

**you are here**  
the journal of creative geography

Volume 10 • Summer 2008

# you are here

the journal of creative geography

Volume 10, Summer 2008

*you are here* is an independent, annual publication produced by graduate students in the Department of Geography and Regional Development:

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Printed by Commercial Printers, Tucson, Arizona.

*you are here* is made possible by grants, donations, and subscriptions. We would like to thank all of our readers and supporters, as well as the following institutions for their sponsorship:

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On the cover: "Space" by John Williams, ink on vellum

- p. 5 Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HAER PA,35-SCRAN,6C-5  
p. 7 "Madrid's Retiro Park," woodblock by Benjamin Fraser  
pp. 9-10 Photos courtesy of Lowell Mick White  
pp. 19-21 Photos by Stace Ginsburg  
pp. 22-23 "you are here covers, 1998-2008," various contributors (see individual issues for details)  
p. 26 "*Cichorium intybus*, L. chicory," photo by R.A. Howard, courtesy of Smithsonian Institution  
p. 29-33 Sculpture and drawings by John Williams  
p. 37 Artwork from *Maps of the Imagination*, Trinity University Press  
p. 41 "Behind You," drawing by Steve Cartwright

## EDITOR'S NOTE

4

## MAP ELEMENTS

Loomis Breaker, Wilkes-Barre  
(poem)  
William Doreski  
5

Retiro Park  
(art and text)  
Benjamin Fraser  
6

Twelve Things I Remember  
About Home  
(non-fiction)  
Lowell Mick White  
8

The Paris Catacombs  
(non-fiction)  
Adrienne Ross  
12

If We Stay Here Long Enough  
(poem)  
Sue Swartz  
15

Unraveling the Thread  
(non-fiction)  
Lauren Linsalata  
16

Navigating Foam  
(photography and prose)  
Stace Ginsburg  
19

There to Here: Ten Years of  
Creative Geography  
(retrospective)  
Kimi Eisele  
22

Chicory Blue  
(non-fiction)  
Lorraine Berry  
24

Mapping  
(art)  
John Williams  
29

The Charles Johnson Projection  
(poem)  
Elliot Harmon  
34

Exploring the Literary Mind  
(interview)  
Hellen Harty  
37

Subway Blues  
(poem)  
Donna Pucciani  
40

Behind You  
(cartoon)  
Steve Cartwright  
41

PLACE NAMES  
41

CONTRIBUTORS  
42

**NOTE:** Please see inside cover for all artwork credits.



## Editor's Note

Here it is. Welcome to the Tenth Anniversary edition of *you are here*. Before you read another word of the eleventh printed volume, I dare you to pause. Feel the weight of the journal in your hands. Slide your fingers over the glossy cover taking care of the two mere staples that hold *you are here* together. Look up from the pages. Where are you? What do you see? What do you hear? Where will you go next?

Resume. I arrived in Tucson five years ago, a rambunctious freshman with no real direction and despised the place. The intense glare of the hundred plus degree sun burned my skin and my psyche. The crowded campus of the University of Arizona was a sprawling maze of possibilities and people. I struggled to negotiate the space. I changed majors; I changed hair colors; I changed friends. Nothing quite fit. But as I began to adapt to the desert, I settled on creative writing as a major. However, the next semester, I took a geography course, and without losing a beat, I held on to both. As I progressed through my studies, I delighted in the useful connections I discovered time and time again between creative writing and geography. I discovered that the desert—instead of the barren expanse of rock and sand it had first seemed—was full of life. My connection to the place grew stronger, and I needed to boast. Who might listen? What I needed was a place where merging geography and creativity was encouraged, was delighted in, was required; what I needed was *you are here*. Here it is.

As we celebrate ten years of *you are here*, it is important to consider how we discovered the journal. Kimi Eisele, the founding editor, reflects on her desire for a better space in which to discuss and alter the discipline of geography, and thus, her motivation for creating *you are here*. Her piece is the issue's anchor and serves as the center spread where all eleven covers are reprinted. She reiterates the call to again consider the most fundamental question of *you are here*: what does place mean to you?

Branching out from the anchor at the center of the issue, Lorraine Berry's memoir shows that while our physical connection to place may be transitory, the

need to find such connections remains strong. Stace Ginsburg's photography and prose show that the power of memory can keep our connection to place intense. Lowell Mick White's detailed descriptions of the farmland of West Virginia, and Lauren Linsalata's tour of the New Mexico colorscape remind us that there is much to be discovered below the surface. Whether we be wandering the dark catacombs of Paris or the crumbled avenues of the ruins at Tuzigoot, the vigorous streets of New York City or the abandoned breakers of Pennsylvania, the longing to describe and share the importance of place is evident.

We are reminded that mapping induces distortion, whether it be mapping a piece of fiction or the physical landscape. John Williams' cylindrical globes hint at the abstraction caused when a three dimensional world is translated to other mediums, while his drawings emphasize context. Hellen Harty's interview with Peter Turchi indicates that distortion is also difficult to avoid in the writing process. Meanwhile, Elliot Harmon contemplates the implications of a flat earth, and Benjamin Fraser's woodblock print shows each place is merely one piece in the larger flow of life.

Each work represents the call of *you are here* to contemplate the importance of place. As we celebrate ten years of *you are here*, it is essential that we also consider the question: where will we go next? In a world that becomes increasingly electronic by the day, we must wonder whether there is need any longer for a printed journal. So I urge you once again to enjoy the experience of holding this journal in your hands. Can it take you places that your computer screen cannot?

We are deeply grateful to our readers, contributors, and benefactors, and we hope you enjoy this issue of *you are here*. Whether the coming years find us in print or virtual, we hope you will continue to support our need to maintain this place, this journal, where creative geography sprouted and continues to thrive in the harsh desert sun.

—Melanie Meyers  
Tucson, Arizona  
Monsoon Season

## Loomis Breaker, Wilkes-Barre

William Doreski

Nothing uglier than the greenhouse  
slab of this structure, hundreds of panes  
broken or missing, the thousand  
still intact so dusted with coal

they look like many rotten bruises.  
The conveyor lurching to the piles  
of crushed anthracite looks spindly  
as a flicker of spider web.

Below, a payloader and truck  
interact, puny vehicles  
to aggress on such a heap.  
The lower part of the breaker



is three stories of poured concrete.  
I press one hand against it  
and feel an ancient earthen cool  
simmer through me. At my feet

a pair of discarded tires,  
old-fashioned wide whitewalls, relax  
in the filth, their working lives done.  
This breaker won't stand here much longer,

the anthracite seams exhausted,  
whole villages collapsing  
above burning abandoned mines.  
As I kick at the treadless old tires

I feel all Pennsylvania  
and almost all America  
shudder with the secret pleasure  
of those slow underground fires.

## Retiro Park

Benjamin Fraser

Madrid's Retiro Park is situated in the center of the capital city near the renowned Prado museum and is a key node in the struggle over public space. Although in its inception a place of refuge for royalty, later it was opened to the public. Most recently the park has seen historical restoration, increased privatization and subsequent police intervention as part of a familiar drive for capital accumulation that has refashioned Madrid's central districts. At issue is certainly the question posed by Henri Lefebvre, "Who has the right to the city?"

The answer to this question can only be a dynamic one. After all, as Spanish critic Mariano José de Larra penned in 1832, "Before all else, the public is the pretext, the cover, for the private needs of each man." There is a movement that breathes life into the static categories of 'public' and 'private' space. Space is envisioned, produced, interpreted, and refashioned through a complex process that involves ideas and representations as much as the material world.

In her groundbreaking work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), anti-urbanist Jane Jacobs suggested that the city was a complex problem akin to those of the life sciences. As Spanish novelist Luis Martín-Santos wrote in his masterful work of fiction *Tiempo de Silencio* (1961), "A man is the image of a city and a city a man turned inside-out."

How does one approach a complex living problem?

The sidewalks are the arteries of the urban ballet.

The Retiro Park is merely a cell in the ongoing flow of urban life. ■



Madrid's Retiro Park  
Linoleum woodblock print



## Twelve Things I Remember About Home

Lowell Mick White

### 1. *The Mispunctuated Town*

Cox's Mills is a tiny place, even for West Virginia, with a population of maybe seventy-five, two stores, a post office, a closed schoolhouse, and a church that holds services one Sunday a month. It lies stretched out along Rt. 47, following Pike Fork between Horn Creek and Hog Run. Cox's Mills is "five miles from everywhere," my grandfather used to say, if everywhere is defined as the surrounding communities of Burnt House, Auburn, Alice, and Troy. Alice is a ghost now, but Cox's Mills is not too different from the surviving other three, a small community, insulated and static, growing gently shabbier as the years pass.

On the map and in the postal directory the town's name is spelled Coxs Mills, no apostrophe, apparently because mapmakers and zip code cipherers don't like apostrophes. I've always spelled it Cox's Mills, anyway, because I do like apostrophes, and I like things to make sense. I've never heard anyone else offer an opinion about the spelling of the town's name, and since I go there now only in memory I probably never will.

### 2. *Millstones and the Bridge Pool*

My mother told me that the millstones for Cox's mills had been just upstream from the bridge where Rt. 47 crossed Horn Creek, and I tried several times over the years to find them, wading up the shallow part of the creek under a dark canopy of sycamores and willows, under a water gap and on up. I never found the millstones, and my guess is that they must have been buried under the silt and fine gravel washing off the hills, buried and lost like so much else. Below the bridge there was a large, deep pool where Pike Fork flowed into Horn Creek, and I did my first fish-

ing there, catching smallmouth bass and bluegills. Sometimes I would fish off the bridge abutment, cringing when log trucks or well-service trucks from Dowell or Halliburton raced by. In the lot next to the pool was an olive-painted, corrugated metal building, an old gauging station for Eureka Pipeline that my grandfather had worked in. One damp December day a truck came and loaded up the building and hauled it off somewhere. In later years weeds grew around the concrete foundation and multiflora rose snaked around a rusted old steam engine whose original purpose no one could tell me.

### 3. *Hunting under the Hickories*

I have been told that before the chestnut blight hit the eastern hardwood forests, chestnut trees were where you went to look for squirrels. It wasn't unusual to see as many as thirty squirrels working in one tree. But the chestnuts are long gone, the remaining dead hulks chopped down and used for fence posts, long enough ago now that even the fence posts are gone, even though chestnut made the best and longest-lasting fence posts. Now the squirrels in our part of the country gather mostly around hickory trees. The leaves of the hickories turn bright yellow in the fall and stand out between the reds and browns of maples and oaks, and when I went hunting I would sit beneath the trees, quietly, beneath the soft falling leaves and hard falling green nuts. Squirrel season was the best time of year: the days were cool and usually sunny, and the woods were silent but for the falling leaves and the rustlings of small animals. One time I heard fallen leaves crackling—something moving—and instead of a squirrel, a gray fox came over the edge of the hill. He trotted right toward me until, when he was six or seven feet away, I said, "Hello, little fox." The fox stopped

and regarded me for a few moments before angling off, circling around my hickory tree but still heading to wherever he was heading. I told my grandfather about the fox and he said, "Td a-shot the son-of-a-bitch."

### 4. *Apple Trees*

Below the house, along the creek, we had two immense apple trees. In a good year the trees would be utterly loaded, groaning under the weight of the apples. My grandmother would literally spend all day in the kitchen during apple time, canning apples, making applesauce or apple butter, the kitchen windows dripping with steam. The ground beneath the trees was pocked with holes and tunnels of ground squirrels that ate fallen apples, and beyond the fence, under the rocks, there were snakes, copperheads and blacksnakes, that ate the squirrels. At night deer would come down off the hill and eat apples, and we could sit in the porch and hear them chewing and sometimes choking. In the summer of 1988 the trees finally died, and the people who were renting the house cut them down, leaving the stumps standing high enough to run a clothesline from one to the other. After the trees died I lost interest in the place.

### 5. *Farming the Hills*

The hills there in that part of West Virginia are hills, not mountains, but they rise so steeply away from the road, away from the creek, that they hem in the sky and induce a sense of confinement. I remember my mother telling about her first trip away from home, to Iowa to visit relatives, and how sick the prairie landscape made her: "All that space. There was nothing around to hold up the sky!" No doubt flatlanders would get sick in Cox's Mills, and feel trapped and nervous. In the days of my grandfather's youth, the hills were still covered in virgin timber. His family—and the other pioneer families over along Rocky Fork and Old Field Fork—would work their way through



the woods, uphill and down, cutting down the trees, selling the solid old timber, burning the rest, rooting up the stumps with mules, planting wheat the first year, corn the second, then grass for cattle, working on and on through the woods. He said the hills were so steep they had to plant the seed corn with shotguns—just stand back and fire it into the hillsides. But all that ended. Farming was difficult at any time in that country, a crazy idea, really, and impossible after the topsoil washed away, and so the farms died out and the trees came back, slowly, thin young forests that have grown more robust over the years. Still, my grandfather would say, "By God, when the Russians take over, they'll have people out working on those hills again."

### 6. *My Palm Prints in Concrete*

Sometime in late 1962 my grandfather poured concrete for a new walkway that led around the front of the house, from the front door to the east porch. We were down that weekend, and he had me put my hands in the cement to make a mark. I remember the icky texture of the cement—it was cold, and sticky, and I didn't like it. My father took a nail and wrote my name and the date beneath the palm prints, and I guess it's all still there. At least, it was when I finally sold the house. The concrete had buckled, bulged up by the roots of a maple tree, but my prints endured, faint and shallow but legible.



### 7. *Our Hill*

When I was very young my grandfather ran cattle on the front of the hill, the side that faced the house, and the cattle grazed the hillside down to short grass, dirt and a few blackberry vines. After he got rid of the cattle the hill began to regrow. Brush—filth, we called it—took over, mostly thorny multiflora rose and more blackberries; then a few trees began to poke through, sycamores at first and then maples and oaks. The top of the hill had been left wooded and was very dark and shady, and you would pass through those first woods and come out on a flat, more or less open area that had once been a planted field. Rocks had been pulled out to let the plow through and were piled at the upper end. We had peach trees up there (peaches down below by the creek would not bear fruit), short lived trees that were all but dead by the time I began exploring the woods. The dead trees stood for years like skeletons until they began to rot and collapse into the brush. From the top of the hill you could see miles of land that were empty, used very hard in the past and now all but unsettled.

### 8. *The Hay Barn and the Meadow*

Directly across the creek from the house was a small hay meadow and an old barn. We used to get two cuttings a year off that land until people started running fewer and fewer cattle and no one bothered to come by and cut it. The grass would grow and fall over, pushed down by rain or pulled down by gravity, and there would be

wide trails through it where deer would pass to get to the apples. The old barn where the hay was stored grew more and more decrepit over the years and became a home for yellow jackets and snakes. When she was dying, my grandmother would look out the window at the meadow, the wasted hay, and one time she said, "It makes me sad looking out there at that. You know some old cow'll be wanting that hay this winter."

### 9. *Pike Fork*

On the maps the upper part of the creek is called Coxcamp Fork, but I never heard anyone call it that. The local name was Pike Fork, but I never heard anyone use that, either, at least on a regular basis. It was just "the creek." It ran through our property, separating us from the hill. As a child there in the summers I usually spent all day down in the creek looking for fossils, catching crayfish or trapping minnows. It never occurred to me to be lonely. I would be down at the creek all day, and then in the evenings I would go back up to the house. At night fog would drift down from the hills, and I always sat out on the porch and listened to the creek run, and I could hear crickets and frogs and other animals, and I could hear owls hoot and deer stomp around by the apple trees. I could hear all the thick dark night noises, and once I saw a snake crossing the road in the headlights of an oncoming car.

### 10. *High Water*

In high water, people upstream would throw trash into the river, sometimes plain garbage

but more often large chunks of wood that were too expensive or impractical to haul off, like rotten lumber or trimmed tree branches or brush. As a very young child the junk in the high water always excited me—I imagined the old logs and boards as naval vessels, battleships—a fleet attacking the minnows. In very high water, the creek would stretch clear across the meadow to lap at the base of the apple trees, and though our house was high enough up on the hillside that it never got flooded, we could feel the rumble of the muddy brown water as it pushed downstream.

### 11. *The Langford House*

The Langford house was across the road and down a bit. The Langford family was long gone, died out or moved away, and the house was rented out occasionally to very poor families, until at last it grew too dilapidated and run down to rent to anyone. One night, after it had been vacant for a several years, my grandmother claimed she saw the house all lit up—glowing in the dark. My grandfather dismissed her, said she was probably dreaming, but I suspected ghosts. By that time I was living away from Cox's Mills, and I was familiar with ghosts—not just the ordinary spirits that might take over a property, but ghosts that got inside your head, ghosts not only of the dead, but of the living, too, ghosts of family and ghosts of place, ghosts that can follow a person around and bother them with guilt and shame and regret that cannot be exorcised.

### 12. *The Tree that Didn't Fall Until Later*

It was late when I arrived home for Christmas in 1981, driving in from Texas, and I was very tired, and I was hungry, and I wanted to sit around and decompress, but my grandfather was all agitated and he was saying, "Where'd you park? Out by the barn? Well, you get out there and move your goddamn truck. There's a tree a-going to fall on it." He followed me out into the dark and pointed across the road into the night. He said there was a big tree over there that had been struck by lightning and might fall any moment. So I moved my pickup. The next day I could see a big oak that been indeed struck by lightning—there was a pale vertical stripe running the length of the tree where the bark had split away. But the tree didn't fall—not then, at least. Years later when I sold the house I came by to take one last look around, and the new owner was walking me out to where I was parked. He was a nice man, retired and living alone, and he said he would take good care of the house. "I know all your family's memories are wrapped up here," he said. By that time everyone was dead, and I didn't really care, or thought I didn't. I didn't say anything. Then I looked up across the road and the lightning struck tree wasn't there. It had finally fallen, not down the hill but across it—but, still, the damn tree had finally rotted and keeled over, and for some reason I just didn't know what to make of it. I stood there for a while, staring dumbly at the hillside, and then I got in my truck and drove back to the new home I was making in Texas. ■





## The Paris Catacombs

Adrienne Ross

The doors to 1 Place Denfert-Rochereau are black. Printed there in block letters are the words: *Entrée Des Catacombes* (Entrance to the Catacombs). It is mid-day. I am hungry. I buy a chocolate croissant from the boulangerie across the street and nibble it as I enter the ossuary's doors, pay five euros, and take my place in the line of tourists walking past warning signs (*Le chiens ne sont pas admis / Dogs are not allowed*), past historical photographs of the centuries-old quarries being transformed into catacombs, past video cameras, and down the spiral staircase to the bone yard beneath the streets of Paris' Latin Quarter. I am far from home, alone in a city of stones and strange words.

In the world above, years ago, I was searching for merlins, peregrines, eagles along western Washington's Bow Edison Road when I found a dead deer in the knee-high, roadside grass. Her nose was ebony, her tawny fur was coarse with dirt and gravel, her legs were arced for flight as she must have been before being hit by a car. She was gutted open. Rain pooled pink with blood. Her ribs were intact: bone sentinels standing guard over heart, lungs, intestines long after the battle was lost.

We walk down a tight, curling staircase; its steps worn gray stone. For a time, we can hear the whistles and sirens from the street. We are twenty or so meters underground. Where are we? Where am I? Where is my lover or my friends, all half a world away? We come to a dark and narrow, stone walled passageway. Stones crunch under footsteps. The electric hum of sparse light bulbs, the chitchat of tourists, a girl's high-pitched "Daddy?" echo as we walk. In the underground air is a smell too clean for death. We walk. The passageway turns through darkness.

We walk past cells barred by metal grates, past a half-eaten apple, past a fire extinguisher. We walk into a gallery where there are shadows, stone columns and a stone floor, a white plastic lawn chair with an open novel on its seat, and a guard wearing sneakers, a blue rain parka, and a red baseball cap. Signs on columns read: *Arrete! C'est ici l'empire de la morte. Vous etes invité à ne rien toucher, et à ne pas fumer dans l'ossuaire.* (Stop! This is the empire of the dead. You are asked to not touch and to not smoke in the ossuary.)

In the world above, years ago, on a dirt road near Landruk, Nepal, I was bargaining with a Tibetan refugee for silver bracelets when I saw on his roadside stand what I thought was a gray shell cut in half, tin-plate on the inside, Buddhist prayers carved on the outside. It was a human skull, fragile and near weightless in my hand. Tibetan Buddhists regard death as liberation from the delusions, fears, desires stalking us like hungry ghosts. Perhaps a Buddhist could have meditated over the skull on the impermanence of life, but I believed then, and still do, that I have only one life to live as best I can. I confused the occipital and parietal bones with the hopes and loves of the person they once sheltered. I put the skull down. I bought finger cymbals and a garnet ring instead.

We lose our loose community of strangers and tourists at the bone vault's entrance. We each have to cross that threshold alone. I hesitate. A gut-instinct of fear: don't come too close to death. As if being alive I wasn't already close to death. As if I could no longer keep my trust that, of course, I had days, weeks, months, years, decades yet to come. I cross the barrier. I step into darkness, into the faint gleam of isolated electric lights, into a room of disembodied skel-

etons and scattered heaps of lives torn asunder into tibia, fibula, clavicles, carpal, ribs, pelvis, vertebrae stacked five feet high and extending into darkness. The bones were the color of cinnamon, hard as stone, the skulls showing the zig-zag crevices of fused plates, the empty sockets

staring at the dark, stony ground, the dark ceiling where water dripped. Skulls, scapulas, sacrum, patellas, metatarsals were all stripped clean from bacteria, mold, spiders, time. Only bones. Nothing to fear. Death is ancient here, and the dangers of life and the love of chocolate and violets, the kiss never given, the sunrise prayer are far away. An American tourist, middle-aged and gut-bellied in Dockers, and draped with Pentax, Olympus, Minolta, Nikon and video cameras strides into the cavern. His wife stops him with a gentle touch of her hand and points to a sign. "What!" he yells shocked into a halted mid-step. "No photos!"

In the world above, I keep a deer's leg bone in a spider plant's terra cotta pot. I keep a fish's fanged jaw on a bookcase and a deer's vertebrae in a deffenbachia's ceramic pot. In a red Tibetan bowl, I keep rabbit mandibles left after coyotes found a warren, and the jumbled skulls and small bones of mice and voles spewed out in an owl's pellet. It's not that I set out to find bones. It's simply that death is everywhere in a world so filled with life, and the bones are everywhere, too, if you know where to look. Now dirt and dust gather in bone crevices. Tissue, muscle, the gristle of life, the flesh of scars, birthmarks and memories, the heart's softness all decay back into the world. What's left are bones that are

**It's not that I set out to find bones. It's simply that death is everywhere in a world so filled with life, and the bones are everywhere, too, if you know where to look.**

brittle, brown, sometimes broken, memorials to a life anonymous in death.

We walk through tunnels and across galleries past the bones of lives laid to rest centuries ago, unearthed from crowded church cemeteries that had been spewing pesti-

lence and miasma onto the streets of the living, until in 1786 a decades-long reburial began as the bones of some six million dead were moved to Paris' vast network of underground quarries and tunnels. The catacombs at Denfert-Rochereau are one brief mile in the dead's empire. We walk past stone benches in a grotto of humerus, femurs, phalanges, ulna. Ten minutes. Thirty minutes. An hour. That old joke: it's not that life is so short, it's that death is so long. Two American boys in shorts and tee shirts pull bones from the heaps, femurs, I think, and start a swordfight to break the boredom. We walk past inspirational signs printed in French and Latin, the graffiti too worn to read, *Ainsi tout passé sur la terre / esprit, beauté, graces / elle est une fleur ephemere.* (In this way, all that has passed on the earth / spirit, beauty, graces / all is one brief flower.) We walk past gated tunnels. We walk, and I shorten the distance to my death, and my bones shelter the marrow growing the blood that keeps me walking. *Où est elle la Morte? Toujours future ou passé.* (Where is Death? / Always future or past.) We walk past the squeals and laughter of children holding up pelvis bones as masks. We walk.

In the world above, years ago, I was searching for chanterelle mushrooms in the green and rain world alongside the Olympic Peninsula's Elwha



River, when I stepped off the trail and found an ungulate's spine. Perhaps an elk. Perhaps a deer. All that was left on the wet ground was a row of vertebrae where the animal fell, or perhaps where it lay down, slept, dreamed, died. Tendrils of tufted emerald moss and the black hieroglyphics of pencil script lichens spread across the white bones. I remember silence, and awe, at old bones sheltering new life.

We walk, we walk past rooms of bones, we walk past caverns of bones, we walk past another drop of water cold on the face as it falls from stone ceiling to stone walkway. Skulls line stone pillars. Another turn. Skulls form decorative diagonal rows in femur walls. As if a pretty design could hide the unruliness of each of these long forgotten people's lost lives. The bones of peasant and master are here; the bones of the revolution's assassins are rubbing shoulders with their victims. The flesh is gone from too many lives to imagine. The bones remain. And the lives of these people's descendants, perhaps scattered to distant shores, perhaps rubbing shoulders with me on the Metro, perhaps walking past me along the Winged Victory's staircase at the Louvre, perhaps eating cheese and a baguette as we sit in the Cluny's medieval garden. There is no lasting loneliness within so much life. Centuries ago, the walking, breathing bone house of one of these strangers stopped to smell a clutch of cilantro, or walked into a new church, or perhaps the same one, considered a friend's face,

paused by a manuscript, or took up some other forgotten, mundane action that released ripples of consequences surrounding me as I walk past another turn, past another chamber of bones, past another world of bones.

And so we walk into the world above, we walk past bones and darkness, we walk up stairs, to diffuse sunlight streaming through the windows and an open door of a room where uniformed guards search rucksacks, pocketbooks, camera bags for a purloined pelvis, a stolen skull, a trinket of a tibia. For hadn't we emerged from the underworld (or as close to it as we will get in this life) like the Sumerian goddess Inanna who, in spite of happiness, set her ear to the Great Below, journeyed into the underworld, was murdered by her sister Ereshkigal, and then reborn into an even more passionate life? But this was no true initiation. The passageway was never blocked. No demons were there. We deserve no tokens. We're just tourists visiting death the same way we're visiting life. And besides, here in the world above, the guards are bored. Coffee is going cold in paper cups. Croissants are turning to crumbs as the afternoon wears on. And beyond the open door is a frazzle of rain, sunlight, sparrows darting between the wheels of parked Citroens, smells of fresh baked brioche and loaves of rye from a boulangerie's open window. And yet the city is new to me. Even with a map, I am soon too lost to find the Metro. ■

—Paris, 2002

## If We Stay Here Long Enough

Sue Swartz

*Tuzigoot National Monument, Arizona*

When the sun lingers, then withdraws into the night  
and the last of us exits the nameless avenues  
sated with the past, one will hear—or so I imagine—  
flickering whispers from the pueblo walls,  
nestling children buried tenderly and long ago  
between the planks and posts, entrances and crossbeams.

Thus was a sacred dwelling erected in sorrow and intention.  
Thus were these dead appointed guardian over time,  
(time itself an unbounded memoir of comings and goings:  
those who go assume they are the first to set out,  
those who arrive sure they are the first to cease from wandering)  
and over its passing:

Over the charcoal-smudge of summer storms,  
gardens of yucca and crimson flowers,  
over gossip planted in laughing rooms.  
Over grinding and grazing, sifting and stirring.  
Skinning. Stacking. Rounding. Throwing.  
Over their own terse abandonment  
by a new generation searching out more fertile ground.  
Over pothunters glibly snatching stoney shards,  
and boys leaving their names in piss and chalk.

Even over us, with dusty boots and clicking cameras,  
eagerness folded neatly in our pockets.  
If we stay here long enough,  
(keeping in mind that even God moves on, wanders off  
while we scramble to keep up, watching the muted sky  
for a sign of fire),  
their secrets will—or so I hope—come to settle  
on our restless flesh, and in that settling,  
we may finally unearth what we came here looking for.



## Unraveling the Thread

Lauren Linsalata

*White*

I am face down in a pile of snow. My arms shake as I push myself up, thighs screaming as I try to dig into the vertical grade to keep from sliding further down. I suck in the thin air with the endorphin-laced gratitude of victory, and roll myself onto my back to survey the surroundings. I am coated in the cleanest snow I have ever seen—not tempered by sand or salt or the road residue on the path up to Taos Ski Valley—and above me, the clear sky drifts down soft flakes that gather on my face. Bringing one glove-padded hand to my mouth, I lick a clump off and let it melt against my tongue. I can feel the snow melting against the small of my back where it has invaded my clothing. It cools the burn of embarrassment and effort as I spread my arms against the path and breathe in the thin air. The flakes gather in trembling mounds on the surface of my jacket. Each is a cartoon flake: individual crystal granules with a shape and clarity found only in illustrations, as though heaven has opened and simply blown out its cheeks, to send a whirlwind of ice carved by a million tiny hands.

*Red*

The orcas cluster around the picnic table like a murder of crows, but without the disturbing, thieving intellect often seen in the eye of a corvus. It's a color wheel cut in half: black on the topside and white down below. Unusual in its normalcy until it takes flight, and the splash of crimson underwing is a slap to the eyes. Dinner is over, and chairs have been pushed back. There is no need for candlelight on a night like this, not when the sunset has lit up to bleed the sky. These birds are bold creatures; they stroll straight up to my dinner plate on the edge of the table with none of the tentative hopping found in the common magpie or sparrow. Named for the sound they make, their croaking comes as dusk seeps over the mountains. I hold a bird watcher's guide in my lap and try to find their anglo name, but it eludes me.

*Orange*

One town, and over three hundred art galleries. More art lives here than people, the woman says. Her children's children are grown, but her hands are still steady enough to fire the kiln, to carve the geometric shapes that create the Santa Clara pottery. She tells me of the tourists who pay for her clay, the shades of dust and adobe and the straw that makes the forest burn every hot summer. I cradle a storyteller in my hands, the female figurine with her mouth open, small children clinging to her limbs. The oral tradition, passed on from mother to daughter, little figurines cooked to the color of rust. While her fingers sculpt and pinch, she explains how the clay is fired in manure—pig is best, she says, but cow smells better. And she laughs and laughs, and the sun shows through her teeth.

Each blanket has two tales, the story that's told over it and the story that's told in it. Ortez traces the thread with his fingers, burnt into calluses from turning piñon nuts over the fire to crack them free of their shells. The story that's told on it, he tells me, that is the picture on the blanket. This one is about how the Song-hunter found pictures for songs. The Song-hunter learns to make paints and colors from a people like his own, Ortez shows me, and stays with them long enough to learn to grow corn. The sun, the fields, the story of the Song-hunter, it is sewn into the tapestry with thread the color of saffron. But the thread—here he points, and it glints like Rumpelstiltskin's spun gold—that runs throughout, the weavers include to remember the stories they told over the blanket. The Taos Pueblo Indians speak a dying language—a dialect called Tiwa—and those strange words have floated over this fabric as it was assembled. The stories told in Tiwa, he says, are the ones that last, when the blanket is gone. Those are the tales that can't be told in pictures, the words that linger over every thread.

*Yellow*

The little girl with the severe voice recounts a tale as she knots the leather reins together, about how the gods created New Mexico. First they created the rest of America, and there were still bits left over, pieces from every other part of the country. Her brush strokes over the horse's coat are fierce but sure, and the animal whinnies and tosses its auburn head impatiently. It can tell that I don't know what I'm doing, that I have no part in this ritual. I stroke its nose to calm it as she speaks. The mountains and the desert and the rivers and the fields of grass weren't brothers until they came to New Mexico. They all came here together, and nudged up against each other, learning to share space. I ask her what made them brothers, and her fingers stop for a moment, and I can see her sharp brown eyes moving over the horse, checking. The cactus, she tells me, is the only thing that was here before the gods made New Mexico. It allowed the mountains to give it water, and the desert to give it home, and the rivers to feed its roots, and the fields of grass to give it pins and flowers. The cactus, she tells me, is the brotherhood. It was here before us, and it will be here after.

*Green*

My grandmother hauls the chairs away from the dining room table and onto the front porch to paint them. She is wearing her white pants—her painting pants—and her hands shake when she tries to open the small metal canister. I help her pry them open and watch as she adds and mixes different shades until she is satisfied with the brilliant turquoise. I take one of her horse-tail brushes and cover the thirsty wood in long, fluid strokes. We work together in silence, save soft murmurs as she corrects my gestures, a subtle nudge this way or that to make sure that the motion of brush won't show after the paint has dried. When I am done, she will follow with salmons and maizes and creams and draw little designs all over the legs. But the turquoise comes first, the same color as the speckled rocks in her silver bracelets, the same color as the trim on her lopsided house. I am sloppy with the base of the legs on the chair, and a little paint splatters on the toes of my tennis shoes. I carry the color home with me.

*Blue*

## Indigo

At the Blinking Light—given its name when it was the only spotlight in town—we pick up a hitchhiker. They are at least as abundant here as drivers, and there is an unspoken law of courtesy in transporting them. After all, this road up to Ski Valley only leads one place. It is a single winding path in and out of the paradise of Carson National Forest. The clearest day in Michigan is still darker than the cloudiest day in the West, and the man points at the sky to show me. He's said it many times before; it has the well carved sound of a personal cliché. He rubs at the blonde scruff on his chin—a skier's perpetual stubble, like a surfer's bleached hair. He wears sunglasses and zinc, a pair of shorts, his boots strapped over his bare back. I share my coffee with him, and he gives me half of his protein bar in return. He used to live in Seattle. That is the story of the non-natives in this city—they all used to live somewhere else, but what matters is that they live here now. They come to Taos like a pilgrimage, the deep hues of the sky some North Star to guide them to salvation. And then they shake their heads, and smile, and look at the horizon. That unending spill of color is all the reason they need to call this place home.

## Violet

The straps make no sound as she laces them tight around her feet, or at least, none that isn't overwhelmed by the clatter of the truck over the washboard roads. We sit in the bed in back, with the six other members of her troop, on our way to the Pueblo Deer Dance. I will not participate, of course, but she has invited me to sit and watch, to clap along to the rhythm of the drums. The day is cool, but clear, and it will be good weather for dancing. She pushes her headdress back off of her forehead and points to the colored beads in the weaving that covers her chest. The colors found in nature are the compass points, she tells me, and gestures to the mountains, and gives each a name that I know from stories, not from maps. Red, in the Sangre de Cristo mountains. Blue, in the Rio Grande. But purple belonged to the gods, to the sky, and to the death of the day, so they do not wear violet. I help her fix her feathers, and she laughs at me. Why would anyone wear the death of the sky?

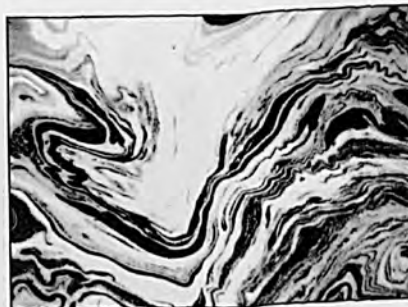
## Black

There is a light ordinance in Taos, to protect the night. No artificial light may be pointed toward the sky at any time. There are no streetlights, and no lights along the two-lane highway. Cars cut through the darkness only occasionally, and every trip, even taken at slow speeds, feels reckless. I press my face to the glass, but even that is not enough—I roll down the window and stretch myself as far as I can, the blackness of the sky spreading out before me. The stars are so bright my eyes tear up, and I cannot look in one place for too long before I must shift my gaze, or risk muddling the myth of each constellation. The vast flat lands on either side of the road are shadowed by the moon, but the sky itself is a darkness so limitless and yet so close that I feel as though I could extend my fingertips and brush against the Hunter, the Scorpion, the Brothers, the Blind Queen. In the blackness, the colors are safe, absorbed and mingled so that no eye can pick them free. Tucked away for the night, each hue is guarded by a starscape of warriors, and the constellations sharpen their spears and crouch. ■

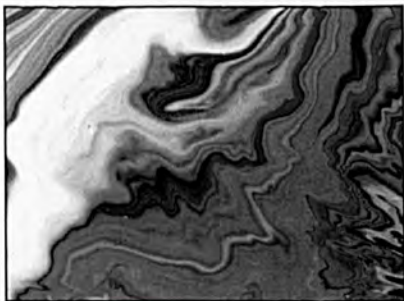
## Navigating Foam

Stace Ginsburg

The foam makes it simple. it is summer. i am taking pictures of foam at the edge of maple creek in upper Michigan. the names of that place make me feel true. i am home. i left my adolescent place when i was seventeen. two years ago and 1,400 miles from there, a guy in a van named 'anywhere taxi' said to me, "how will you ever know yourself if you don't go back to your roots. how will you really know who you are if you don't face the past?"







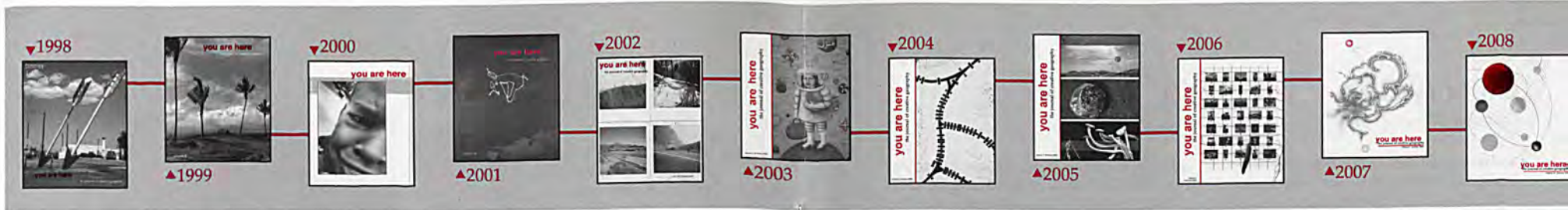
when the foam freezes i think of saturn.  
another click and foam becomes the eye of  
horus. i have a next door neighbor who at  
ninety-eight years old says, "i go to maple  
creek every spring. it is my piece of heav-  
en. last year, why, i jumped over it—at  
age ninety-seven! look at me, jumpin' over  
creeks. well, i did fall in that one time, but no  
matter. maple creek is my piece of heaven."

the foam is no longer the eye of horus, but  
it becomes the birth of a star. funny how  
foam on black river does that. my memory  
goes back to the place where i was born  
and pushes water through my eyes. i'm in  
a different place now. i'm in a place where  
streets say cerro gordo, navaho, san lorenzo,  
tewa, gambia oak, and calle pelligroso. they  
don't say iron, gold, copper, pine, longyear,  
birch or maple. i cannot find a river in this  
desert. in the north, when water rushes i  
catch my breath. in the south, desert wind  
does that to me. the desert wind makes dry  
cracked arroyos. forests and deserts speak  
differently. the desert oaks have a language  
i've not yet learned. in the north, swift wa-  
ter pounds stones and leaps. in the south  
arroyo beds have layered voices that speak  
simultaneously about time but are difficult  
to decipher. place makes me an archeologist  
in my own body, navigating north to south.



the foam reminds me of the boys that i went  
fishing with at age fifteen. they jumped off  
the bridge while i shrieked and stood near-  
by. we drank budweiser all day. they pissed  
in the river. this foam reminds me of that.  
and then we watched the sunset and it was  
the only time i remember when the boys  
of my adolescence became still. rocks and  
trees and clouds and words grew into me  
then. i forgot and then the foam moved and  
the memory returned to remind me. ■





## There to Here

*Ten Years of Creative Geography*

Start where you are. 1997. On the fourth floor of Harvill Building, a sterile 1970s brick rectangle that houses the University of Arizona's Department of Geography and Regional Development. When I first climbed the stairs and entered the building to begin my graduate studies the space itself irked me. Inside, a sprawling maze of hallways, doors, and tiny grad-student offices offered no real central gathering area—the department itself seemed an accidental microcosm of Tucson. Where was the central plaza? Where was the coffee room? Where would we, young graduate students with ample curiosity and new ideas, sit and debate and exchange? Where would we overlap, intersect, bleed, push on, and alter the discipline of geography?

Clearly, we needed a new space. Though we were relatively new to geography, our understanding of the field was fortunately as much conceptual as actual, which allowed us to transcend our immediate environment, get beyond the bricks and mortar, and begin to seek out the heart of the matter of place, wherever it was. With the geographic tomes on the seminar tables, we saw the new bricks as words, the windows as images. But we wanted a more intimate space. A place for ideas and exchange that you could hold in your hand and carry around in your bookbag. A journal. Yes. There you are.

Operating from the idea that place matters to everyone, we asked geographers to unbind themselves from the rigors of the discipline and its formal expectations and asked artists and writers to think more deeply about how places and spaces influenced them. We began with, and have mostly stuck to, the simple questions—Where are you? Where do you live? Where do you dream about going? Why aren't you somewhere else? Where have you been? How do you make sense (using your five senses) of your surroundings? What does place mean to you?

We wanted to avert the academic jargon that threatened to bury us in our classes and celebrate the unadorned, the straightforward, and the quirky.

We wanted something called “creative geography,” even if we didn't quite know yet what that was. If the existing journals of the discipline frowned on anecdotal evidence and overly-personal accounts, then our journal would welcome them, seeking out memoirs, musings, portraits, and doodles to print and share. And so it has. Since 1997, we've heard from more than 140 contributors—studied geographers, closet geographers, and non-geographers who then became geographers once they began to reflect upon, write about, render, and redefine geography through poetry, fiction, essays, paintings, drawings, photography, maps, even dance.

Now, ten years later, *you are here* has become a place of its own—with a spacious floor plan and plenty of room for visitors. It is, in essence, an intersection, where geography meets everything else—literature, history, art, anthropology, science, and more—and we all get to stand in the same room and chat.

What a spirited conversation it has been. Across frozen tundras, tropical beaches, craggy trails, motorized metropolises, backyards, interior mental states, personal paradises, and the canyons of Hell, the most intimate and distant landscapes all perfectly sized to fit in your very own hands. An alternative atlas that aims to remind you that you, too, are somewhere.

Hats off to the steady and diligent stream of editors, culled from the discipline's newest inductees, who, despite the daily rigors of their studies, the ever-continuing threats of funding cuts, and the oft-repeated though still apparently mythical declaration that readers are no longer interested in printed and bound pages anymore, have believed in this place enough to keep it alive.

Here's to another ten years. Here, there, everywhere. Onward. ■

—Kimi Eisele, Founding Editor  
MA, geography 1999



## Chicory Blue

Lorraine Berry

*And the past is the past and that is what time means, and time itself is one more name for death...*  
—C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*

### May 2007

My ersatz lover left a perfect bruise on the inside of my arm. His fingerprint is tattooed on the tender skin just inside the radial bone. He grips my forearms when he bears down on me. The bruise has two colored backgrounds: the top of my arm, which has browned from constant exposure to the early summer sun, and the pale whiteness of the underside. The bruise has diffused, lost some of its sharpness. It hurt when I pressed on it, and I liked that. I liked the reminder that not all is tender when having sex; sometimes, grief, confused for passion, takes us to a brutal place.

After Yves' death, I searched my body in vain for any marks he might have left on me from our love-making. I wanted to find a scratch on my hip, or a bruise on the inner muscle of my thigh, or a love bite on my breast—anything that would let me hold onto him. If I had found such a mark, I would have photographed it. In my more extreme moments, I wonder if I could have found a way to preserve such a bruise in amber, so that some record would exist for all time that I had been loved by that man.

The structure of my memories is an ellipse; one minute, I touch upon something adjacent to those immediate moments when Yves was dying, the next, I am sling-shotted into writing about something that happened days or weeks or months later. The order of days has lost meaning. The passages in my journal follow neither calendar nor progression toward healing. But grief is shaped that way, I think.

It is not straight lines and angles; it bends, and curves, flows forward and back. It is like a woman's body, or a waterspout, or a dust devil in an empty corn field. At the center of each of those things is a place of quiet and stillness.

But quiet and stillness does not mean empty. No, in that place, I am engorged with unshed tears, aborted dreams, unfinished conversations, and now, sense memories that are fading one corpuscle at a time. I can still see his face, his jet-black hair, the thatch of fur on his chest that brushed against my breasts. But the sound of his voice is gone. For a couple of weeks after he died, before the phone company got word of his passing, I would call his answering machine trying to imprint his voice, time stamp it somewhere in my head, but the recording didn't take.

I am sitting here in the stillness and the quiet now, in my room, and my breasts ache for the touch of a mouth that cannot be replaced, no matter how tightly I may close my eyes in another man's bed. And it gets quieter still. There is something on the edge of my consciousness, just there. I try to slow down my breathing, my heartbeat, so that I can hear what it has to say.

### November 2006

For many years, I thought that I could find home in the arms of some man. When I had made love with one, and I was lying in his arms afterward, listening to his heartbeat under my ear, feeling the warmth of his hand on my lower back as he held me, sometimes I'd think, "Oh. I have found him." And when the "relationship" would fizzle, it was more than simply losing the company of a man. It was like losing some part of myself that had been looking for a place to land for a long time.

Tonight, as Yves and I form a spoon of flesh in his bed, I know, finally, that I have found the home for which I've longed. I don't know if it will be in Montreal or whether he will come with me to Upstate New York, or whether we will run off together to some obscure place. He whispers in my ear, expressing his wonderment for this same discovery. He has found in my flesh the same thing I am finding in his. A sense of place. A sense of not being lost. Of not being dislocated.

### November 2006

The view is not unimpeded. It is refracted off the light of a bathroom mirror and I see myself kneeling beside Yves sitting on the bathroom floor, his back against the wall, the Tylenol he tried to take to relieve his aching head scattered across the tiles.

"Help me stand up," he says. And I see myself, all five-foot nothing of me, attempt to help the six-foot man to stand. I cannot support his weight. We fall, together, he and I, and my body cushions his as we slam into the bathroom vanity before I let him slide back down onto the floor. He had less than a minute of consciousness left then, and I already knew he was leaving me.

### July 2007

I'm sitting here in a friends' cabin, looking out at the Adirondack lake, which is blue this morning, rather than steely gray. The sun is out, and the air is full of bird songs. Every now and then, a breeze moves through the trees, and the leaves shake in response.

Albert Camus asked once in *The Myth of Sisyphus* whether it was possible to live with-

out appeal. I read that essay for the first time when I was seventeen. A friend asks me now what I mean, to live without appeal, and while my seventeen-year old understanding of it was from a different, more naïve place, my belief in it has not changed. We stand on the edge of an abyss. How easy it would be to appeal to some greater authority, a higher power, and ask that life be made easier. Instead, I have perceived, in ways that have made me both miserable and ecstatic, that what there is *is* sky above and earth below, just that, and I can try to know those things as best I can.

When I grab my notebook to write down the question: "is it possible to live without appeal?" I hear them. The loons. It is a wild, orgasmic cry, unlike anything I've heard before. It is a laugh and a moan and an aria. Is it an answer?

What answer is there? Living without appeal is what I have. And I am not unhappy. Even alone in this cabin, I feel such a sense of wonder and awe about me. That quiet sense that while there are things that are out of my reach, that my desires for certain things may never be met, everything I need is right here at my fingertips. And for now, that has to be enough.

I think about Yves, though. Sometimes, when my heart hurts, I imagine these moments in his presence. I imagine what it might feel like to be sitting here writing after having just made love with him, how I would feel his fluids between my legs, or be able to smell his scent on my arms. Maybe he would be sleeping, and I would listen to the easy in-and-out of his breath, let it be the rhythm against which I counterpoise the clicking speed at which I move my fingers across the keyboard. Is there



harm in such fantasies? Does it make it more difficult to take comfort in my solitude?

#### July 2007

I grew up in Seattle, and moved to Ithaca years ago to go to graduate school. It took me a while to find a love for the Finger Lakes. I couldn't see how it was anything other than slightly raised hills covered with deciduous trees that I couldn't name. Now, I adore the wildflowers, the rolling hills, the gorges and waterfalls. I left behind in the Pacific Northwest the sort of grandeur that leaves one speechless, without language. Here, I have had to learn to name the unfamiliar, and in doing so, these hills have given me language that I never had.

With this new tongue, I've reached a level of familiarity with the countryside where I can tell what month it is by what is blooming. The Pacific Northwest, at least on the western side of the mountains, only seems to have two seasons: wet and dry, kinda cold and kinda warm. But I have seen these Finger Lakes hills festooned in the drapery of four distinct seasons. Today it is a plethora of mid-summer wildflowers. The orange day lilies line the road, as do the daisies, the black-eyed (really chocolate brown) susans. Golden alexander seem to have replaced Queen Anne's lace this year. Hop clover, nicotina, harebells, wild geranium, and the fuchsia-pink sweet peas accentuated the green of the various grasses, and my favorite—the chicory—bend toward me.

Chicory blue, depending on the light, shades toward gray or lavender. Unlike forget-me-



nots, which when they pop up at the beginning of spring just seem so damn cheerful with their little golden eyes, I interpret chicory as having more substance. Someone who was struggling with grief, for example, might see in its center a bit of ash. It grows along

roads, rooting itself in gritty bits of earth. It blooms from early July until the first frost, and it survives despite blazing heat or the worst of the summer storms. Its beauty, however, lies both in its tenaciousness and its sublime color. I never pick chicory; I have seen it every day this summer as I have walked and walked these hills. Like most wildflowers, it dies in a vase of water within hours of being pulled from the earth. Some things are meant to stay undisturbed.

Today's walk feels good: the sun warms my skin, and after three days of rain, the verdancy of the hills feels refreshing. A hawk circles above my head, and it occurs to me that the raptor's presence explains why no chipmunks or squirrels have crossed my path. It is therapeutic to walk, too. I've felt uneasy in myself, shaky, unsure what I was doing. It is the same sensation I had back in Montreal, the night that Yves went to the hospital—when I laid in his bed, alone, wondering what was happening and what I was going to do.

#### November 2006

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning, and I was so, so tired. The hospital staff sent me home—explaining to me that there were hours of tests awaiting Yves and I should go get some rest—and so I went back to his apartment and

crawled into his bed. I clutched his pillow against me, burying my nose in it to retrieve his scent. I had stripped off my pants and shoes and socks, and lay there in a camisole and panties. It was warm in the bedroom, and despite the November chill outside, I kicked off the blankets. There was a table lamp on the floor next to my side of the bed, something that Yves had rigged up for me so that I might read while he slept off his headache, and I kept the light on. I didn't know what to do. I should have felt sad or frightened, but all I remember was this bone-weary numbness. I took a tranquilizer, thinking it would send me off to sleep. When a half-hour later, I was still awake, I took another one. The phone rang in the apartment, my cell phone—the number I had given the hospital staff—and when I saw the area code, I knew that it wasn't a friend who was calling me at 2:30 a.m.

"Is this Lorraine?"

"Yes." I said.

"And you were the one who brought in Yves?"

"Yes."

"I'm afraid I have some bad news. The MRI revealed a massive brain bleed. We are transferring him to St. Luke's. Do you know how we may contact his family?"

"I can give you the phone number for his ex-wife," I said. "I assume she'll know how to reach his parents."

I asked her then if Yves was going to die, and all that she could tell me was that it "did not look good." I thanked her, said good-bye. I still had Yves' phone in my hand. I hit the "dial" command for his ex-wife's number, heard it ring a few times, and then hung up.

#### July 2007

Yesterday, I went for a hike with my eldest daughter. She has her learner's permit, and I let her drive the twenty-five miles over to the town of Watkins Glen. The town contains within it a national treasure of a gorge walk. The park was established a hundred years ago, but its latest incarnation—the 800 stone steps cut into the side of the gorge that take you along rock pools and water falls and sluices and natural bridges—were part of the great WPA and CCC projects of the 1930s. It's one and a half miles from the bottom of the gorge to the top, and it's all steps leading upward, except for the occasional trail leading beside some of the pools.

My daughter and I climbed to the top of the gorge and then walked to the graveyard that abuts the park. It's a remarkable cemetery, the land donated by a daughter of the Rothschild family who changed her name and converted to Catholicism. Inside the cemetery is a crypt, and inside that crypt is a gorgeous piece of stained glass. The person entombed within died on April 15, 1912: he went down with the HMS Titanic. It's an odd sensation to feel this closing of temporal distance. The sinking of the Titanic is history, and yet, right there before us in a tiny town in the middle of rural New York, was a reminder that the loss was still mourned. On the steps of the crypt were tended, fresh flowers. A further walk through the cemetery takes you into an entire section of Italian graves. The graves not only bear Italian surnames, frequently they have *qui riposando* and then a name, who was *nata* in some part of Italy, but who had *morta* thousands of miles away.

I've always had an obsession with cemeteries. In an earlier part of my life, I was a historian, and I frequently looked to graveyards for clues to questions about which families settled here. Since Yves' death, I see cemeteries differently. I look at the information on the gravestones,



and I try to imagine what it must have felt like for families to bury their dead. I'm not terribly interested in those who lived long lives. It's the ones who died young that wrench me. My great grandfather died at the Somme in 1917; my grandmother was left an orphan at an early age when her mother cut herself on a tin can and developed a fatal sepsis.

Yves left behind children, but no marker exists for him. As far as I know, Yves' ashes are still in the urn. The air at his service was thick with the conflict over what was to become of him. He had been claimed by a relative who insisted that his ashes would remain on her mantle. Somehow, as briefly as I knew him, I cannot imagine that was what he would have wanted. But then again, he's dead. It's not as if he's aware of the fight over where he is right now. And yet, still, thinking of his ashes stuck in that urn on a mantelpiece as if he was a tchotchke leaves me sad.

At his services, I approached the table that had been turned into an altar. The urn was silver, and the swirls etched into it looked as if they had been blackened by soot. The urn's texture invited me to caress it. It would have been easy to do. To rub it, to touch it, to try to bring it to life. I have enough experience with caressing flesh and causing it to change under my hand; I think I was self-conscious enough to know that standing in front of the crowd and stroking Yves' urn would have been too crude an act. But, in my head, there was nothing crude about it. I wanted to unscrew the lid, plunge my hand into the ashes there, and become sticky with Yves. I wanted to take a handful of those ashes and put them in my pocket, carry him with me for the rest of my life.

August 2007

Gray tends to get a bad rap. Neither black nor white, we use it to describe drabness, or some-

thing not easily characterizable, or gloom, even as a symbol for aging when canescence begins.

Wednesday, oyster-colored clouds started casting their shadows in the early afternoon. Despite knowing better, I wanted nothing more than to be out in it, to find some relief from the stultifying heat. I set out on one of my familiar paths. Soon, lightning, like a heartbeat rhythm on an EKG, beat across the sky and landed on top of a nearby hill. The thunderclaps were almost immediate, and I felt their jolts within me. It was almost too much sensation, but the wind felt so good against my sweaty skin that I didn't want to seek shelter. The next bolt of lightning looked to me like the crazy pattern made by the stylus on a polygraph, and for a brief moment, I searched my conscience for what might lie beneath.

After Yves died, I thought about his ashes a lot. I wondered if, when parts of him drafted up the chimney at the crematorium, how long he had remained a part of the atmosphere. How much of his body had escaped into the air? Did the wind carry him east or south? Has there been a moment when I have breathed him in? Everywhere I have walked these past months, perhaps some molecule of him has settled. I know he's dead, yet some of his ashes took flight. Where are they?

As the rain moved in, the hills turned soot-colored and fuzzy. The pelting drops bent the wildflowers forward, and it didn't take long for me to become soaked. I let myself believe that he was in the rain. Surrounded by the chicory, drenched by the storm, I ran my fingers over my flesh and reminded myself that this was what there was: living without appeal. Living without Yves, but his memories having a place within me. Between the sky above and the earth below, this is what there was. And on that day, finally, I understood that it was enough. ■

## Mapping

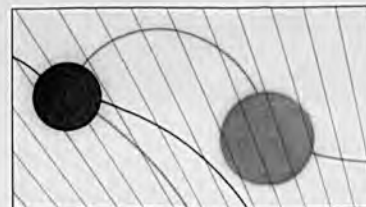
John Williams

Maps are catalysts. They enable us to forecast ourselves into the future, remember the past, or signify particular cultural traditions. As a representation, maps offer a specific point of view. Often we note the grand traditions in our culture but ignore those that play a role in our daily lives. As a continual tourist, I observe these experiences as fundamental to our collective understanding. Documenting events, spaces, or relationships helps us understand who we are and how we fit in.

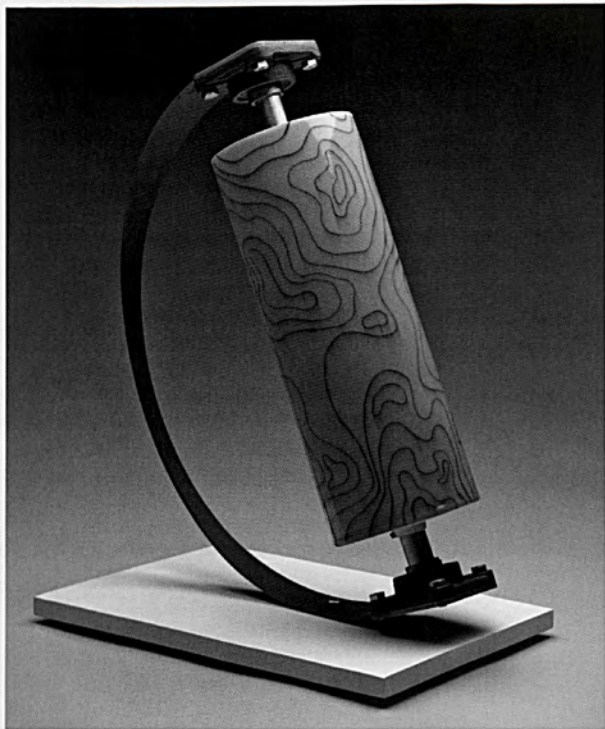
There is a certain abstraction that I court when I draw on round objects. The rotating cylinders in my three-dimensional work reference the contemplative and spiritual nature of prayer wheels, the mediated messages of billboards that mark the landscape, and political projections of globes. My series of cylindrical globes explores the kinetic landscape, while taking on notions of projection and creating a circumstance that requires interpretation.

My recent exploration of two-dimensional drawing focuses on layering information to show relevance and dependency. Mapping relies on contextual relationships to maintain accuracy and perspective. By drawing on separate sheets of paper, I am able to demonstrate meaning through context. All of my drawings maintain a tension between areas of tight control and chance.

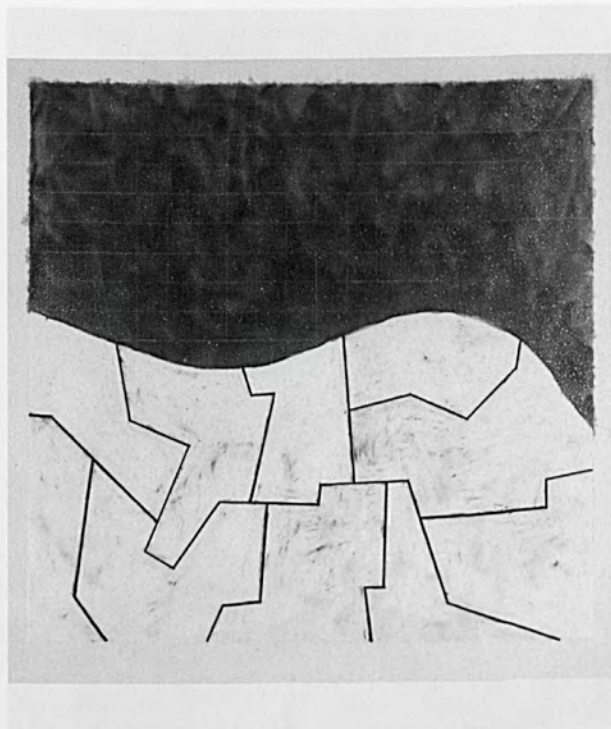
Usually we read maps on flat surfaces, but when projected in the round or separated by layers these images distort. The fact remains that all maps are abstractions of both the natural and the man made world, and that our interpretation dictates an object's relevance. ■



From the cover: *Space*  
Ink on vellum (detail)

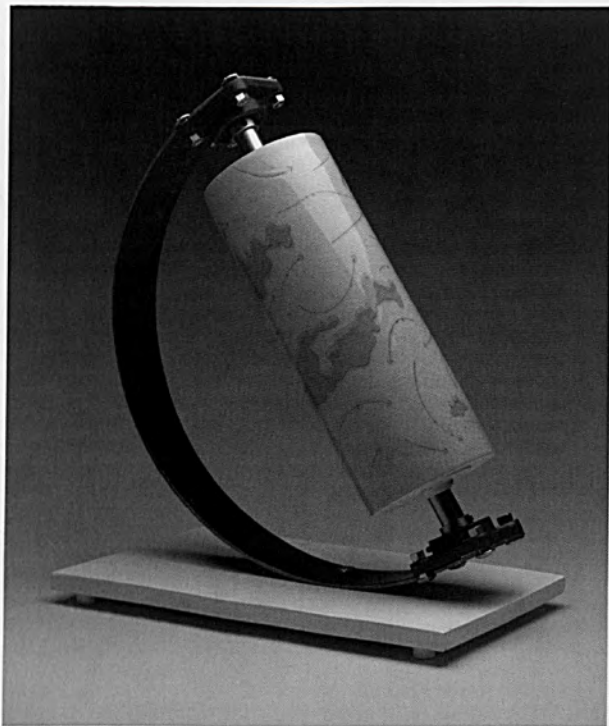


*Contour Globe*  
Porcelain, inlay, glaze, steel  
19" x 11" x 14"



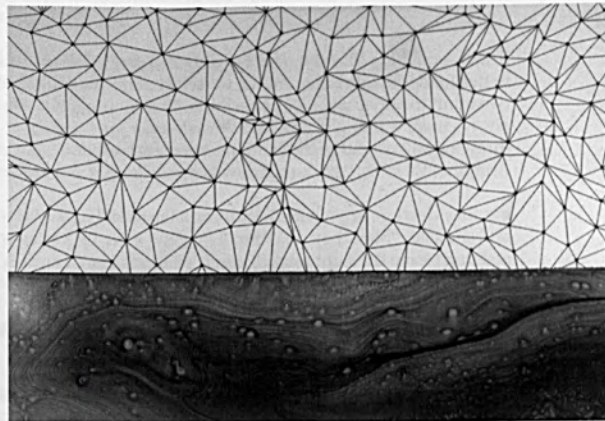
*Untitled, 2007*  
Ink and pencil on vellum





*Ocean Currents Globe*  
Porcelain, inlay, glaze, steel  
19" x 11" x 14"

The Charles Johnson Projection  
Elliot Hamann



*Isometric*  
Ink on vellum



## The Charles Johnson Projection

Elliot Harmon

“‘Science’ consists of a weird, way-out occult concoction of gibberish theory-theology...unrelated to the real world of facts, technology and inventions, tall buildings and fast cars, airplanes and other Real and Good things in life.”

—Charles Johnson (1925–2001)

It was something like that, and we were in a café in the Tenderloin. From our table we could see three drug dealers, two adult theatres, and UN Plaza. Men, always men, walking to and fro in the street, throwing words and bottles and threats at each other. And finally I said, “You know, they keep walking,

but they don’t go anywhere.” And Carla laughed and she said, “Sure they do. You just don’t have the right map.” In a sense, all maps are flawed. Sacrificing distance for area, area for distance, distance and area for proportionality. And then some sacrifice everything for the purpose of looking right.

My third grade teacher told us that in China, children are shown maps where China is in the center and China is larger than everything else, and then in the afternoon she’d unroll the map in which Africa is dwarfed by Greenland. And I understand why it’s important, above all, for your map

to look the way you want it to. The new maps are also wrong, but in new ways no one’s complaining about yet. And then there was Charles Johnson who, upon inheriting the Flat Earth society, reached out to his flat world, making three thousand believers.



He sent his proof in airplanes all around the world that airplanes can’t go all around the world. It wasn’t even pseudoscience. Charles Johnson proof: grammatical errors, run-on sentences, and other things that we were taught in school not to use but went on quietly desiring.



Charles and Marjorie believed that the earth was flat, but maybe not in the way you’re thinking. They didn’t believe the way people believe in God. They believed the way people fish. Spending long weekends by the lake outside their Lancaster home, studying the still flatness of the water’s surface, killing wasps. Antarctica

is every direction: a wall of ice around the world. And nobody knows, Charles Johnson liked to say, what’s on the other side. I could fly down there—people do that—and I would never find the wall, so how will I know what’s beyond it? Marjorie swore in an affidavit that,

when she lived in Australia, she never hung upside-down. But Carla wants to change the subject. She tells me that she’s quitting law school. “I wanted to help people,” she says, “but I’m becoming a jerk.” “What else would you do?” I ask. She says, “I have no idea,” and smiles. Our check, face down,





appears on the table. Come to think of it,  
I never know which way I'm going. Sometimes  
I'll think I have it figured out,  
and then I'll remember how much smarter I was  
when I was nineteen. Carla says I'm being dumb,  
but I insist on walking with her to the station.

The United Nations first convened in 1945. Of all the world,  
they chose California. San Francisco. Tenderloin. Here.  
And I don't know how a place where all the nations met  
can become a place where no one's supposed to go alone,  
just like I don't know why they chose for their symbol  
a map of the Flat Earth. We kiss goodbye and I walk

back to UN Plaza. But I don't walk in a straight line;  
I ramble. I'm learning. And I find myself  
on the Flat Earth map carved into the cement.  
All maps are flawed, you know. Just  
in different ways. And maybe which flaws  
we end up being okay with make us who we are. Or maybe

that's not it at all. I arrive at the center,  
the north pole. From here I can see everything.  
Here is a man sleeping behind  
a cardboard sign; there, a line of men and women  
whisper what they're selling to everyone who passes by. A bus  
doesn't stop, and some people don't do anything,

they just go wherever they're going, while my friend,  
the law school dropout, rides the light rail to whatever's next.  
And somewhere far away,  
I can barely see a man and woman by a lake  
changing the world. And you know,  
I still don't know what's beyond the wall of ice.



## Exploring the Literary Mind

Hellen Harty Interviews Peter Turchi

Peter Turchi, author of *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer* (Trinity University Press), believes writers stand to gain perspective by doing as cartographers do. An author and professor of fiction, Turchi has considered the advantage of a mapmaker's outlook as part of the writing process and arrived at an eye-opening approach to the craft. I was curious to know the extent of cooperation between the art of formulating words and the science of drawing maps, only to confirm that the line dividing art and science is far less rigid than conventionally presented. Please join me on a short tour of Peter Turchi's literary mind.

**YAH:** What are your goals with this book? Are you encouraging people to write differently or to interpret writing differently?

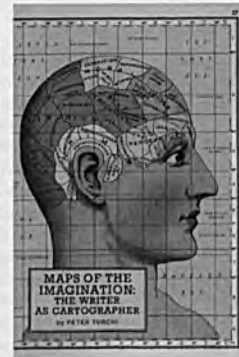
**Turchi:** My original goal was to inspire fiction writers to think about their work differently. Specifically, I wanted to guide them through some considerations of strategic omission; selection; "invisible" conventions, or ones we might adopt without giving them much thought—such as starting a new paragraph when a different character speaks; departures from convention, from relatively minor ones, like not naming characters or not putting quotation marks around dialogue, to much more radical ones; the urge to be all-inclusive, to create a large world—such as in an epic poem or novel—or to fully inhabit a character's consciousness as in *Mrs. Dalloway* or *Ulysses*; the artifice of realism, and both the tension between, and useful relationships among,

realism and all the -isms that have followed; the role of intention; and the fact that people have been saying there's nothing new to say, or to see, for thousands of years, and they've always been wrong, so don't be discouraged.

The book got its start in a series of lectures in Warren Wilson College's low-residency MFA Program for Writers. Since those lectures are attended by poets as well as fiction writers, I made some references to poetry and—also, because I'm interested in them—to film and cartoons. And because I tend not to compartmentalize, when I saw connections to fractals, board games, family stories, and the Marx Brothers, I used them as illustrations. As a result, the book has gone far beyond the audience I had imagined. Among the readers who have told me that it speaks directly to what they do have been advertising designers, cartographers, choreographers, visual artists, software designers, marketing specialists, animators, and lawyers. Other things I've learned: a lot of people are intrigued by maps. And readers appreciate a book that is serious but also playful.

**YAH:** How do you see intuition and intention interacting within a cartographic approach to writing? How much of the process is consciously planned and how much is organically realized?

**Turchi:** That varies greatly from writer to writer, even from piece to piece. As I say in the opening chapter of *Maps of the Imagination*, we can







**Like mapmakers, fiction writers necessarily omit almost everything. We certainly might omit some things out of ignorance, but most often we omit information to steer the reader's attention.**

see mapmaking and writing as consisting of two processes: exploration and presentation. But that doesn't mean that our exploration, or discovery, ends when we begin to present a chart or story for our readers. More often, we're making discoveries right up until the time we mail off the final draft. In the final chapter, I discuss the delicate balance of

the conscious and the unconscious. Vladimir Nabokov believed "the greater one's science, the deeper the sense of mystery."

Stephen Dobyns says that a poem begins as an unconscious or semi-conscious creation and gradually becomes an entirely conscious one. I know writers who disagree with that, but I suspect most would subscribe to the general notion: no matter where a story or novel or poem begins, no matter what inspires or motivates us, we exert increasingly conscious control as we work to shape the piece in some particular way for some particular reason. Maybe it's easiest to think of this in terms of sculpture: you might start off thinking only that you're going to carve David out of a block of marble, but the result is a combination of intention and discovery. In the final chapter of *Maps of the Imagination* I try to describe the ideal balance of the two, but it's easier to describe the dangerous extremes: too much dependence on the unconscious, the unplanned, the unconsidered, and the work might fail to communicate, might float off into the clouds; too much conscious deliberation and the work might squeeze out all mystery and ambiguity, might lie on the ground, inert. Any piece of writing is, finally, turned over to readers,

and the writer needs to leave room for the reader to participate, to actively engage.

**YAH:** How do you see the scientific aspects of cartography influencing a fiction writer's treatment of realism?

**Turchi:** I don't believe writers need to know anything about cartography. I do think that it can be interesting for

writers to think about various aspects of mapmaking as metaphors and analogues for what they do. "Scientific aspects" of either practice could refer to specificity, accuracy, etc., and obviously it's good for a writer of realism to get it right when, say, he has a character drive from Akron to Tucson. But I'm more interested in the kind of "science" writers might not think about. For instance: most "scientific" maps are based on a cartographic projection, some distortion formula for plotting points from the more-or-less-spherical Earth onto a flat sheet of paper. Realism is a distortion formula for plotting the world we know onto a sheet of paper in words. The danger for, say, a fiction writer is to assume that realism is somehow more "natural" or "accurate" than other projections. In fact, realism is so full of familiar assumptions and conventions that it can be dangerously deceptive.

**YAH:** Since omission is similarly inherent to both cartography and fiction writing, how can the strategies of omission used in cartography be applied to a writer's task of omission?

**Turchi:** Maps omit information for all sorts of reasons (see J. B. Harley and Denis Wood, among others). Among others, they omit infor-

mation out of ignorance (the mapmaker didn't know something else was there), out of a kind of helpful censorship (on a road map, do we really want birds' nesting sites and underground pipes and cables depicted?), and more devious censorship (some mapmakers omitted any signs of inhabitants in maps of the "New World" to encourage the belief that it was "empty," waiting to be claimed). Like mapmakers, fiction writers necessarily omit almost everything. We certainly might omit some things out of ignorance, but most often we omit information to steer the reader's attention. Edward Tufte calls this "disinformation design," a useful term. Fiction writers want to guide the reader's attention toward some things, away from others. This is not only for expediency, but for the creation of mystery, tension, and suspense. Louise Glück and Anton Chekhov have both said, in their different times and languages, that the dullest work is that which leaves out nothing. Haiku is perhaps the most familiar literary form that emphasizes omission; classical haiku depend not only on imagery, but on implication.

**YAH:** As you've already noted, some people assert that there's nothing new to say or see. Why should authors and cartographers continue to write and study maps?

**Turchi:** Maps are depictions of our knowledge; and like all depictions of our knowledge, they encourage us to ask new questions. "What's over there?" "Why are there no trees in that neighborhood?" Or, in the famous case of John

Snow and the cholera epidemic in London, "What does the fact that most of the victims lived in this general area tell us? What does it mean that other people in the midst of them survived? And why did some people from far away also die?" E. O. Wilson, the naturalist, has said that one could still make a career of studying the land at the base of a particular tree. The more closely we look, the more we find. My next book of essays is based in large part on my ongoing conversations with the artist Charles Ritchie, whose work interests me for many reasons, among them the fact that he's an obsessive: most of the images he's made in the past two decades have been of a few things in his house, or viewable from its windows. He simply keeps looking at them, and he keeps making remarkable discoveries. That sort of practice requires enormous discipline.

**YAH:** In your own fiction, what has been your favorite place to write about and why?

**Turchi:** Well, that's the punchline: I don't write so much about place. So far I've lived in Baltimore; the Eastern Shore of Maryland; Oxford, England; Tucson; Chicago; Boone, North Carolina; Asheville, North Carolina; and Oslo, Norway; and I'm about to move back to Arizona. I tend to write about states of mind, and about particular kinds of yearning. In that way, I've never quite gotten over the thrill of that frontispiece in *Treasure Island*: the map that promises adventure, that represents a world we can dream about, but only temporarily inhabit. ■



## Subway Blues

Donna Pucciani

Strap-hanging jazz  
croons tunnels of yellow squares,  
heat, graffiti and body smells  
beneath Lincoln Center,  
flesh on flesh and the grime  
of windows pressing my face  
into Duke Ellington's A-train.

From NYU to the bowels of the Bronx,  
I changed at 59th Street,  
and oh, how I wrote those grad-school  
papers on Pinter and the loss of self, eating  
a baloney sandwich with mayo and lettuce  
on smashed white. One night  
I thought a stray bullet grazed me.  
I ducked, but only a light bulb  
had burst above my head, flaked glass  
in my hair under Yankee Stadium.

Decanting at Fordham Road,  
doors snapping closed like textbook covers,  
the stairway musting of gin and cigarettes,  
I'd step through bottles and mattresses,  
fall into the arms of the city,  
her hair on my face,  
and climb her body up to the roof  
through a door without a doorman,  
up six flights of old marble  
to resurrect myself  
where tenements, taxis and bridges  
rustled below like plastic prayer beads  
glowing in the dark.



"Behind You," cartoon by Steve Cartwright

the following

## PLACES

appear  
in this issue of

## you are here

Adirondack Lake	43.79N	74.26W	Maple Creek, MI	46.65N	90.12W
Africa	7.11N	21.5E	Maryland	39.00N	76.75W
Akron, OH	41.07N	81.51W	Michigan	44.25N	85.50W
Alice, WV	38.88N	80.81N	Montreal, QC, Canada	45.32N	73.38W
Antarctica	90.00S	0.00E	New Mexico	34.50N	106.00W
Arizona	34.50N	111.50W	New York City, NY	40.78N	73.97W
Asheville, NC	35.59N	82.56W	Old Field Fork, WV	38.96N	80.67W
Auburn, WV	39.09N	80.85W	Olympic Peninsula, WA	47.75N	123.75W
Australia	25.16S	133.44E	Oslo, Norway	59.54N	10.44E
Baltimore, MD	39.29N	76.61W	Oxford, England	51.45N	1.15W
Boone, NC	36.21N	81.67W	Paris, France	48.51N	2.20E
Bronx, NY	40.85N	73.85W	Pennsylvania	40.75N	77.75W
Burnt House, WV	39.04N	80.99W	Pike Fork, WV	39.39N	80.64W
Carson National Forest, NM	36.50N	106.25W	Rio Grande, NM	36.62N	105.69W
Chicago, IL	41.85N	87.65W	Rocky Fork, WV	38.92N	80.67W
China	35.34N	104.09E	San Francisco, CA	37.77N	122.42W
Coxcamp Fork, WV	39.04N	80.82W	Sangre de Cristo Mountains, NM	37.34N	105.29W
Cox's Mills, WV	39.09N	80.82W	Seattle, WA	47.61N	122.33W
Elwha River	48.15N	123.56W	Somme, France	46.00N	2.00E
Finger Lakes, NY	42.83N	77.00W	Taos, NM	36.37N	105.42W
Greenland	71.42N	42.47W	Taos Ski Valley, NM	36.58N	105.45W
Hog Run, WV	39.62N	80.72W	Texas	31.25N	99.25W
Horn Creek, WV	39.06N	80.86W	Treasure Island	*	
Iowa	42.00N	93.50W	Troy, WV	39.02N	80.76W
Italy	41.51N	12.34E	Tucson, AZ	32.22N	110.93W
Ithaca, NY	42.44N	76.50W	Tuzigoot National Monument, AZ	34.77N	112.03W
Lancaster, CA	34.42N	118.08W	Watkins Glen, NY	42.38N	76.87W
Landruk, Nepal	28.22N	83.49E	Wilkes-Barre, PA	41.24N	75.88W
London, England	51.29N	0.07W			
Madrid, Spain	40.26N	3.42W			

\* coordinates unknown or imagined

## Contributors

**Lorraine Berry** has degrees from the University of Washington and Cornell University; she teaches at SUNY Cortland, where she is the Project Director for NeoVox. She is also the Book Review Editor for *Frame Lines*, an Australian publication. "Chicory Blue" is taken from her memoir-in-progress, "In the Body of the World." She lives in the Finger Lakes region of New York with her two daughters.

**Steve Cartwright** has done art for several magazines, newspapers, websites, commercial and governmental clients, books, and scribbles—but mostly drools on—tavern napkins. He also creates art pro bono for several animal rescue groups. He was awarded the 2004 James Award for his cover art for *Champagne Shivers*. He recently illustrated the *Cimarron Review* cover, and regularly does art for *Skyline* magazine, *Stories For Children*, and many others. Take a gander (or a goose) at his online gallery: [www.angelfire.com/sc2/cartoonsbycartwright](http://www.angelfire.com/sc2/cartoonsbycartwright).

**William Doreski** teaches writing and literature at Keene State College in New Hampshire. His most recent book is *Another Ice Age* (AA Publications, 2007).

**Kimi Eisele** created *you are here* in 1997. She is still here, in Tucson, where she works as a writer, choreographer/dancer, and teaching artist. Her current project is called "The Invisible City," a site-specific performance lab for dancers, writers, and musicians in a yet-to-be-determined spot in downtown Tucson.

**Benjamin Fraser** received his PhD in Hispanic Literature in 2006 and is an assistant professor of Spanish at Christopher Newport University. He has published articles on the Retiro Park in the journals *Social and Cultural Geography* and *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas*.

**Stace Ginsburg** recently completed an MA in Transformative Language Arts through Goddard College. Her coming of age memoir, "From the forest and the belly of the whale: stories of the dusha," is currently being reviewed by a publisher. She is also a performance artist in the Now or Never Theatre's production of "Shadows and Journeys," a multimedia puppetry performance piece about place currently touring national parks in the Southwest. She resides in Boulder, Colorado.

**Elliot Harmon** was born in Pierre, South Dakota and lives in San Francisco. Recent publications include *DIAGRAM*, *Sorry for Snake*, and *NOO Journal*. Visit him at [harmon.idiolexicon.com](http://harmon.idiolexicon.com).

**Hellen Harty** recently graduated from the University of Arizona with a degree in English Literature. She is currently lucky enough to take an unspecified amount of time off from the pursuit of a respectable future. She plans to teach English in China while putting to "the test" her delight in foreign languages, as well as writing fiction and comedy and comedic fiction, pieces of which all turn out very absurd and brief, you may not even think they're cool: [myheadisfullofsoap.blogspot.com](http://myheadisfullofsoap.blogspot.com).

**Lauren Linsalata** is a recent graduate from Michigan State University and is in the process of making her own pilgrimage to Taos. She is perusing an MFA in creative writing but, so far, has become a class-act barista instead. Her nonfiction has been previously published in *The King's English*.

**Donna Pucciani** has published more than 300 poems in U.S. and U.K. journals, such as *International Poetry Review*, *Spoon River*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*. Her books of poetry include *The Other Side of Thunder*, *Jumping Off the Train*, and *Chasing the Saints*. She is vice president of Poets' Club of Chicago.

**Adrienne Ross'** essays have appeared in *Tikkun*, *Under the Sun*, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Cezanne's Carrot*, *Fourth River*, *Just Like A Girl: A Manifesta*, the *American Nature Writing* anthology series, and other online or print publications. She received a 1996 Seattle Arts Commission literary award and the 2001 Artist Trust Literature Fellowship.

**Sue Swartz** is a social justice activist and teacher, poet, and aspiring ballroom dancer. Her poetry won the 2007 Joy Harjo Poetry Prize, and has appeared in *Isotope*, *Drash*, *Cutthroat*, *Lilith Magazine*, and elsewhere. She lives in Bloomington, Indiana.

**Peter Turchi** is the author of five books and the co-editor of two anthologies. He received North Carolina's Sir Walter Raleigh Award and fellowships from the NEA and Guggenheim Foundations. He earned his BA at Washington College, in Maryland, his MFA at the University of Arizona, and for fifteen years directed and taught in the Warren Wilson College MFA Program for Writers. He now teaches at Arizona State University. [www.peterturchi.com](http://www.peterturchi.com)

**John Williams** holds an MFA from Bowling Green State University. Focusing on themes related to cartography, he works in a variety of media and techniques. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. Currently, he is a resident artist at The Clay Studio in Philadelphia.

**Lowell Mick White's** work has appeared in many journals, including *Callaloo*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, and *Short Story*. He is currently a PhD student at Texas A&M University, where he specializes in creative writing and regional literatures.

**you are here** wants you to submit works for our **SUMMER 2009** issue

What does **PLACE** mean to you? How do we communicate **WHERE** we are to those who are distant? How do we experience, imagine, understand, and represent **PLACE**? We invite you to explore your own ideas and ask your own questions.

**you are here** is an annual publication that focuses on a variety of perceptions of place, and ideas about how place is interpreted, experienced, and created. It has included, but is not limited to: **short fiction, essays, memoirs, journals, photoessays, interviews, poetry, paintings, maps, collages, and photography.**

We encourage submissions from **geographers, historians, anthropologists, philosophers, scientists, writers, artists**, and anyone else interested in exploring the concepts of place and **SPACE**.

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