have ever read. I think the closest I could compare it to is a Harlan Ellison book. The are short stories that take place in Kentucky but a Kentucky in some different dimension than the one we live in. The Contrary Gardener is the first story and I wish some day there would be more of it because I really wonder what happens after but you have to read the Voluntary State and the Border State. These stories are amazing! I don't want to live in that world but Christopher can certainly take you to visit it in a way you will never forget your visit there and you may appreciate your own life a little more. I really recommend this book even if you don't want to read it. It is one of those books that is just worth it. At least it was for me.

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## Marcheto says

3.5 stars

I had only read one of Christopher Rowe's stories before, so I didn't really know what to expect from this book, and although there were a couple of stories that didn't grab me, it has left a pleasant taste in my mouth. Telling the Maps is a varied collection that compiles ten pieces of different lengths (from flash-fiction to novella), styles and genres. Most of the stories (the strongest ones, in my opinion) can be classified as science fiction, Kentucky-dystopian science fiction more specifically in several cases, with a few and interesting examples of religious dystopian science fiction, like Rowe's award-nominated "Another Word for Map Is Faith", my highlight from the book.

I also enjoyed "The Voluntary State", another of Rowe's more popular stories, in which he describes another weird and intriguing dystopian world that in my opinion was too complex and new for a piece of this length, making the story a bit confusing and too centered in the world-building to the detriment of the plot and characters. On the contrary, the "The Border State", a new novella that takes up the second half of this collection, set in this same world, was the perfect length to continue discovering this society in a more relaxed and enjoyable way, and it was my second highlight in this volume thanks to those threatening and disturbing rivers and despite the fact that I don't like cycling at all.

Overall, an interesting collection that I would recommend to any science fiction fan, and the perfect way to start discovering Rowe's short fiction.

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## Skip Baney says

Wow. I wasn't expecting to like this as much as I did, but I suspect it's going to be in my top five for 2018. I stumbled across it in the shelving cart at the library and recognized the first story (The Contrary Gardner) from a "years best sci-fi" anthology.

Many of the stories have a southern/rural bent, and that's something I don't come across much in sci-fi. One reviewer called it "near future rural dystopian", another "splendidly weird and wonderful and heartrending"; both are very accurate, IMHO. It sounds odd, and probably not something I would normally gravitate to, but Rowe's storytelling and world building is incredible.

I hate pulling out the "literary sci-fi" backhanded complement, but it came to mind immediately. The stories were lean and character focused. They stood on their own and didn't focus on technology or exposition except where it was absolutely necessary for the story. AI and nanotechnology play a big part of the two standout stories (The Voluntary State, and The Border State), but Rowe hardly devotes more than a few sentences describing them and doesn't really need to. That's not to say that they're devoid of tech - both of those stories have some of the most far out and creative world building I've seen. It just doesn't take center stage.

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### **Paul Kane says**

I think The Bitter Southerner recommended this as a cool sci-fi book from a southern author, and i have to agree.

Mr. Rowe is from Kentucky, and with the exception of one story set in Tennessee (a frightening TN ruled by a malevolent AI) and one set in space, the rest of the stories are set in Kentucky. But these are stories of distant futures that might be. They are all fascinating, and my only complaint it that the last work in the collection, which concerns bicycle racers fighting the evil AI in Tennessee -- that story drags a bit.

Otherwise -- Mr. Rowe has a fascinating imagination and i would love to read more set in any of these worlds that he describes.

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### **Kathleen says**

Reading this book is an adventure. Rowe is a creative world builder, and he weaves engrossing stories within this environment.

Rowe's world has some of the power of the best dystopias. He creates a polluted world where people build from scraps and debris (like Mad Max) and yet preserve some unaccountable classic pieces (Shakespeare in STATION ELEVEN and Greek myth in this book.) There are intricate state-supported religions. Rowe also incorporates the humor of ALICE IN WONDERLAND with quixotic rulers creating a mish-mash of reasonable and incomprehensible rules. He also has rebellions/revolutions and quixotic creatures like China Mieville.

This book would have benefitted from better editing. There are a number of awkward sentences. Although in some stories I felt like I had stumbled into somebody else's dream --What's happening here?---the book is well worth reading. I recommend it.

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### **Dan says**

Excellent collection of literary near future rural dystopian stories and novellas, most set in Kentucky. I'd list standout stories but there really aren't any bad ones. It's as if a science fiction writer shared Wendell Berry's concerns but thought that revolution was the answer. Not sure I agree but the book is highly recommended. 4.5.

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**Tobias says**

An impressive and beguiling collection of science fiction, unfolding in unexpected ways.

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**Nathalia says**

I simply could not get into this short story. The plot and the subject matter was far too dry for me to form even a slight interest, and I found myself zoning out throughout many parts of the story. I also had a rather difficult time forming a connection to the characters.

I wouldn't recommend this story to any Fantasy or Science Fiction lovers.

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**Sarah says**

A collection of mind-boggling stories from the boggling mind of Christopher Rowe. You think you know where you are -- well, it's usually Kentucky -- and that you have a grasp on what's going on, and then a car nuzzles someone for comfort, or a betting clerk hovers in the air beside the protagonist, or a telephone has to be killed. The stories are fresh and the narrative voices delightful, but it's the world-building details that absolutely slay me.

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**Doug says**

I enjoy Christopher Rowe's stories enough that I was happy to spend money on this collection even though I had read most of the stories before. He writes wonderfully, and he creates intriguing visions of a future, often post-Singularity, America through the lens of Kentucky.

The twin centerpieces of this collection are "The Voluntary State" (originally published in 2004) and "The Border State", a brand new novella that makes up half of this collection. Both stories center around a Tennessee that's been taken over by what seems to be nano-bot technologies, but never lose sight of the fullness of the central characters in the context of the fictional world at large.

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