PART ONE

AROUND HERE

Whenever we enter the land, sooner or later we pick up the scent of our own histories.
— WILLIAM LEAST HEAT-MOON

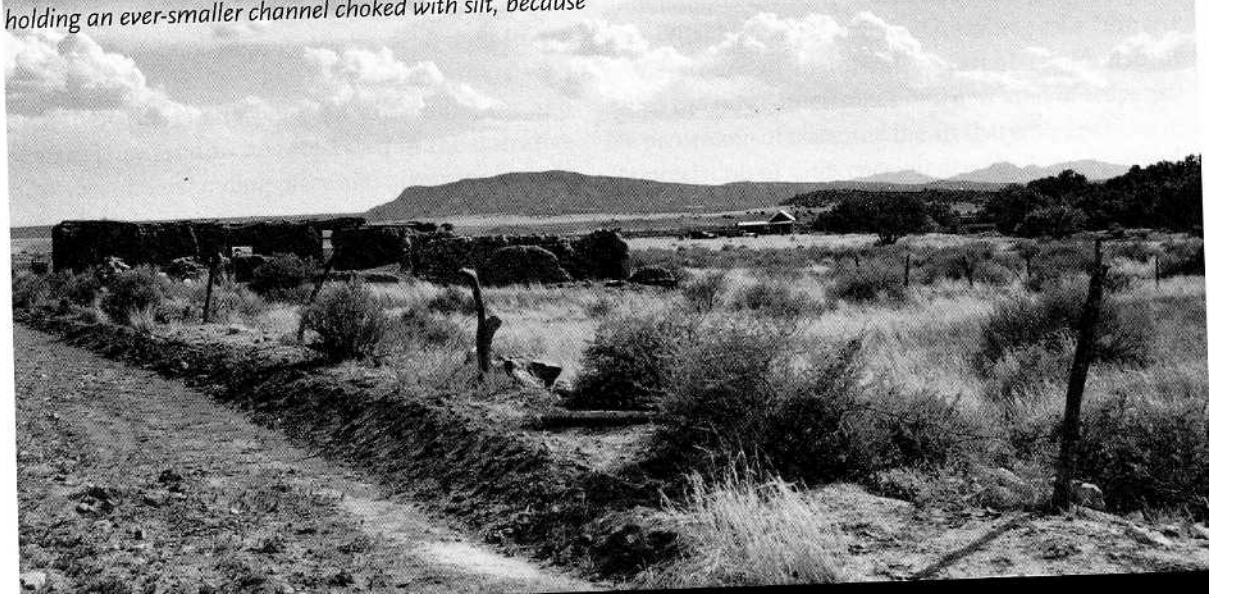
All our prayers in the morning, in the evening, start with the word "Here."
— EDMUND LADD

The population on this continent will become grounded, will find their place, by a slight change of mind that says "I'm here."
— GARY SNYDER

Sweet Home

A concentration of large rocks has tumbled into the deeply eroded creek bed beside my house. New Englander that I am, I think about building a wall. I'm told I should check first with an archaeologist. In a nearby dump I've found dark gray sherds of Pueblo pottery, but these rocks look too big and square to be the remains of an Indian dwelling. An archaeologist friend says they are probably from an old settler's outbuilding that fell into the creek as the banks crumbled. A Hispano neighbor, whose ancestors were here long before the Anglos came, says it was probably part of an irrigation structure. I am intrigued by these temporal reminders, whatever they are. Once the creek (it's called a river on some maps, a wash on others) ran gently between shallow banks. There was an orchard on my side. Since then the stream has cut deep into the landscape, an ever-widening wound holding an ever-smaller channel choked with silt, because about a century ago the ridges were deforested to make railroad ties, the climate changed thanks to the 1883 eruption of Krakatoa, and ranchers mercilessly overgrazed their ranges, resulting in today's ragged gullied landscape.

Remedios Chavez, an elderly woman who was born and raised here, tells me (in so many words), "We worried at first when they came, but if they love this place and mind their own business, it's all right." They is me. I'm part of the Anglo exploding invasion of Northern New Mexico over the last twenty years (it started in the 1820s). And I don't really mind my own business—I spend a lot of time wandering the vast rangeland, sandstone outcrops, and volcanic dikes, looking at traces of the paleolithic, the Tewa, the Tano, Keres, Apache, Comanche, Hispano and Anglo pasts.



Kennebec Point is on Georgetown Island, at the mouth of the Kennebec River, in Sagadahoc County—the name given to the lower part of the river by the Kennebec Indians. This is the area that is "local" to me—the mouth and the east bank of the Kennebec, where three peninsulas jut into the sea between the Kennebec and the broad estuary of the Sheepscot River. There the island slants "down east" (so-called because the prevailing wind is southwest and a run up the coast under sail was downwind). The nearest city is Bath, upriver on the west side.

From the sea, the mouth of the Kennebec is just another niche in the ragged line that is Maine's 3600-mile coast line. Small Point (in Phippsburg) divides it from Casco Bay to the South, with its many islands, centered

"AROUND HERE," WHERE WE LIVE, IS A CIRcular notion, embracing and radiating from the specific *place* where generalizations about land, landscape, and nature come home to roost. "Out there" is a line of sight, the view, a metaphor for linear time. The relationship of the center to the peripheries is crucial, a crossroads, but the center doesn't hold forever, and neither do the margins. Home changes. Illusions change. People change. Time moves on. A place can be peopled by ghosts more real than living inhabitants.

The lure of the local is not always about home as an expressive place, a place of origin and return. Sometimes it is about the illusion of home, as a memory. If place is defined by memory, but no one who remembers is left to bring these memories to the surface, does a place become noplace, or only a landscape? What if there are people with memories but no-one to transmit them to? Are their memories invalidated by being unspoken? Are they still valuable to others with a less personal connection? Sometimes when people move to a place they've never been before, with any hope or illusion of staying there, they get interested in their predecessors. Having lost or been displaced from their own history, they are ready to adopt those of others, or at the very least are receptive to their stories.

Is "around here" just about individuals who see themselves as centers trying to create peripheries wherever they go? (Geographer Yi-fu Tuan says Americans have a sense of space rather than a sense of place.) Or does even serial familiarity with places satisfy deeper longings for roots and continuity as we come to terms with a way of life that disregards them? One can be "homesick" for places one has never been; one can even be "homesick" without moving away. When place-oriented sculptor Mary Ann Bonjorni says, "Place is what you have left," I'm not sure whether she means "all that remains" or "that which is left behind." William deBuys has pointed out that traditional cultures should be conserved because of "the fresh new questions they pose about the relation of people to each other and to the land." As we examine our own cultural origins and mixtures, and their effects on our own places, we learn a people's history of the United States, to use Howard Zinn's phrase. History can be illuminated by looking back at one's own family's story, generation by generation—moves, job changes or losses, houses, illness, social expectations, class and religious fluctuations, the role of women, and so on...all the things that connect us to each other and to a community, which can be a place or a feeling. It proves not only that the personal is the political, as the feminist movement established long ago, but that the political is personal. However, the degree to which the past is key to the present is debatable; too much made of the past fosters a determinism that limits the future.

> *Whatever the future may have in store, one thing is certain; unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannnot adequately solve its most urgent problems—to find and identify itself.*
> —JOHN DEWEY, 1927

Community is as elusive a concept as home in this millennial culture. The word community is often used as a euphemism for poor neighborhoods and small towns, the false assumption being that people are huddled together there with nobody to depend upon but each other, and that they all get along more or less fine. Yet community can also be denied those deemed too poor, ignorant, or criminal to support each other —hardworking families living in the South Bronx, for

AVENIDA VIEJA, Galisteo, New Mexico, 1996 (Photo: copyright Susan Crocker). The adobe ruin in the foreground is said to be an old stage stop. Within recent memory there was a large adobe "hacienda" next to it, which was moved brick by brick and rebuilt at San Sebastian. The Galisteo Creek and its *bosque* are at the right, and the author's house is barely visible in center background.

on Portland, the largest port and largest city in the state. Upstream, the Kennebec meets the Androscoggin River at Merrymeeting Bay and proceeds to its source far north in Moosehead Lake.

Kennebec Point, between busy Bay Point to the west across Heal's Eddy and larger Indian Point to the east across Sagadahoc Bay, is the quietest and least known of the three peninsulas that make up my home ground. Each one has a different ambience, a different character, depending on topography, background, recent history, and current inhabitants.

Bay Point is still a working fishing village and year-round community, although much diminished since its heyday as Georgetown's major boat landing in the 19th century. It still surveys a swirl of activity pouring out of the

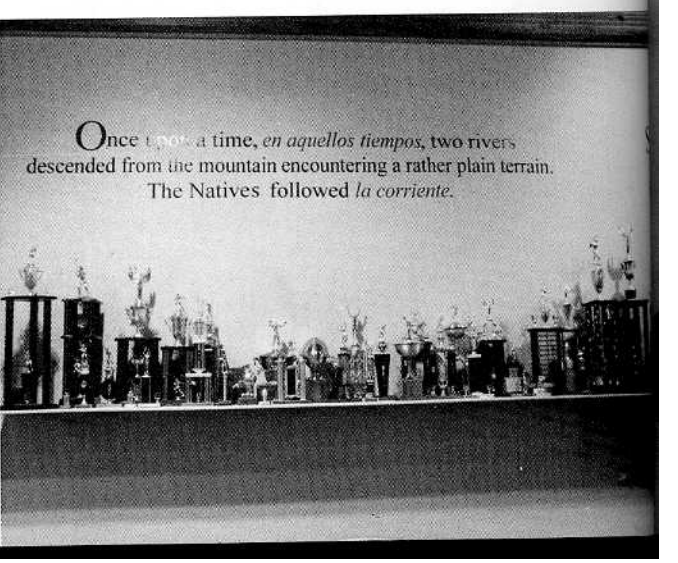
instance. In fact, community can be created, and denied, anywhere. The struggle for survival can set communities at each others' throats; neighborhoods can cover the absence of "community" by creating its facade though social conventions. The Boy Scouts, PTA, Rotary Club, Masons, Elks, golf and bridge clubs may simulate communal elements even as members prefer to stay out of their neighbors' business (the Kitty Genovese syndrome) and to have the world's business stay out of their neighborhoods (the NIMBY or "Not In My Backyard" syndrome).

I often find myself conflating place and community. Although they are not the same thing, they coexist. A peopled place is not always a community, but regardless of the bonds formed with it, or not, a common history is being lived out. Like the places they inhabit, communities are bumpily layered and mixed, exposing hybrid stories that cannot be seen in a linear fashion, aside from those "preserved" examples which usually stereotype and oversimplify the past. As community artists can testify, it takes a while to get people to discard their rose-colored glasses and the fictional veneer of received "truths." Community doesn't mean understanding everything about everybody and resolving all the differences; it means knowing how to work within differences as they change and evolve.

"Good neighbors" remains an American ideal, but it has been pointed out that subdivisions and anonymous bedroom communities are often devoid of gathering places where neighbors can plan strategies and discover mutual strengths. Bars, cafés, and other commercial meeting grounds have been zoned out of many areas. The lack of common history and the habit of transience means that even well-meaning efforts at community can lack substance, while an excess of shared history can lead to feuds and cultural confinement. As assimilation and cultural intermarriage accelerate, community responses vary, with some feeling threatened and others enriched. Peter Marris, using the term "tribalism" in the general sociological sense, identifies it as a perverted, embattled form of community, the result of a confusion of identities: "Wherever people are expected to treat each other as equal members of the society, yet do not share the same symbolic code, the anxieties of misinterpretation create pervasive defensiveness." A healthy community in a mixed society can take these risks because it is permeable; it includes all ages, races, preferences, like and unlike, and derives its richness from explicit disagreement as much as from implicit agreement.

Most of us are separated from organic geographical communities; even fewer can rely on blood ties. We can only hope to find created communities—people who come together because they are alike on some

CELIA ALVAREZ MUÑOZ, *Herencia: Now What?*, 1996, photographs, objects, installation at Roswell Museum and Art Center, Roswell, New Mexico (Photo: William Ebie.) In this collaborative project between a Texas artist and the Hispano community of Roswell, viewers first see a curved bank of old doors representing both antiquity and obstacles; the walls on both sides of the gallery are lined with portrait photos (by local photographer José Rivera) and excerpts from interview texts, with a superscript of graceful green grasses and a frieze of words in Spanish and English ("Dream, Caprice, Compromise, Neglect, *Olvido, Fuerza, Costumbre, Poesia*..."). On the back wall are some 100 shining



river into the ocean: sailboats, lobster boats, futuristic yachts, windjammers and tall ships, destroyers and their tugs from BIW, the occasional daring kayaker (one was drowned there recently in a storm), the despised jet-skis, and, rarely, a rowboat or two. There have been summer houses on Bay Point for a century, some planned as a workers' vacation resort.

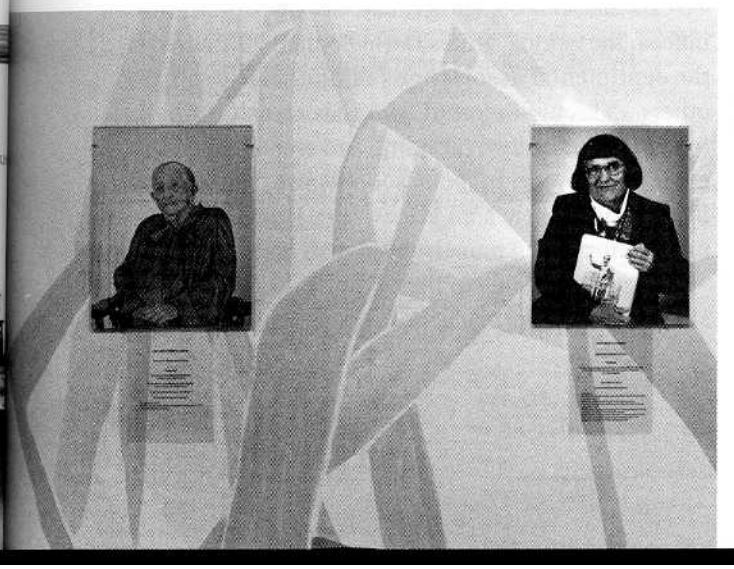
When I was a kid it was a treat to walk over to Bay Point to get a soda at Millie Spinney's little store. As a teenager I went to rousing and sometimes rowdy Saturday night dances at the "Casino," a barnlike structure with a wide porch. There was a thriving fishing business with two lobster wharves. Today the docks are ruins, the store is a private home, and the site where the Casino stood is only bushes.

level—or communities that are accidentally formed through place, workplace, and other more artificial means. Sometimes created places, based in dissimilarity, can be more vital and less isolating than unchosen ones. But most of us live such fragmented lives and have so many minicommunities that no one knows us as a whole. The incomplete self longs for the fragments to be brought together. This can't be done without a context, a place.

A starting point, for artists or for anyone else, might be simply learning to look around where you live now. What Native peoples first inhabited this place? When was your house built? What's the history of the land use around it? How does it fit into the history of the area? Who lived there before? What changes have been made or have you made? If you've always lived there, what is different now from when you were young? If you haven't, what's different from where you were raised and from when you moved there? What is your house's relation to others near it and the people who live in them? How does its interior relate to the exterior? Does the style and decoration of either reflect your family's cultural background, the places from which your people came? If not, why not? Is there a garage? (the automobile, "the machine in the garden" as Leo Marx put it, has drastically changed the American landscape). Is there a lawn? a garden? Have you cut down trees or planted them? Is the vegetation local or imported? Is there water to sustain it? Do any animals live there? Have they always been there? Are there more or less of them? What do you see from your favorite window? What does the view mean to you? How does it change with seasons and time? And so on and on.

Questions like these provide ways to understand how human occupants are part of the environment and where we fit in personally. Research into social desire can set off a chain of personal reminiscences and ramifications, including lines and circles of thought about the interlinking of histories, unacknowledged class systems, racial, gender, and cultural divisions, and common grounds (not to mention the possibility of past lives)—all of which define our relationships to places and help to explain the lure of the local. Such investigations constitute an archaeological rather than a historical process, moving from the present down through layers of culture and history, back to the sources, rather than beginning in the chronological mists and working up to present smog. It makes clear how memory fades as it recedes, how legend then myth creep in and take over. Yet myths and legends also come full circle to affect the way we live the daily present. Some African American artists call up the traditional African *griot*, a communal figure who represents historian, shaman, and the old relative, telling

sport trophies, borrowed from local clubs and schools; they are set on a high shelf—almost but not quite "out of reach"—below a brief poetic text by the artist. *Herencia* is the result of a month-long residency and a much longer study period during which Muñoz worked cross-generationally with Roswell residents, mirroring the adults with still photographs and the youth through a videotape. It documents a moment in an ongoing internal dialogue about time and space, place, home, history, community and the difficulty of understanding them in a disorienting and disenfranchised society. The show was extraordinarily popular and evocative for an audience that rarely feels welcome in museums.



stories that are, as filmmaker Julie Dash put it, "not linear, but always coming back around," a notion manifested in her evocative film *Daughters of the Dust*. Going backward, the artifacts get mixed up, the path meanders, allowing more lateral exploration. T. S. Eliot wrote in "Four Quartets" that home "is where one starts from....We shall not cease from exploration/ and the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time." On the other hand, Georg Lukacs characterized Western society as one of "transcendental homelessness." Both were right. These are the two strands of our multicentered experience.

> *Well ahead of us, treeless hills begin to emerge from the haze, hills steaming constantly as though Hell has sprung a leak; hot vapors are pumped underground here to melt the thick petroleum. At the foot of those hills hides a town. A few dark hints of trees betray its location but we know it well: Oildale, a community now contiguous with North Bakersfield. We discern a distant building, then two, then the silvery tangle of a refinery. I turn to my wife and smile. "Almost home," I say. She smiles back: "Almost home."*
>
> —GERALD HASLAM

The first thing we think we see when we look "around here" is home, or dwelling place; they are not necessarily synonymous. A dwelling is at least "a roof over your head"—a room, usually an apartment or house. Sometimes this place is a home, assumed to be the focus of one's own landscape, which is what one sees out the windows. The English word *home*, reflecting a "domicentric" view, can uniquely "refer with equal ease to house, land, village, city, district, country, or, indeed, the world," writes David Sopher. "It transmits the sentimental associations of one scale to all the others..." Even if the word *home* has taken on a more temporary, transitory, meaning, and even if many have come to believe with Thomas Wolfe that "you can't go home again," there's no place like it. Home is at once more intimate and more isolated than place.

It may be possible to live with the doors slammed shut, to call a room or a house "home" without consid-

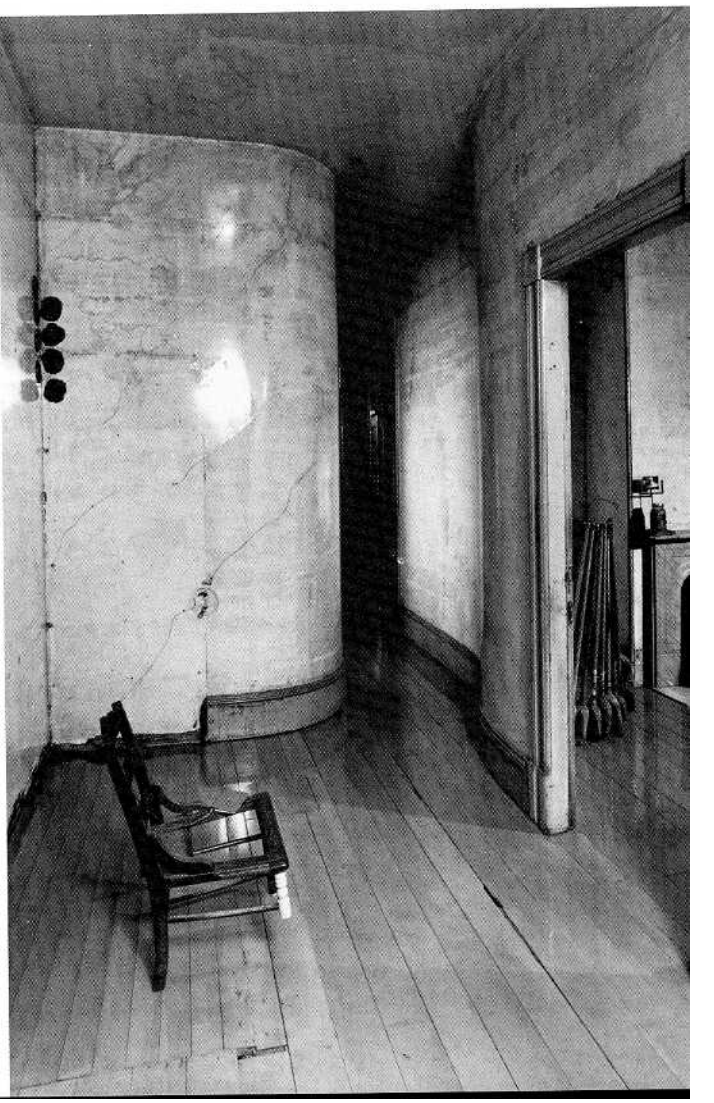
Brenton and Susan Wren Perow's dock on Bay Point, 1995 (Photo: Peter Woodruff). Perow's lobster boat—the West Side—is moored off the dock where the couple was married. He is a second-generation lobsterman from Bath, and she is a former Kennebec Point summer person, who is also a jeweler, arts administrator, and landscaper.

Indian Point is larger, less sheltered on the ocean side than Kennebec Point, and more dramatically "scenic" (Marsden Hartley once painted crashing surf here). It too was farmed and grazed and then summer cottaged like Kennebec Point, but until the 1950s it was sparsely settled. Then the whole point was subdivided and sold off, becoming a summer community of artists, school teachers and professionals, an

ering where it is located, where it stands, and where we stand. Yet eventually the peripheries enter, and any "house" expands into place, which may be the highway that goes past and the view beyond it, the city street outside with unconnected human and motor traffic. For some, home is the street itself, slabs of cardboard on a particular heating grate or hallway floor. But in every case, the surroundings seep into lived experience, permeating even the heaviest armors of alienation.

The search for homeplace is the mythical search for the *axis mundi*, for a center, for some place to stand, for something to hang on to. For indigenous people, home is often a much broader and shared concept, "an extension of their soul and spirit," as Pueblo writer Rina Swentzell has put it. Seneca artist Peter Jemison has said that it is not the American flag but the pole and the eagle on top that mean something to his people: they connect earth and sky, body and spirit. The British, although famous for their imperial arrogance in importing a monolithic version of home to the "jungle" (a euphemism for others' unfamiliar homes), are not the only ones who have seen themselves as the center of the world. Most tribal peoples call themselves simply "the people," and their terrain is "the center," the place of emergence or creation or the goal of ancestral journeys. Lakota shaman Black Elk wisely pointed out that "anyplace can be the center of the world."

The dominant cultural clichés about home are all idealized: "home sweet home," "a house is not a home," "be it ever so humble, there's no place like home," "home is where the heart is," and, of course, a



DAVID IRELAND, *Interior site*, the artist's house at 500 Capp Street, San Francisco, 1975 to the present (Photo: copyright 1988, M. Lee Fatherree). Ireland, an architect, designer, artist who blurs the boundaries between these activities, has made an ongoing artwork of his own 19th-century house in the Mission District (a former boarding house and accordian factory built by a retired sea captain). A curious bridge between past, present and posterity, the house is both an artwork and a receptacle for artworks and/or the paraphernalia of daily life. Old tools or household objects (a bouquet of used brooms in room at right) lean against the walls, amputated furniture hangs from the ceiling, and collected bits (rubber bands, toilet paper tubes) fill glass jars or are stacked on shelves, suggesting the ritualization of domestic labor. When stripping down the interior, Ireland chose to maintain its layered history by adding coats of Verathane; the cracked and mottled walls glow with internal light and their shabbiness becomes an unexpected elegance. Time is exposed in its use and its elusiveness. Ireland's Capp Street house, wrote Rebecca Solnit, "became a museum of its own past," but, as a home, it escaped the conventional state of suspended animation to "evolve, adapt and function as a stage for private life."

increasing number of whom are living there year round. Over one hundred houses now stand on Indian Point, the smaller ones on the Bay side, facing us, and the larger ones fronting on Sea Beach, Little River, Reid State Park, and the open sea.

When I was a child "old man Webster" held sway over the Indian Point road, blocking access to Sea Beach and its striking array of white rocks, tidal pools and "Devil's Chasm"—the best storm-watching spot in the area. We would trespass by walking across the flats and bushwhacking or drive down the road with my grandmother, who would get out to beard the irrascible Mr. Webster in his den: "I'll visit with Mr. Webster a while, you children go on down to the beach." When I was an

more telling pair—"a woman's place is in the home," and "a man's home is his castle." It was not until the seventeenth century—in Europe—that the comfort and privacy we assume as part of the notion of home was even an issue. It came with the increased isolation of family units, led by the bourgeoisie, as communal living waned. In his evocative book on domestic interiors—*Home: The Short History of an Idea*—Witold Rybczynski traces the human dwelling place from campsites to bare rooms to the complex spaces we inhabit today, drawing parallels with the development of self-consciousness, "the house as a setting for an emerging interior life."

Comfort and privacy or intimacy are by no means the cultural or economic norm in many parts of the world; nor is there any agreement as to what they mean. Domesticity was, from the beginning, "a feminine achievement," as was the success of a newly scientific approach to housekeeping called "domestic engineering" in the nineteenth century, and, from the other side of the door, the later need for "a room of her own." Gender affects our experience of the four walls we return to as well as our experiences of the "outside world," defined by mobility or lack thereof, as well as by boundaries—which originally meant places bound together rather than lines of separation. Gender often merges with class as a key to reading domestic places. (Poor women, for instance, know rich neighborhoods because they are domestics there, while rich women remain ignorant of the places where their servants live.)

The notion of a gendered landscape is still new to many Americans, although we are generally aware that house, home, street, neighborhood are experienced as prison and refuge, confining and protecting, different—especially for women—in daylight and dark. On the domestic level, "a woman's touch" has long been valued (even as a woman's work has been devalued and de-skilled), though seen as the superstructure rather than the infrastructure of American history. Yet these same women often stepped out of conventional divisions of labor to do much of the work involved in cutting a home out of the wilderness, fighting off its previous inhabitants, and cultivating the land.

This was not what the Victorians meant when they said women and children were "closer to nature," an idea that survived through the fifties. Suburbs, perceived as refuges, were considered more "natural" than cities and were therefore where women and children belonged. Lewis Mumford's support for the "garden city," says Elizabeth Wilson, was based on the belief that it would restore women to their proper maternal role (whether they liked it or not). The signs of culture—lawns and barbecues—as male, and horticulture—gardens and daily maintenance—as female, are reflected in suburban yards. At the same time, women have constantly struggled to bridge the gaps between private and public domains, partly to break out of our own gender captivity and partly to change the way difference is perceived. The suburbs may have been a good place to come home to, but they were not a good place to be stuck in. In the three years that Herbert Gans was studying Levittown, there were fourteen suicide attempts, thirteen of them by women.

SUZANNE LACY, *Auto: On the Edge of Time*, 1994. Lewiston, New York (Photo: Suzanne Lacy). Part of a larger national multi-site project sponsored by New York's Public Art Fund, in which the artist worked with battered women and children, women in prison, and various support groups. These battered cars, parked in a neighborhood filling station, were "decorated" by those who know domestic violence firsthand. The place-specific installation brings the terrible stories out from behind closed doors and into a community space, turning private experience inside out for public view. In a related installation for Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Festival, Lacy drew a metaphorical parallel between the domestic violence support network and the underground railroad.

adult, an overzealous constable became my arch adversary as I refused to give up Indian Point, which I saw as part of my "traditional" turf.

In May 1995, the liberal weekly *Maine Times* reported that the governor was buying a summer house on "exclusive Indian Point," where he "would join a de facto millionaires' club." This came as news to most residents, although one of them is a co-founder of the *Maine Times*. The governor himself insisted his house was modest, proving it by saying that his next door neighbor was a retired schoolteacher. Georgetown is no Rockefeller hangout, although one movie star does summer inconspicuously in Robinhood.

Real estate agents ignore the adage "a house is not a home" and persistently advertise "lovely homes" as though a home could be found ready-made. For many, the domestic landscape is formed not by family activities or by the trees or buildings visible from the window but by familiar cartoon shows or MTV or the Internet or the "local" shopping mall, which has taken the place of mysterious small-town vacant lots or creeks and woods to explore. After only a few centuries, if that, domesticity has become as specialized and alienated as the rest of modern life, fragmented along cultural and class lines.

According to Gwendolyn Wright, zoning (first implemented in Los Angeles in 1909) "was designed to remove the class of people who would have worked in larger stores and to ensure that most suburban women were protected in their homes, affording them little opportunity for employment." Homework was also banned in many suburbs, leaving in the lurch the growing number of single mothers who commuted to urban jobs but were unable to afford childcare, and fueling the feminization of poverty. Although working mothers prefer apartment living, landlords are conventionally unwelcoming to pets and families; in 1979, 70 percent of Los Angeles apartment buildings did not allow children. The cooperative aspects of suburban living, such as they are, seem mostly available to women who don't work out of the home; friendship, baby sitting exchanges, coffee klatches, phone calls, help in emergencies, a certain security. Here too, however, there are rules. A cousin of mine was a suburban "househusband" in a New England town for a few years in the seventies while his wife worked. He found himself excluded from kitchen social life and child-oriented neighborhood intimacies because other husbands were threatened by his presence around their wives while they were away at work.

Very little has changed on Kennebec Point in my sixty years; all but two of the summer families who were there when I was born have remained, and some houses are bursting at the seams with grandparents, parents, and children's children.

In 1997, for the first time in some thirty years, a new family has bought a house on the Point, having rented it previously. (The "old" family, which has summered there since the late 1930s, is still in residence elsewhere on the Point.

There are now 23 houses on Kennebec Point, three built since the 1930s, and two more are in the works. The three

The content of the American homeplace is often conformity disguised as self-expression, the creation of a transparent nest that reflects a family's self-image and social aspirations, or literally exposes their lives, through a street-facing picture window. Zoning often prohibits non-traditional families and "unrelated" people living together in group homes. Peter Jackson has mapped the "ecology" and "micro-geography" of prostitution in California, and analyzed the ways in which gay and lesbian politics "are simultaneously social and spatial" as they shift the boundaries between private and public domains. Gay men have often played a gentrifying role much as artists have, revitalizing parts of the inner city by superimposing their own cultural values, while displacing the inhabitants. They have developed their own urban "ghettos" (Christopher Street in New York, the Castro in San Francisco, South Beach in Miami, among others), which serve as protective bastions but can also expose its occupants to harassment. Lesbians, however, have been reluctant to form "identifiable residential clusters"—no doubt due to the added vulnerability all women feel in this society; they are also more likely to be living with children and need to consider school districts, to blend more harmoniously into "ordinary" life.

Such blending is not always possible. A "good address" may be merely a facade, like house styles. A 1988 Ohio State University survey solicited responses to pictures of six different house styles—Farm, Contemporary, Colonial, Mediterranean, Saltbox, and Tudor. Respondents were told the houses were the same size, layout, and location; the landscapes were identical and entirely neutral. Then they were asked to choose which one would be most comfortable to approach if you needed help, the house of a leader, and your dream house. The farmhouse was considered friendliest (it was the most horizontal, and the porch spanning the whole facade was more welcoming). The columned Colonial was seen as the leader's (it was taller, suggesting a literally colonial hierarchy, and the entryway was also tall and directive). The Tudor was the dream house (it combined the imposing and the homey, its central entrance section resembling a smaller house). Class played a much larger role than region in these choices: respondents from Los Angeles and Columbus, Ohio, came up with very similar answers.

However, sometimes our design preferences are reactions *against* class or social conditioning. You can build a pseudo-adobe house in a New England colonial town, or a two-story clapboard house on the high desert, but you can't make them part of the bigger picture. Cultural suppression can be communal rather than imposed from the outside. In an essay on internal constraints on Appalachian folk art, Charles Martin tells a sad story of conformity: a man who returned home after living outside of eastern Kentucky for years built a house and painted it an odd (unidentified) color; instead of facing the road, as was customary, his house faced the back hillside. He was laughed at, criticized, and then virtually ostracized for challenging local ways and, in doing so, damaging his family's reputation. He eventually gave in and remodeled, but he is still known as "the fellow with the house."

The cultural significance of plan or layout (more than facade or decoration) in vernacular architecture resembles the significance of paths beaten by custom through a landscape. John Vlach's study of the southern shotgun house, for instance, establishes its origins in the compounds of West Africa, then traces its creolization in French Haiti and New Orleans and its spread through the American South in the nineteenth century; painter John Biggers has seen the shotgun's line of rooms as railroad cars, "buildings on the

oldest date to 1783, 1823, and "before 1830." Another five were built between 1830 and 1845. The next building boom on Kennebec Point, and everyplace like it along the southern Maine coast, began around 1889, as the influx of people from Massachusetts and New York worked their way up through New England looking for quaint and healthy summer refuges. One of the several large turn-of-the-century summer homes was built by a descendent of the Olivers, who date back to a David Oliver who lived on Parker's Island in the 1600s and fled to Sagadahoc Rock during Indian raids.

move, on the track, led by an unseen locomotive, of freedom and spirit." Robert Farris Thompson contends that the American porch reflects another African influence, brought by slaves from Kongo and Angola. Today, according to Labelle Prussin, when black people move into a white neighborhood, they often add on front porches, turning the street "into a wholly different cultural situation, with dialogues crossing streets, porch to porch."

If the history of vernacular architecture can be written in warm but vulnerable wood and "permanent" prestigious stone, now metal too must be added. Sometimes the home is a "mobile home"—a phrase that expresses the contradictions at the heart of American life. Perhaps the real American dream is to "sleep in one's own bed" and at the same time "be on the move." The trailer camps and RV (recreation vehicle) parks that make up "moburbia" can offer the best of both worlds —belonging and escape, community and independence. "Just knowing that underneath the floor is a set of wheels makes you feel free," said one afficionado.

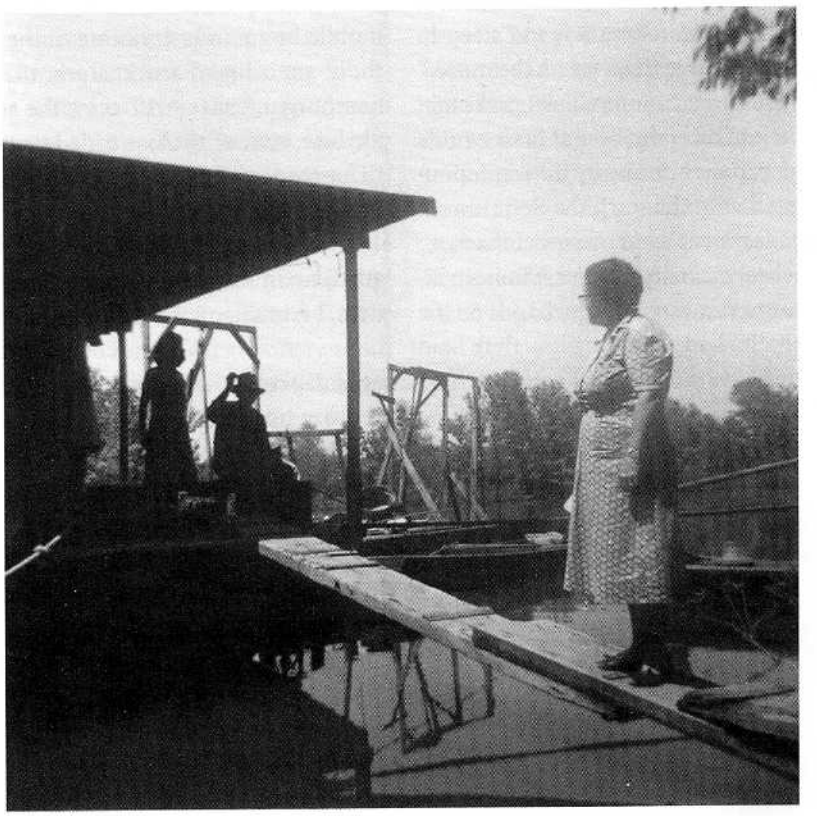
Writing about "wheel estate," Michael Aaron Rockland describes passing a caravan of Winnebagos on the road. The rear vehicle had a neon sign that said HOWDY and the lead vehicle flashed COME AGAIN, like a friendly small town. Trailers and mobile homes (officially called "manufactured homes," since many of them travel only once, in halves, from factory to home-site) are in fact a response to the shortage of affordable houses in the United States. Energy- efficient, relatively tax-free, and half the price of on-site construction, mobile homes and motor homes allow retirees a new start as well as a new double-gendered toy—a truck to play house in. And they are democratic, too, heirs to the mail-order (later "prefab") house that began with balloon-frame construction in the mid-nineteenth century. When post-World War II builders seemed to have abandoned the blue-collar homeowner, the mobile home industry came to the rescue: "Although there are a lot of steakeaters, the basic diet is still hamburger," says Art Decio, the self-made owner of Skyline, one of the nation's largest manufacturers. "The story of America is really a chronicle of man's [sic] unending quest for homeownership."

RVs head south and west. Like everybody else selling anything in the USA, their advertisers tout "new frontiers." Homes on wheels have, from their inception, been seen as heirs to the covered wagon and the gypsy or sheepherder's caravan; they recall the nineteenth-century homesteader's shed, which could be taken apart in a day, loaded on a wagon, and moved on to claim new land. It is no less "natural" for humankind to move than to stay rooted, but the traditionally rootless (gypsies, or "travelers," and hobos) remain suspect in this society, despite the fact that they are really the prototypical Americans. "A century ago, when, just as today, one American in five changed residences within a year," writes David Sopher, "one of the most widely treasured household icons was a plaque or sampler carrying the words Home Sweet Home." Today there is a plaque that reads "God Bless our Immobile Home."

Waterbed Truck in Des Moines, Iowa, early 1970s (Photo: Lucy R. Lippard). Inside out, a bed on wheels, a kind of boat, American commercial folk art.

Being in Place

The land is important to me, but even more important is the idea that it becomes a "place" because someone has been there.
— MARLENE CREATES



In Maine, where you come from is always an issue. "Though I've spent a good portion of every year since birth in this house, in this town, I was born in Miami," writes Joseph Barth of Alna. "This automatically calls into question my credentials as a native. Somehow a zygote starting its division here is not blessed with the same innate potential as a flesh-and-blood baby inhaling a first lungful of Maine air. But despite the accident of my subtropical birth, I've always felt that here is where I belong, so I try to do my part and participate."

There are several tiers of status; to take them from the bottom up: Tourist/out of stater, summer person or someone "from away," local, and native. Native, however, does not mean indigenous people. Over

EVERY LANDSCAPE IS A HERMETIC NARRATIVE: "Finding a fitting place for oneself in the world is finding a place for oneself in a story." The story is composed of mythologies, histories, ideologies—the stuff of identity and representation. Jo Carson, a professional storyteller from Johnson City, Tennessee, knows her sight lines. She learned in college that when she talked Appalachian, people were "either rude or enchanted." Gradually she realized she was exotic because "I am of, and from, a single place, and most people don't have the privilege." As a "placed person," to use Wendell Berry's phrase, she says she is "involuntarily rooted....Unless I can see these old mountains, some piece of heart is missing in me....Perhaps in my last life I was a tree. I am from here, I was raised here." When Carson talks about place, she means not only landforms, but "the flavor of a society, the beliefs and activities of people who make up a given place." Her stories start with "basic central place functions—grocery store, gas station, auto mechanic, restaurant, movie house (read video rental, these days) and decent bookstore. Most geographers do not consider a bookstore a basic central place function, but I do."

MAGGIE LEE SAYRE, *River Life*, n.d. (Photo: Courtesy Center for Study of Southern Culture). Sayre lived most of her life on a houseboat with her family, fishing rivers through Kentucky and Tennessee. Born deaf, she began taking pictures as a child around 1936 with a box camera. She signed her work "Deaf Maggie Lee Sayre." Her pictorial autobiography, a chosen means of communication with a world she couldn't hear, combines local knowledge and respect for memory with an itinerant's curiosity, detailing the activity and paraphernalia of fishing life—the nets, the floods, the friends, the fish caught (giant carp, catfish and spoonbills). In regard to Sayre's life, Tom Rankin quotes Eudora Welty: "A sheltered life can be a very daring life. For all serious daring starts from within." About this picture, Sayre told Rankin: "This is Pearl Dotson....That's my father on the porch....I was standing on land when I snapped this shot, looking at the boat there. I think it's a good picture."

Much has been written in the last twenty years or so about "the sense of place," which is symbiotically related to a sense of displacement. I am ambivalent about this phrase even as I am touched by it. "A sense of place" has become not just a cliché but a kind of intellectual property, a way for nonbelongers to belong, momentarily. At the same time, senses of place, a serial sensitivity to place, are invaluable social and cultural tools, providing much-needed connections to what we call "nature" and, sometimes, to cultures not our own. Such motives should be neither discouraged nor disparaged.

All places exist somewhere between the inside and the outside views of them, the ways in which they compare to, and contrast with, other places. A sense of place is a virtual immersion that depends on lived experience and a topographical intimacy that is rare today both in ordinary life and in traditional educational fields. From the writer's viewpoint, it demands extensive visual and historical research, a great deal of walking "in the field," contact with oral tradition, and an intensive knowledge of both local multiculturalism and the broader context of multicenteredness. On one hand, there is "the ability to know a new place quickly and well, and to adapt to its circumstance," a source of mapping in indigenous societies. This is still a survival technique, a kind of scanning known to citydwellers as well as to woodsmen. On the other hand, memory is stratified. If we have seen a place through many years, each view, no matter how banal, is a palimpsest. Yi-fu Tuan says that the terrain of late childhood seems to penetrate our lives and memories most intensely. In Georgetown, driving on an almost-two-lane tarred road, I can call up its predecessors: the one-lane hardtop, the gravel, the dirt with the tall grasses growing up between the ruts, stained with oil from under the cars, the straightened curve now lying forgotten over there

heard in an Indian crafts store near Wiscasset: A Native American woman (from the West, I suspect) asks the white woman behind the cash register whether the objects are all made by Native people. "Oh yes," she replies cheerfully, unaware that the question is culturally loaded, "all native Mainers."

The legal definition of a "resident" of Georgetown is someone who lives here a minimum of six continuous weeks each year. A mere resident, however, is not a local and certainly not a native. A historical

in the puckerbrush. I can imagine even further back. The old road seen in photographs, described in recollections, is now woods, its ruts the faintest trace. Even as a newcomer, in New Mexico, once I know that *Avenida Vieja* (the old road) ran northeast-southwest before the highways came in and the adobe ruin next door might have been a stage stop, I can call it up along with the noisy carts and carriages that bumped over it. Memory is part first-person, part collective.

The sense of place, as the phrase suggests, does indeed emerge from the senses. The land, and even the spirit of the place, can be experienced kinetically, or kinesthetically, as well as visually. If one has been raised in a place, its textures and sensations, its smells and sounds, are recalled as they felt to a child's, adolescent's, adult's body. Even if one's history there is short, a place can still be felt as an extension of the body, especially the walking body, passing through and becoming part of the landscape. Michael Martone is eloquent about his sensuous identification with the Midwest:

> *The Midwest is too big to be seen [as the Heartland]....I think of it more as a web of tissue, a membrane, a skin. And the way I feel about the Midwest is the way my skin feels and the way I feel about my own skin....the Midwest is hide, an organ of sense and not power, delicate and coarse at the same time....*

Kent Ryden isolates the sense of place as a specific genre of regional folklore, offering four "layers of meaning" familiar to local residents but invisible to visitors, cartographers, and even scholars: local and material lore including local names for flora, fauna, and topography; handed-down history, much of it intimate, some of it apocryphal; group identity and place-based individual identity; and the emotions or affective bonds attached to place, which Yi-fu Tuan calls "topophilia."

Place is most often examined from the subjective viewpoint of individual or community, while "region" has traditionally been more of an objective geographic term, later kidnapped by folklorists. In the fifties, a region was academically defined as a geographic center surrounded by "an area where nature acts in a roughly uniform manner." Today a region is generally understood not as a politically or geographically delimited space but one determined by stories, loyalities, group identity, common experiences and histories (often unrecorded), a state of mind rather than a place on a map. Perhaps the most accurate definition of a region, although the loosest, is Michael Steiner's; "the largest unit of territory about which a person can grasp 'the concrete realities of the land,' or which can be contained in a person's genuine sense of place."

"Regionalism"—named and practiced as either a generalized, idealized "all-Americanism" or a progressive social realism—was most popular in the thirties when, thanks to hard times, Americans moved voluntarily around the country less than they had in the twenties or would in the fifties. During the Great Depression, the faces and voices of "ordinary people" became visible and audible, through art, photographs, and journalism, and had a profound effect on New Deal government policy. John Dewey and other scholars recognized that local life became all the more intense as the nation's identity became more confusingly

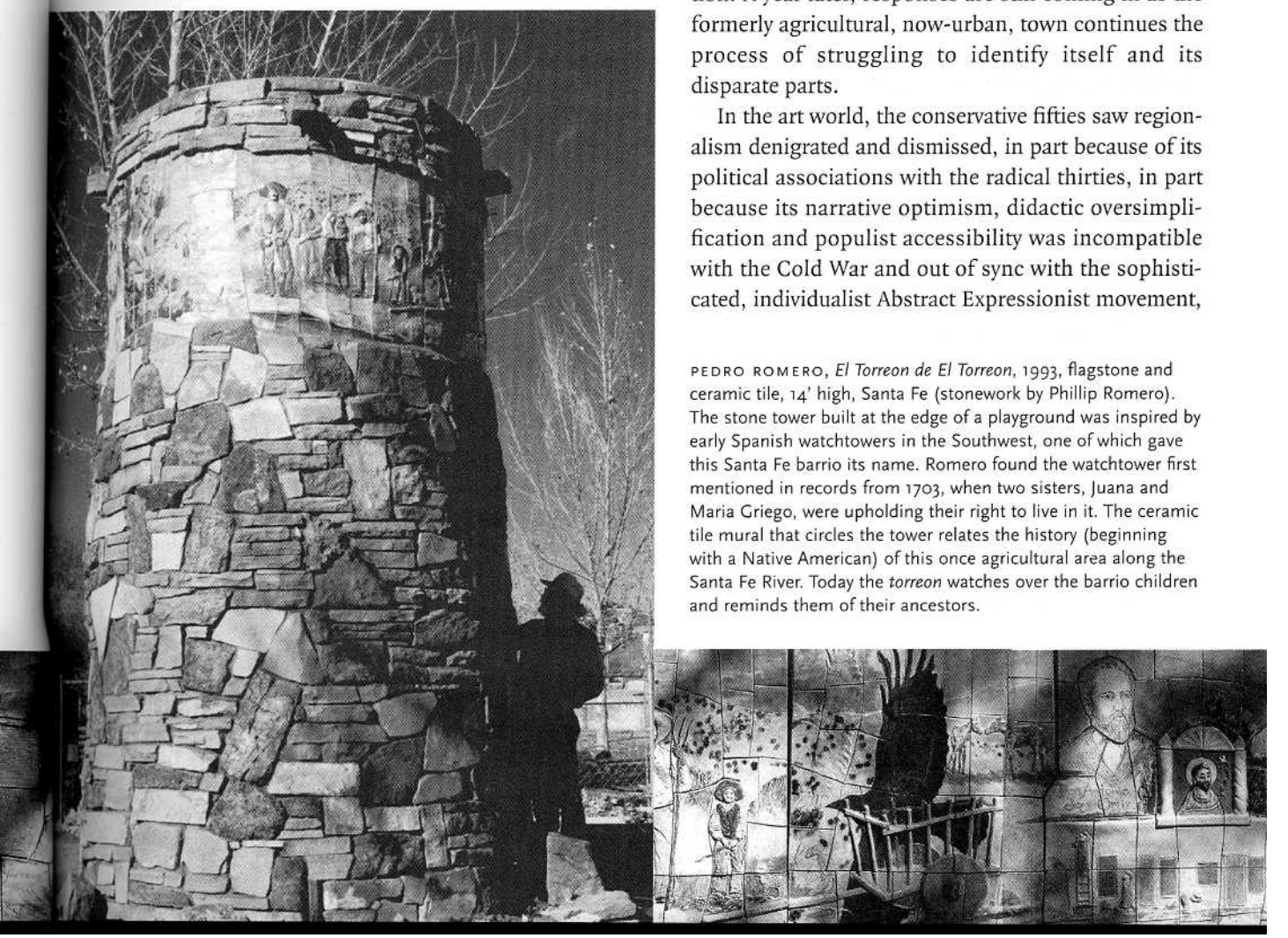
notion of "nativism" colors the way people see their places. "It is part of Maine folklore that those from 'away' may be street-smart and book-smart, but they lack the knowledge the true Mainer has of how to survive, physically and mentally, in a harsh climate," says Douglas Rooks. "Mainers tend to develop a get-along mentality, doing whatever's necessary in order to survive and stay in Maine," writes Edgar Allen Beem, but with this comes "a sense of limited horizons."

diverse and harder to grasp. (Allen Tate called America "that all-destroying abstraction.") The preoccupation with regionalism was a "search for the primal spatial structure of the country....[for] the true underlying fault lines of American culture."

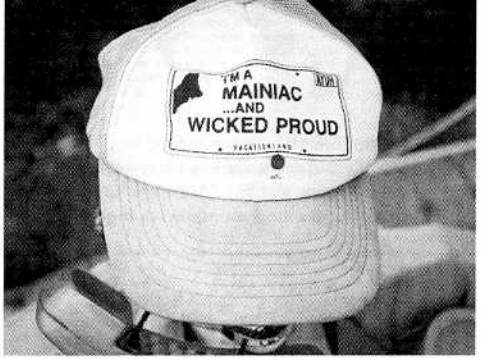
Bioregionalism seems to me the most sensible, if least attainable, way of looking at the world. Rejecting the artificial boundaries that complicate lives and divide ecosystems, it combines changing human populations and distinct physical territories determined by land and life forms. But most significantly, a region, like a community, is subjectively defined, delineated by those who live there, not by those who study it, as in Wendell Berry's description of regionalism as "local life aware of itself."

In April, 1996, the town of Fairfield, California, for instance, inspired by a coalition of local public artists and administrators, asked itself, "Where is Fairfield?" A local high school designed chairs as symbols of places in the community; grade schoolers designed postcards; t-shirts, supermarket bags, banners, local media, and oral history projects all asked the question. A year later, responses are still coming in as the formerly agricultural, now-urban, town continues the process of struggling to identify itself and its disparate parts.

In the art world, the conservative fifties saw regionalism denigrated and dismissed, in part because of its political associations with the radical thirties, in part because its narrative optimism, didactic oversimplification and populist accessibility was incompatible with the Cold War and out of sync with the sophisticated, individualist Abstract Expressionist movement,



PEDRO ROMERO, *El Torreon de El Torreon*, 1993, flagstone and ceramic tile, 14' high, Santa Fe (stonework by Phillip Romero). The stone tower built at the edge of a playground was inspired by early Spanish watchtowers in the Southwest, one of which gave this Santa Fe barrio its name. Romero found the watchtower first mentioned in records from 1703, when two sisters, Juana and Maria Griego, were upholding their right to live in it. The ceramic tile mural that circles the tower relates the history (beginning with a Native American) of this once agricultural area along the Santa Fe River. Today the *torreon* watches over the barrio children and reminds them of their ancestors.



Mainiac Cap (Photo: Lucy R. Lippard). Mainers are proud of being called Mainiacs. This cap is worn by a Kienholzian figure that is part of an anonymous roadside sculpture near Skowhegan made of found objects and an abandoned car.

just then being discovered as the tool with which to wrench modern art away from Parisian dominance. Today the term *regionalism*, most often applied to conventional mediums such as painting and printmaking, continues to be used pejoratively, to mean corny backwater art flowing from the tributaries that might eventually reach the mainstream but is currently stagnating out there in the boondocks.

In fact, though, all art is regional, including that made in our "art capital," New York City. In itself extremely provincial, New York's artworld is rarely considered "regional" because it directly receives and transmits international influences. The difference between New York and "local" art scenes is that other places know what New York is up to but New York remains divinely oblivious to what's happening off the market and reviewing map. Yet, paradoxically, when the most sophisticated visitors from the coasts come to "the sticks," they often prefer local folk art and "naive" artists to warmed-over syntheses of current big-time styles. (Ad Reinhardt, the ultimate avant-gardist, "last painter" of apparently solid black canvases, once gave a jury prize to an elderly woman's leaf collages, infuriating his local imitators, who thought they had the inside track.)

Instead of getting angry, defensive, or discouraged, it might be a good idea for local artists to scrutinize their situation. Why *does* this very local art often speak so much more directly to those who look at a lot of art all over the place? What many of us find interesting and energetic in the "regions" is a certain "foreignness" (a variation on the Exotic Other) that, on further scrutiny, may really be an unexpected familiarity, emerging from half-forgotten sources in our own local popular cultures. Perhaps it is condescending to say that a regional art is often at its best when it is not reacting to current marketplace trends but simply acting on its own instincts; the word "innocent" is often used. But it can also be a matter of self-determination. Artists are stronger when they control their own destinies and respond to what they know best—which is not necessarily related to place. Sometimes significant work is done by those who have never (or rarely) budged from their place, who are satisfied with their lives, and work out from there, looking around with added intensity and depth because they are already familiar with the surface. These artists may seem marginal even to their local artworld, but not to their own audiences and communities.

It has been argued that there is no such thing as regionalism in our homogenized, peripatetic, electronic culture, where all citizens have theoretically equal access to the public library's copy of *Art in America* if not to the Museum of Modern Art (which costs as much as a movie). On another level altogether, middle-class museum-goers living out of the centers do become placeless as they try to improve and appreciate, and in the process learn to distrust their own locally aquired tastes. They are usually unaware that mainstream art in fact borrows incessantly from locally rooted imagery as well as from the much-maligned mass cultures—from Navajo blankets to Roman Catholic icons to Elvis to Disney.

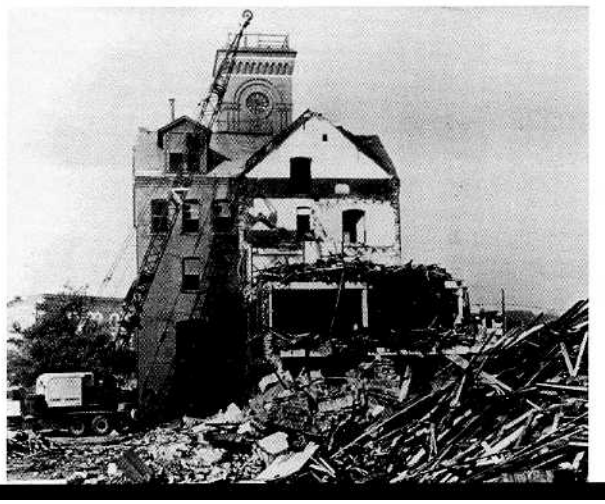
Everybody comes from someplace, and the places we come from—cherished or rejected—inevitably affect our work. Most artists today come from a lot of places. Some are confused by this situation and turn to the international styles that claim to transcend it; others make the most of their multicenteredness. Some of the best regional art is made by transients who bring fresh eyes to the place where they have landed. They may be only in temporary exile from the

"How can you argue with a Mainer whose roots are 11 generations deep?" begins a local book review. Although my grandson is the fifth generation in my family to love this place, we're summer people "from away" and always will be. (In parts of the West the term is "from off.") It's partly a class thing. You can be a newcomer, but if you've worked at the Bath Iron Works for a couple of years, you're a local (but not a native); you can come here summers all your life and you're still "from away."

Over the last thirty years, ownership of a "second home" has become more common among the middle class, and homes vary in scale from a full-sized winterized house on the shore to our summer-only house made of one layer of plywood, to a trailer on a

centers (usually through a teaching job), but they tend not to waste their time bewailing their present location or getting away whenever possible. They are challenged by new surroundings and new cultures and bring new material into their art. As Ellen Dissanayake has observed, the function of art is to "make special"; as such, it can raise the "special" qualities of place embedded in everyday life, restoring them to those who created them. Yet modernist and some postmodernist art, skeptical of "authenticity," prides itself on departing from the original voices. The sources of landbased art and aesthetics remain opaque to those who only study them.

An American Brass Plant in Waterbury, once the tube mill of Benedict and Burnham, being torn down in 1961. From *Brass Valley* (Photo: Tom Kabelka, *Waterbury Republican-American*). Valley people, says worker Frieda Ewen, "are always on the edge....The factory can get up and go and people know that....You're totally dependent on that building." By 1980, there were fewer than 5,000 workers in Naugatuck Valley brass plants, where once there had been 50,000. The decline of the brass industry has been attributed to outdated machinery, high labor costs, runaway shops to Asia, South America, the Middle East, and to the replacement of brass by plastic and aluminum. According to longtime worker and union organizer Bill Moriarty,"one thing that went sour was that these were all once locally owned plants. Then Kennecott came in and took over Chase; Anaconda took over American Brass. The only semi-local plant was Scovill's; it also had tentacles out all over the country. These conglomerates came in, and they just ran these plants into the ground." Union man Tony Gerace adds, "We didn't realize that the bigger corporations could unload a particular plant without any feelings..."



In all discussions of place, it is a question of abstraction and specifics. If art is defined as "universal," and form is routinely favored over content, then artists are encouraged to transcend their immediate locales. But if content is considered the prime component of art, and lived experience is seen as a prime material, then regionalism is not a limitation but an advantage, a welcome base that need not exclude outside influences but sifts them through a local filter. Good regional art has both roots and reach.

A model for this kind of project, though not well-known among artists, was the Brass Valley Workers History Project, initiated in 1979 by Jeremy Brecher, Jerry Lombardi, and Jan Stackhouse in the Naugatuck Valley near Waterbury, Connecticut. It embraced community organizing, union education, an illustrated book on the local history, and an exhibition; in still another ripple outward, it inspired a larger process that included music festivals and teaching resources. The project did not enshrine the past in a palatable cocoon but functioned as a social catalyst. It was received by families living in the valley as "a kind of collective family album in a community where almost everyone has a relative who worked in the brass industry."

As early as 1947, geographer John K. Wright stated the importance of including in his field the way people saw the world as well as its physical attributes, of mapping the desirability and undesirability of places and the reasons people feel the way they do about them. This relationship of peripheral places to central places has also informed more recent studies. Psychologist Tony Hiss asks us to measure our closeness to neighbors and community and suggests ways to develop an "experiential watchfulness" over our regional "sweet spots," or favorite places. Seeing how they change at different times of day, week, and year can stimulate local activism:

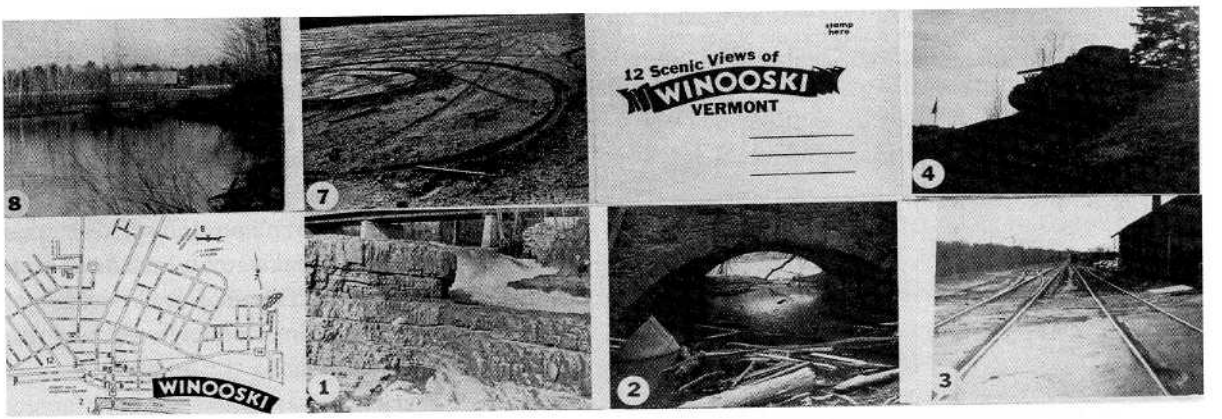
patch of wooded inland. But when I was a child in the 1940s and 1950s there was a huge social gap between summer people and those called "the natives." It was cultural, not just economic, and rural versus urban. (Georgetown year-rounders were just beginning to go to beaches for pleasure; many who spent their lives on the water never learned to swim.) Such differences were exacerbated by snobbery in some quarters. Within the summer colony itself, there were those who carefully distinguished renters from owners, prep school students from those who went to public high schools. Such attitudes have diminished greatly, but they have left scars.

Other than parks, what landscapes do you know and care about that you would nominate to a list of Outstanding National Landscapes? How secure are these places at this point? Who's in charge of them? What kind of changes to what you see, hear, smell, or touch would damage your sense of connectedness to these landscapes?

"Regional" photographers and conceptual artists have paralleled these ideas in the visual arts. Dan Higgins has been deeply rooted in the local for over twenty years. His works on Winooski, Vermont, are shown at local bars, stores, and other municipal sites. They include *The Forgotten Trash Can Photos* (1975), selected from a group of discarded photos from the fifties and sixties found behind a pharmacy. As Nathan Lyons has written, "the accidents of millions of amateurs devoid of a picture vocabulary—which produced an outpouring of multiple exposures, distortions, unusual perspectives, foreshortening of planes, imbalance—has contributed greatly to the visual vocabulary of all graphic media since the development of photography."

Higgins's *The Incredible Onion Portraits* (1978)—posed portraits of groups of Winooski people who shared a workplace, a school class, a club, or a neighborhood, each holding an onion—constitute not only a portrait of a place, but a commemoration of its history and a protest against its destruction, gentrification and homogenization by the bulldozers of urban renewal: "The Onion Portraits speak of specificity," wrote Higgins in his introduction. "They deal with fabrics and textures that exist rather than with planners' preconceptions....The Onion is prop, appropriate not only because the town's name is the Abenaki word for wild onions growing along its river, but because the Onion is strong and reeks of a flavor unsettling to bourgeois taste....To hold the Onion is to participate in local lore; its embrace is an affirmation of locality."

DAN HIGGINS, *12 Scenic Views of Winooski, Vermont*, 1973, foldout postcard. The first in an ongoing series of communal, collaborative love notes to his hometown, Higgins made this with eighth graders at the John F. Kennedy Junior High School in Winooski as part of a Vermont Council on the Arts artist-in-the-schools program. Students took pictures of their favorite places which were offset printed, folded by hand, and distributed. This project epitomizes the lure of the local, its apparently innocuous sites—decidedly places rather than landscapes—offering a classic "geography of childhood." The imaginative viewer will be able to crawl under the bush, kick the dirt beneath the overpass, or hang out at the railroad tracks, sensing the secrecy that dramatizes ordinary crannies. The project works both as "art" and as an educational strategy by which students take their own realm seriously.



On the Move

We are part of a societal ebb and flow,
people washing in and out of suburbs and cities. Like hunter-gatherers,
we must go where we will be fed, where the jobs are listed....
Whether we like it nor not, we are bound together
by that which may be the cheapest and ugliest in our culture—
[brand names and Golden Arches and celebrity recognition].
These symbols and heroes may annoy us, or comfort us....
at the very least they give us context.
— LOUISE ERDRICH

Distances in coastal Maine still vary depending on the mode of transportation: Popham by car takes an hour to reach; by boat it is very close, but once there, we have to worry about tides and moorings. Roads rather than water became the main coastal routes in the 19th century. During the same period, the soil was becoming exhausted, and by the turn of the century, many of the old saltwater farms were abandoned for houses closer to town and industrial jobs.

Since the 1940s, mobile homes and trailers have sprung up next to handsome old houses, crumbling because they were too expensive to heat and maintain. Some vanished, others were rescued by an influx of summer people, a few of whom were in fact returning to ancestral turf. One young

NORTH AMERICANS ARE FAMOUS FOR WANTING to know what lies over the next hill. From the spiritual journey or mythic quest to the more mundane search for land, job, or peace and quiet, mobility has been more American than stability. Wendell Berry says, "wherever we have been, we have never really intended to be. The continent is said to have been discovered by an Italian who was on his way to India." At the same time, he has also observed another national tendency—"to stay put, to say 'No farther. This is the place.'" Given our national history, such a declaration sounds like wishful thinking, although Berry's heartfelt and practical paeans to rootedness in the Kentucky hills pluck chords of longing in many of us. Today Americans move on an average of every four years and American adults are usually older than the houses they live in. (Even as I write this, comes the news, in September 1995, that Americans are moving less, down from 20 percent to 16 percent, and the majority now move within their own county or state.) The kind of content that depends on memory and continuity is unavailable to those who move so often. Our migratory preference, writes Wallace Stegner, has deprived us of bonds to place and community: "It has robbed us of the gods who make places holy."

The first cross-country lure was land—or real estate. That impetus came to a forced halt at the Pacific. According to historian Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893, the "frontier"—marking the boundary between savagery and civilization, wilderness and cultivation—disappeared around 1890. While Turner's thesis has been dismissed by revisionists, it was in itself a watershed: when there was no more frontier to look forward to, our national movements became more frenetically random—here and there, back and forth between coasts, following elusive fortune and driven by economic necessity, inventing new frontiers to replace the vanished ones. Alaska is even today called "the last frontier"; the land battles taking place there are eerily reminiscent of earlier frontier histories. Wave after wave of exiles and immigrants are still coming through the United States, and we have made internal exiles of those who are its natives. Whatever our ethnicity, we share a disturbed and disturbing common ground.

It was once believed that identity could be submerged into a harmonious relationship between people and place, that "Americans" were created by immersion in the American landscape which in turn had been created to reflect the American ethos. This kind of one-way environmental determinism riding on rugged individualism has since given way to more complex readings of the relation of place to identity and society, varying widely among cultures and generations. J. B. Jackson has pointed out that the scorned and flimsy architecture of poverty (from the Middle Ages until the present) protects people from being tied involuntarily to their environments, from remaining in untenable and tyrannical circumstances, which is the flip side of a romanticized rootedness. Nathaniel Hawthorne presented a character in *House of Seven Gables* saying similarly: "We shall live to see the day, I trust, when no man shall build his house for posterity....It were better that they should crumble to ruin, once in every twenty years, or thereabouts, as a hint to the people to examine into and reform the institutions which they symbolize." The notion that a house might not be home forever,

Previous page: MARK KLETT, *Checking the Road Map: crossing into Arizona, Monument Valley, 6/22/82.* In her preface to Klett's book *Revealing Territory,* Patricia Limerick remarks that "U-Hauls can carry as substantial a cargo of hope and ambition as anyone ever packed into a covered wagon," but despite the promise of "Adventure in Moving," a West that can be traveled seventy miles an hour instead of fifteen miles a day has diminished in both size and legend.

family on Kennebec Point was condemned for bringing in a mobile home in the 1960s, even though their parents owned one of the grandest turn-of-the-century mansions on the Point. They soon built the shell of a "regular house" around the mobile home and now no one would suspect the hidden core.

Maine summers are warmer in the day and cool at night. June and July can be wet and foggy, August is bluer, and after Labor Day come stronger winds and crisp weather. End-of-summer melancholy affects everyone, but for natives Labor Day marks the moment when they reclaim their state.

Maine's "summer complaint" can be traced back to the late 18th century. But the infrastructure for a tourist economy catering

that it should be built impersonally, with eventual sale in mind, was new in the 19th century.

The term "Americans" (used for U.S. citizens to the exclusion of those with whom we share the hemisphere) masks and maintains deep social and cultural divisions that determine place and displacement like nothing else. There is a dialectic between center and movement, home and restlessness, that every American understands—even if s/he has never budged, has only watched road movies, read the novels of restlessness, listened to the plaintive ballads of loss. In fact, the resurgent popularity today of country music (even as it loses its roots in questionable fusions with homogenized pop) expresses the melancholy of those forced to move constantly in search of a decent living.

I'm not from here, I just live here. I grew up somewhere far away... I'm not from here, I just live here. Came here thinking I'd never stay... on my way to somewhere else. People tell me it's not like it used to be, I shoulda got here before it got ruined by folks like me... Can't say that it matters much.... Nobody's from here. We just live here.... Locals long since moved away....

— JAMES MCMURTRY

These words from a contemporary song echo bitter frontier experience expressed earlier by a disillusioned second generation of Western sodbusters: "We do not live, we only stay / we are too poor to get away."

When one is ready or forced to move is the time when fantasies rise to battle with experience. Pictures form in our minds and we go in search of them; they don't always jibe with reality. Americans going from West to East or East to West, North to South and South to North, for instance, are surprised by the spatial differences. Some Westerners are claustrophobic in the East, while others find it charming and cozy; some Easterners are agoraphobic in the West, while others find it liberating. Trying for months to make up my mind about whether to build my little house in the West next to the trees along the creek or in a bare pasture with a splendid view of sheer space in all directions, I realized the tension lay between my "Eastern" and "Western" personae: the former was drawn to the water and trees, the latter to the 360-degree view and vast space. (I chose the creek.) As I look back at my family history, I see a tension between West and East that continues in my own life—not a conflict so much as a visceral pull from one to the other, the same pull that keeps me moving from ocean to plains, from woods to mountains. Perhaps this dialectic between rest and restlessness is peculiarly North American and should simply be accepted as the source of our multicenteredness.

Those Americans who have not yet found their place, their bit of land, are dissatisfied with it, are not allowed to keep it, or simply need to move on, are joined by those exiled from other nations. We are all "the immigrant population" in the U.S., and most of us lack a center, an orientation. As the national resources shrink and jobs disappear with them, change for working people is less and less voluntary. Among the villains are corporations, "whose very survival is predicated on destroying local economies and thus local communities," writes James Howard Kunstler, although he concludes rather vindictively: "So it is somehow just that their hirelings should live in places of no character, no history, and no community."

If you would find yourself, look to the land you came from and to which you go.

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

We tend to presume our ancestors had a place, but in my own family, once they were uprooted from the old world, people moved around constantly; from the seventeenth century on, it was rare for two or three

to the wealthy was not in place until the 1840s, when speculators began to imagine, construct and sell "summer retreats" along the New England coast to the New York and Boston elites. After the Civil War the tourist industry took off as Americans became "increasingly bewildered by the effects of industrialization, urbanization and immigration." The image of Maine as "vacationland" was born then, with writers and artists as the vanguard. Writer William Dean Howells seems to have coined the all-too appropriate term "summer colonists." According to a 1910 newspaper account, "Cove and cape, the coast is pretty well monopolized by non-

generations to stay in the same town. Each generation, even each member, of a single family may be looking for a different kind of center based on their own class and cultural experiences. Before leaving the parental home, my father lived in one house; my mother lived in five; I lived in ten; my son has lived in three, one of them for most of his life, and he is still there with his own child. These are stories of preference—of upward and downward mobility, of loss and privilege—that would be very hard to read from the outside.

The relationship of multicenteredness to identity is less acknowledged than that of either rootedness or placelessness. We come to a sense of belonging in a place by any number of different roads; in fact, mere time spent is often not enough. Although tradition has it that the longer a family has occupied a place, the deeper their roots, psychological ties can be as strong as historical ones, and they can be formed by "rootless" individuals if their longing for roots is strong enough. To be *of* rather than *in* a place certainly does not demand that one be born and raised there. Yet the pulse of contrast remains. William Kittredge writes of returning to rural Oregon, where he was raised, and meeting a man whom he might have become: "That man is home, where I could have been. I was born to it, but I left. As a consequence I carry a little hollow spot inside me." Yet in the same book, Kittredge also writes: "People ask me if I don't wish I was back on the ranch. The answer is no, and always will be. I have a new life, which is mine, I invented it. That other life belonged to somebody else, to somebody's son or grandson."

There is an ironic cast to some adopted homes, as when Danish-born Isak Dinesen wrote rather smugly of Africa: "Here I am, where I ought to be." People from privileged classes tend to confuse place with property (and even "nature"), because they have the means and leisure time to be strangers in others' lands, to indulge their wanderlust, to travel to sites of beauty, difference, curiosity, to have "second homes" on shores, in mountains, on abandoned farms. Like Maine, like New Mexico, much of the world is a local battleground between those who would like to stay and those who want to move in. The question of who "belongs" is a matter of overlapping degrees, ranging from the indigenous people who may have been in an area for thousands of years, to the "natives" whose ancestors may have come from one hundred to four hundred years ago, to the "locals" who've been there a while or just live in a place now, to those "from away" who may own land but only live in a place part time, to the visitor, the tourist, the stranger.

The "stranger" unites "here" and "there." If s/he stays, s/he may come to belong and reciprocate, or may remain detached and disinterested. Some places

residents; 'no-trespass' signs are so thickly set they form a blazed trail. The man from the city resents intrusion...." Summer people probably dislike tourists as much as local people do, but for different reasons; they disturb our peace, invade places where we are already the privileged invaders. We are traditionally lumped with them.

The psycho-sociology of a small summer community provides complex microcosms of society at large. The families on Kennebec Point are interwoven and have known each other for generations. Incomes, politics, vocations, and home bases vary widely although most came first from

hold strict and apparently irrational criteria for belonging. Class is often the unspoken qualifier. In midcoast Maine, for instance, you can spend eighty summers in a place and you are still from "away." But you can come from away, from Texas or Massachusetts (in which case you are genially called a "Masshole"), to work at the Bath Iron Works, Maine's major employer, for only a few years and you become a "local" (though not a "native") with the attendant privileges of complaining about those from away. Each area has its own fine distinctions. Writer George Ella Lyon says you can be from the town of Harlan in Harlan County, Kentucky, but "if your daddy owned a dry cleaners instead of working in a coal mine, your credentials are questionable."

The cliché "strangers in their own land" is relative, more applicable, in a sense, to those who have displaced the indigenous people (to whom the phrase is most often applied) but remain alienated from the land. E. V. Walter cites a need "to experience the world in a radically old way"; is he calling us back or calling the old ways forward? Those sensitive to the dangers of both gentrification and nostalgia (its root is the Greek word for "return") are not necessarily effective or unselfish when it comes to balancing the old and the new in ways that will comfort and satisfy old and new inhabitants. One way to understand where we have landed is to identify the economic and historical forces that brought us there—alone or accompanied.

The changing landscape is created by the replacement of some people, the displacement of others, and the disappearance of ways of life paradoxically envied by those who have come to emulate them but, by their very arrival, actually destroy them. All of us who have adopted rural places are guilty to some degree of the "drawbridge syndrome"—wanting to be the last of our kind to enter the kingdom of heaven. If no one else like us could move in, we could live suspended in time, simple spectators to the way life has been there without us.

"Having increased our individual mobility in both the physical and social sense—the speed and ease with which we can travel from place to place as well as the power to choose our hometowns—we find ourselves less and less sure of where it is we have finally arrived," writes Robert Finch, who calls his adopted home on Cape Cod "the place where I should have been born." The journey defines the destination.

Most people do not have the time or inclination to ponder the meaning of place, especially if they have always been there. A multicentered population is more often forced to consider places than a monocentered

CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI (with Leslie Camhi), *What They Remember*, from *Lost: A Project in New York*, 1995, A Citywide Project of the Public Art Fund, New York. (Photo: N. Folberg, courtesy of Eldridge Street Synagogue) One of four pieces that make up the project *Lost*, *What They Remember* was located in the 1887 Eldridge Street Synagogue on New York's Lower East Side, now a historic landmark where services are still held; the main sanctuary is a heritage center. Boltanski, who is French, thought his violinist uncle, who had emigrated and disappeared, might have worshipped here. At nine stations throughout the synagogue, three- to five-minute tape loops of children from different ethnic backgrounds could be heard telling their own versions of their histories. (They were asked how their families came to New York and about their memories of the countries and cultures they came from.) *What They Remember* was tied into the project's three other pieces: *Dispersions* at another historical landmark—the Church of the Intercession in Harlem—where piles of clothes were arranged along the nave, and bagfuls marked with the artist's name and title of the work were sold for two dollars; *Lost Property* at Grand Central Terminal, where 5,000 personal belongings from the Lost and Found were arranged on long metal shelves; and *Inventory* at the New-York Historical Society, where Boltanski made a pseudo-ethnographic show of ordinary items.

Massachusetts. ("Massturbation" is suggested as a parallel to western "Californication."). One family became year-rounders early on. The summer patterns of my childhood—when mothers and children came for two months and fathers appeared on weekends or on their month's vacation—have changed drastically; now people come and go more often, usually for shorter periods. It's harder to keep up with the children's children. "Who's that?" we older ones whisper to each other at communal gatherings.

one: choice alone, the forks in the road, demands it. Newcomers must find their own place in the place they have chosen. Deborah Tall sees the process as an encounter with the land itself: "Because I've stayed, the land feels attentive, full of reciprocal energy. The Iroquois call that energy *orenda*—a power inhabiting all living things sometimes described as a kind of voltage or static electricity that can be accumulated through ritual and then used."

However, the benefits of multicenteredness are not available to those who move geographically without ever really changing places—those so weighed down with baggage that they are never able to open themselves to local difference and change. Many of these are members of the "migratory elite" (yuppies, and the international "restless cosmopolitans" of business and the arts). Unlike deep identification with place or the need to keep moving is the kind of placelessness engendered by sheer indifference, which has reached such a point in this country that there are teenagers whose daily routes run from home to school to mall to television. They have never climbed the hill immediately behind their town, and there are children who have never gone the few miles from their homes to the sea.

In a Word

One could almost say that when an old man or an old woman dies in the Hispanic world, a whole library dies with that person.
— CARLOS FUENTES

The Whiteman's names are no good. They don't give pictures to your mind.
— ANONYMOUS APACHE

CHRISTOS DIKEAKOS, *Deadman's Island*, from "Sites and Place Names (*Boîte Valise*)" 1991-94, color photograph beneath etched glass. (Collection of the Art Gallery of North York, Toronto.) At the age of eleven, soon after immigrating to Canada from Greece, Dikeakos first became interested in the Indian grave-yard on Deadman's Island (*skwatsa* in Squamish) in Vancouver Harbor, having heard about it from a storyteller at the public library. Early accounts described the dead lying in carved coffins and canoes, or in tree burials; by 1911, the island had been logged to desolation, "shivering in its nakedness, a monument to materialism, vandalism and stupidity, cleverness and illegality," according to the local paper. In Dikeakos's "Sites and Place Names" series, the panoramic images seem to stretch between times, between Native and non-Native memories. Sometimes the result is poetic, as in a picture of a wooded landscape in Sasketoon called Wanaskewinihk, or "forgotten place"; sometimes the layered complexity of inhabitation is more ironic, as in an image of a suburban Vancouver road overwritten with its archaeological contents: "ground slate points, trout, salmon..."

Beneath the familiar name of any one hill, town, cemetery or even family, there are layers of nomenclature, some of which remain mysterious, or illogical, like the names of our three peninsulas: Bay Point is on the Kennebec River, not a bay. Kennebec Point lies between two bays. No one seems to know exactly when they were named. Indian Point (the tip of the peninsula now given that name as a whole) appears on maps from the 18th century, as does Sagadahoc Bay, which was Rodgers (or Rogers) Bay until the mid 19th century, when the Rogers had disappeared and someone realized that the indigenous and historic name for the

EVERY PLACE NAME IS A STORY, AN OUTCROPping of the shared tales that form the bedrock of community. Untold land is unknown land. The places most valued by Americans in the early nineteenth century were those evoking myth or legend, and most of the newly American landscape, supposedly bereft of human history, was perceived as inferior to that of Europe, where every hillock told someone a story. Sarah Josepha Hale, writing in 1835, bemoaned "the barrenness, the vacancy, painfully felt by the traveller of taste and sentiment, [arising] from the want of intellectual and poetic associations with the scenery he beholds. Genius has not consecrated our mountains, making them high places from which the mind may see the horizon...they are nothing but high piles of earth and rocks, covered with blighted firs and ferns; the song has not named our streams." The landscape, in other words, was not yet acculturated to Euro-Americans, who were blind to the storied Native landmarks already in place. As Jan Zita Grover puts it, the *unstoried* was as yet unassimilable. Naming is, with mapping and photography, the way we image (and imagine) communal history and identity. Yet surprisingly little detailed attention has been paid to the local origins of American place names and what they have to say about specific histories of place.

Vancouver artist Christos Dikeakos is the only visual artist I know who has studied place names in depth. In his series "Sites and Place Names," the original indigenous names are etched on glass over photographs of modern sites, continuing an interrogation of home and community begun in 1968, when Dikeakos began to decipher and demystify changing urban reality with unassuming black-and-white photographs. Informed by conversations with Plains Cree scholar Stan Cuthand and Native Salish elders, Dikeakos brings back the so-called "pre"-history of western Canada, "piecing together" Native and non-Native histories while critiquing the dominant Canadian art genre of landscape painting. He believes that "historical imaginings" can help us locate ourselves in the present and notes the authority of naming, as well as the lack of public monuments celebrating the relationship of Native people to the land. Patricia Berringer says that Dikeakos "asks us to look at Vancouver in a new way, seeking what was in what is or appears to be...the past is represented by the word, the present by the image." This linguistic relationship does not easily cross cultural borders. Native people cautioned Dikeakos that "the world is not mutually translatable," that unbridgeable abysses were created not by their "unwillingness to communicate," but by cultural autonomy.

Indigenous names tended to locate resources for common good—pointing out the place where a healing herb grows or the water is bad—or to say what happened there. There are parallels with the aboriginal people of Australia who sing their places into being as they pass through them. For us, names on maps play a similar role— a lazier, more detached way of reading the land in sequence. Euro-American names tend to be less about what *is* there than what it *looks like* or who *was* there. They are used as grassroots affirmations, as bids for posterity, and as proof of ownership, a means of control from the top. "The name lays claim to the

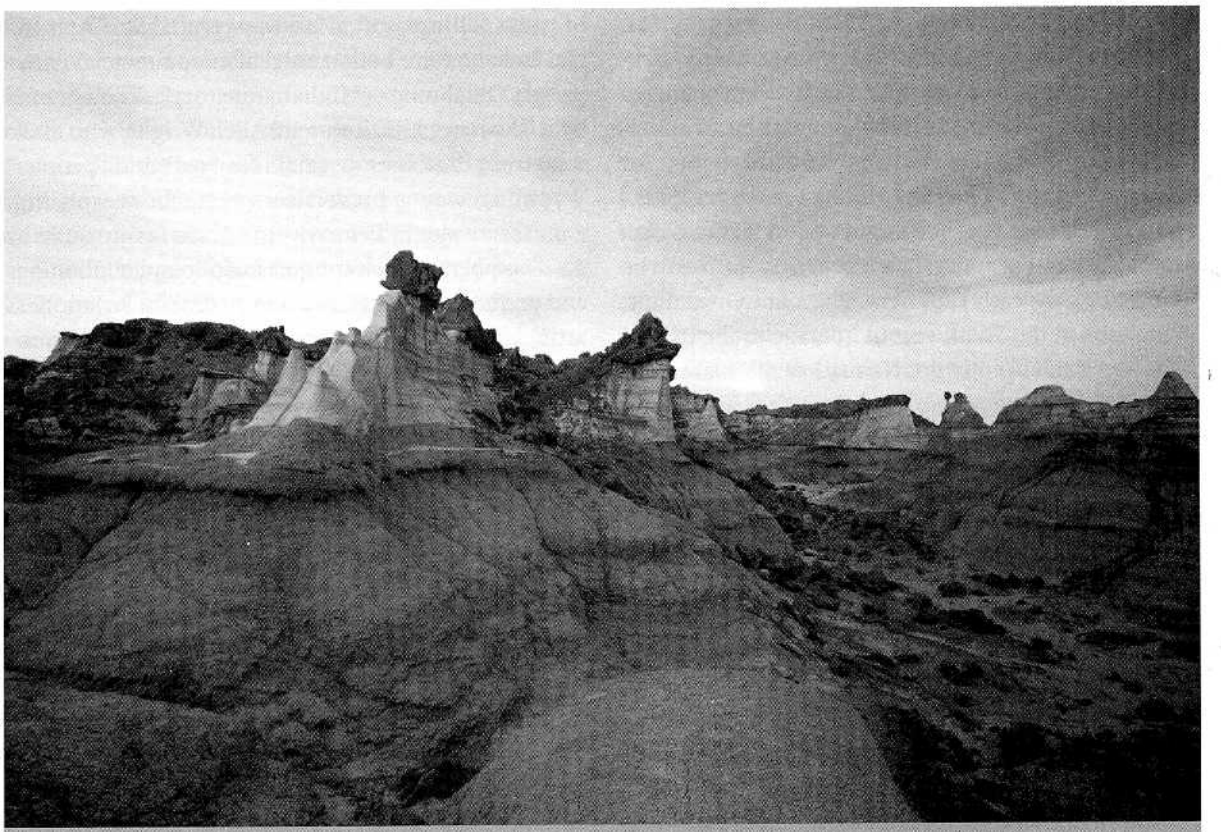
WANDA HAMMERBECK, *Name Reflecting Attitude: The Bisti Badlands*, 1994, original photograph in color. Hammerbeck, who lives in rural California and is a member of Water in the West, has since 1975 worked with notions of site and boundaries, of "resting and rising, that is, issues of being on the earth and under the sky—the basic place of humankind." Investigating the ways a site "makes meaning," she looked at how the imposed names of such "exotic" landscapes reflect social attitudes and can lead to exploitation—"in this case, extensive mining." Hammerbeck includes text to escape the slick image of landscape photography and to make the viewer deal with the meaning as well as the look of the land.

whole river's mouth had been lost locally. Bedroom Bay, also modern, is a mystery. Kennebec Point's rocky southern headland was first called Great Head and the adjacent harbor Little Harbor Head, named in a time when travel was by water. The spit of land between my house and the rest of the Point was called Oliver's Neck—for the family farming there in the 18th and 19th centuries and still living a few miles inland.

Georgetown (after King George or Fort St. George) was called by Natives Erascohegan, "a watching place or lookout"—probably a specific high place, like the southern end of Kennebec Point, with a view of the

view," Alan Trachtenberg remarks. The ability to name or rename oneself and one's place is an aspect of ownership. Conquerors have always taken advantage of it. (The rechristening of landmarks after invasion suggests the way married women lose one or both birth names—Florence Emily Isham becomes Florence Cross or Mrs. Judson Cross.)

Imperialism favors names that remind people of power and property, but the need to familiarize a harsh and unknown landscape must also have played a part in the days of early European exploration and settlement of this continent. Naming (or renaming) landmarks could be a matter of life and death, as well as a way of providing a sense of power and psychological security. The new names were sometimes whimsical and, in retrospect, disrespectful of indigenous people's culturally significant events. For all the romantic paeans to wilderness and the moral heights attributed to unconquered nature, "Americans" did not respect a landscape until it had been tamed—at least by romance or narrative. An intimidating peak in the distance or a strange geological formation becomes more familiar once it is dubbed "Pike's Peak" or "Shiprock."



NAME REFLECTING ATTITUDE
THE BISTI BADLANDS

river's mouth and out to sea. Arrowsic may be based on the word for rapids. Other local Abenaki names: Kennebec (long quiet water), Sagadahoc (to pour forth, river's mouth), Seguin (hump), Hockomock (hell, as in the two present "hellgates" of rough water), and Sasanoa (for chief Sasanou, an "a" added after death).

The European habit of naming places after families is confusing as generations change names, places are sold, or people move. There were some two dozen John Parkers in Georgetown in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Heals or Healds were Huguenots named Delano. The Poors changed

Places to name must have seemed as infinite as the land and its resources for those colonizing North America in the seventeenth through ninteeenth centuries. Wives, children, nieces, patrons, drunken fantasies, jokes, literary references, rude puns, and pure whimsy as well as deadpan descriptions enliven the maps of the West, whereas the East, in the beginning, was more soberly named for its old world predecessors or given the Native names already indelibly attached to some new places. Cultural groups always carry old names into new places, where eventually they lose their meanings and acquire new pronunciations (as in "Callus"—Calais, Vermont; "Demoyne"—Des Moines, Iowa; or "Beeyuna Vista"—Buena Vista, Colorado). Many names are time-worn, having weathered phonetically from an Indian or "foreign" name to English words that resemble them and mean something entirely different. (The Ku-kwil tribe, for instance, became "Coquille" for the French trappers.) The western river Owyhee might sound Native North American but was named for Hawaiian Natives who were among the early explorers. The name Guadalupe, ubiquitous in the Southwest in homage to the indigenous Mexican virgin,is not Nahuatl as often assumed but stems from the Arabic word for a river hidden in a ravine, via Moorish-Spanish immigrants.

European newcomers were often baffled by unfamiliar scale and land forms, creating new names or borrowing them from other languages: bluff, bottom, knob, crossing, notch, gap, creek, run, wash, pass, prairie, plains, mesa, fork, peak, butte, park, and desert (which originally meant a place no one lived, then came to be a place no one lived because there was no water). Nomads tend to name only the major landmarks, while agrarian people may have names for every corner of their lands. An intricate boundary system on the Hawaiian Islands resulted in hundreds of thousands of place names, opaque to outsiders with their plethora of vowels and baffling similarities. The continental United States is parsimonious, by contrast, with about one name per square mile.

In the mid-nineteenth century, when the Western territories were annexed and then became states, the arbitrary official naming process hit its stride. According to George Stewart's monumental *Names on the Land*, Congressional orators liked "long and rolling polysyllables" (Maine is the only monosyllabic state in the union). Colorado was almost named Idaho and Idaho was almost named Montana, and the word Oregon is thought to have emerged from a long history of misspellings of a midwestern river. Arizona and Indiana were both named after commercial enterprises; Oklahoma—"Indian Territory"—was named by a Choctaw chief, Reverend Allen Wright, who made it up from the Choctaw words for "red" and "people." Wyoming was a perversion of Meche-weami-ing, a massacre site in Pennsylvania made fashionable by an 1809 poem, which congressmen found euphonious and preferred to the Native names despite its "rootless artificiality." A certain Mr. H. R. Williams, vice president of the Milwaukee Railroad in the late nineteenth century, named thirty-two stations in Washington state from a wildly diverse set of sources, including several Massachusetts towns, foreign countries, battle sites, a health food, a malted milk, a poet, a Shakespearean play, a college, a stockholder, and some "chance selections."

Name changes then ensued. In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, towns were constantly switching names to honor some newly important person or event, just as Cape Canaveral, a name going back to the early sixteenth century, was changed to Cape Kennedy. Alternatively, the original names, some of which referred to specific landmarks and

their name to Powers; Birch Island was Poor's Island, but got changed on some irrevocable official map. Fishermen and farmers named places after specific local harvests and markers incomprehensible and unlocatable today. Pond Islands, Ragged Islands, Fox Islands, Long Islands, and Wood Islands abound along the coast. Before roads, when each community was relatively self-contained, only fishermen and traders ventured far enough afield to be bothered by the question "which Ragged Island?"

Read's Beach on Kennebec Point is named for Annie Lauriat Read, but is confused with the Reeds now on the Point and

histories, were felt to be too crude: places that had acquired "a bad name" could opt for a clean slate. Some of the changes were made by local wits, as when Mountain was made out of Mole Hill, West Virginia. Some changes have been successfully resisted; New Yorkers have simply ignored the gratuitous change of Sixth Avenue to the pretentious Avenue of the Americas. External nicknames for urban ethnic communities are usually insulting or infantilizing: Spaghetti Hill, Beantown, Japtown, Little Dixie, Little Italy, Little Tokyo. Not so little, these enclaves often contain populations larger than major cities in the homeland; there are supposedly more Italians in New Haven, Connecticut than in Naples, and the same is true for many American cities and their counterparts abroad. With increasing local consciousness, longtime residents today are monitoring officials to ensure that the commonly used names of places are on signposts and maps instead of being named anew or inappropriately.

It seems logical that street names would be more local than those of larger areas, but a failure of imagination appears to have struck many towns (and most commercial developments). Certain streets appear monotonously cross-country, though I suppose there's a chance that the generic Pine and Walnut streets once boasted their eponymous vegetation; New York's Spring and Canal streets are named after real, now buried, features. Regional clichés were born, so that every Colorado town has its Colfax, Euclid, Arapaho streets; coastal New England towns have their Fore, Front, Middle, Winter, Summer, Commercial, and Mechanic streets. Names can trace odysseys and occupancies. The Huguenots who named streets in New Rochelle, New York, moved on to North Carolina, where the same series of names is to be found. In Manhattan, the Bowery (following an Indian trail known as the old Beaver Path) kept its Dutch name for part of its journey, its northern end breaking into English with Broadway. Nonchalantly winding across the orderly checkerboards of the planner's city, it subverts control by recalling earlier, more organic courses.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Indian names were adopted casually, because they were there, because that was the dominant culture. With the settlers' ascendency, Indian names were reviled as harsh and uncouth and were replaced by "civilized" names from the Old countries. Later still, when indigenous people were no longer a threat and a mellower romantic movement pervaded American culture, Indian names—often distorted and/or poeticized—became popular again, so that many American Indian names were collaged back into the culture long after the fact. Stewart says that Seekonk, in 1812, was the first Massachusetts town to deliberately choose an Indian name. Most Americans were ignorant of tribal distinctions and languages, using "Indian" names randomly or inaccurately. Ridiculous translations were paralleled by disregard for geographic specificity. (The name Osceola, the great Seminole chief who resisted colonizers for years, has been affixed to seventeen places, most outside his territory.) The names the Europeans replaced are for the most part lost, echoing or whispering through myth and oral history to be recaptured here and there by attentive anthropologists or special tribal maps.

Lafayette Bunnell's account of the Mariposa Battalion's "discovery" of Yosemite in 1851 includes a poignant scene at a mountain lake. The Yosemite chief Tenaya and his people had been captured and were about to be marched off to a reservation in the San Joaquin Valley. Bunnell informed the chief that the lake and river were now named after him: "At first he

with Reid State Park. A younger generation has no idea who the Reads were and thinks of it as Swain's, Bascom's or Gamble's beach. The old, unchanging name (Little Harbor Head) or an old, generic one (Silvery Beach) would be better. What is now known as Pelon's or Carlisle's beach was once redundantly called Sandy Beach. Indian Point's Sea Beach was originally called Bark Beach, for a barkantine that went aground there. Our family's name for a tiny rock island (aka White Rock) at the edge of Bay Point in Heal's Eddy is "Spud Walks," after my uncle Jud (aka Spud), who was stranded there as a child at high tide by his older siblings because

seemed unable to comprehend our purpose, and pointing to the group of glistening peaks, near the head of the lake, said 'it already has a name; we call it Py-we-ack.' Upon my telling him that we had named it Ten-ie-ya, because it was upon the shores of the lake that we had found his people, who would never return to it to live, his countenance fell and he at once left our group and joined his family circle." As Rebecca Solnit interprets this exchange: "Bunnell says, in effect, that there is no room for these people in the present, but they will become a decorative past for someone else's future....Pyweak means shining rocks; like most of Yosemite's original place names, it describes what is present rather than monumentalizing a passing human figure....Bunnell claims to Tenaya that the new name will give the man a kind of immortality, but what he is really doing is obliterating Tenaya's culture from the place and beginning its history over again."

A place is a story happening muny times
...Over there? We say *blind women steaming clover roots become ducks.*
We will tell that story for you at *place of meeting one another in winter.*
But now is our time for travel.
We will name those stories as we pass them by.
— KWAKIUTL, QUOTED BY FRANZ BOAS

As we move in and out of each other's homes, we can at least nest more comfortably if the memories begin to register, even those which are not ours. How did that stain get on the bathroom wall? Who chose the ugly linoleum or carved the handsome woodwork? Why did they plant trees that darken the living room or block the views of the mountain? Who were they? Where did that path in the garden go? Clues are offered by layers of wallpaper and linoleum, or the newspaper with which a fireplace has been blocked, or old foundations in the back yard, or artifacts that turn up while you're gardening. Abandoned houses are especially poignant. Their shattered, gaping, or boarded windows offer opaque apertures onto an unknown past that is not, but might be, our own. They are receptacles for shared fantasies. The natural response is to ask, "What happened here?"

The answer is a story. Narratives articulate relationships between teller and told, here and there, past and present. In the absence of shared past experience in a multicentered society, storytelling and old photographs take on a heightened intensity. The place is "the heart of storytelling...the imaginative act of bringing together self and earth, culture and nature, as if these were remembering one another as members of one family, binding life to life," write Susan Scarberry and Reyes Roberto Garcia in regard to the work of Navajo artist Bill Russ Lee.

Where once the stories detailed shared experiences, today it may be mostly the stories themselves that offer common ground. Once you start hearing the stories, you are becoming a member of the community. You are becoming "related," because the story is, as Terry Tempest Williams says, "the umbilical chord between past, present, and future." When governments and educational institutions can't be trusted, historical authority shifts to grandmothers. The most valuable local cultural resources may be elderly relatives (or younger ones with good memories, who took notes, or tape recorded, or identified the old pictures), or the old guy in the cabin on the outskirts of town who is eager to remember his youth in a very different place (which is now where you live), or the elderly woman who can be persuaded to tell her grandmother's tales. "The sense of place can outlast place itself." Whatever may have happened here in the past, it is altered by your very presence, even if it is temporary.

he was a pest; as they rowed away, they yelled mockingly, "Spud Walks!" and he had to wait for low tide to get home across the flats.

Turn-of-the-century summer colonists brought the habit of giving their "cottages" pretentious names, which soon filtered down from the wealthy to many a modest abode. A cottage at Sagadahoc Bay is called "The Wreck," after a shipwreck that provided its porch decoration. My grandmother changed the name of her house from Shore Acres to High Tide. Others on Kennebec Point are called "The Ledges," "The Anchorage," "Red Gables," "Overlook," "Lighthouse Ledges," "The Crow's Nest," and a recent, much

Just as stories can make the outsider feel more at home, they can also expand a small world. With their stories, write Jane Staw and Mary Swander, "the people of south-central Minnesota live in a fluid time and place, which allows them to see through boarded-up buildings to their future city park....It allows their worlds to be peopled not only by their husbands and wives, children and grandchildren, but also by the hired hand who lived on the farm twenty years earlier, or by an elementary school friend who went off to live in the Twin Cities. And it allows their space to expand, almost indefinitely, to encompass their daughter's farm, three miles away, where their granddaughter is riding her bike up and down the gravel drive, to encompass even Japan, home of the exchange student who lived with their son the past year and graduated from Winnebago High School that spring."

Since revisionist history took hold in the sixties, an increased interest in oral history has given us access to local life, and insights into our own lives, illuminating places better than idealized or objectified histories can. Oral histories offer poignant additions to our own personal experience and provoke more optimism than pessimism about the contradictory human enterprise. Local knowledge and awareness contextualize historical information or images that might otherwise become detached as "high art." In cities and large towns, the need to know others' histories as well as one's own is particularly urgent and particularly difficult because the geography encourages alienation. Although more conventional physical bonds—like sharing schools, streets, stores, churches—are multiplied to the point where they are invisible and perceived as missing, cities are not free of narrative bonds to place, of folklore. Elders Share the Arts, for instance, a fifteen-year-old New York City group, specializes in lively theatrical presentations of "living history" by residents of senior centers, nursing homes, and hospitals in neighborhoods where pride and dignity are hard won.

However, any suggestion of nostalgic quaintness is well hidden in contemporary "urban legends." They often cluster around subway stations, dark streets,

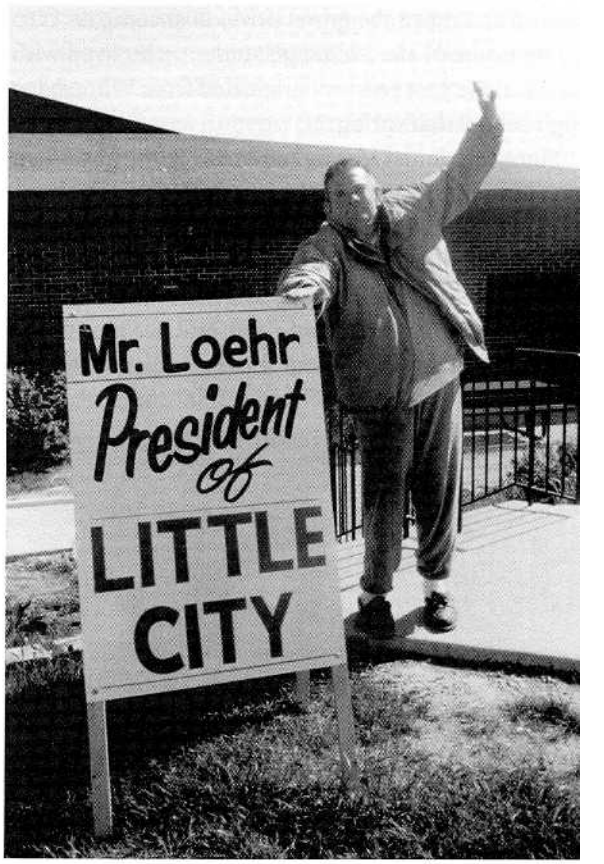
JACK BAKER, *The Museum of Neighborhood Phenomena*, Seattle, 1977. Baker's exhibitions/artworks in his Seattle storefront studio (a former grocery store) were based on local stories and sights—everything from traffic patterns to found objects—sparked by the artist hanging out and noticing the "little fragments you see on the street and wonder about." Along the back wall of the museum were a group of images serving as memory triggers for those who had grown up there. Baker taped stories people told and photographed the places where they had happened, as well as documenting current events himself, taping sounds and commentary. The tales ranged from "Passing Pentecostal" and "Hare Krishna" to "Glen's Crow Story," "Howard Giske's Heavy Cruiser," and one called "Loading Corn Syrup." "Bullshit is always interesting anyway," says Baker. "You realize the depth that this neighborhood has, or the depth that any situation has for that matter." Seeking to make unpretentious and accessible art, Baker was also interested in mapping his neighborhood so as to understand where its various systems overlapped. Twenty years later, he still lives in the same neighborhood, which has been gradually gentrified, with a few rusting cars and old timers hanging on.

giggled-about addition—"Heronwater."

Stories and local humor inform Maine places from various cultures. • Penobscot Mike Sockalexis didn't know the petroglyphs up the Kennebec at Emden until he was taken there in 1995 by Rosalind Strong of NEARA; he recognized the rock drawings as mnemonic devices for telling Penobscot creation stories. • A woman named Looke living on Kennebec Point in the 19th century became famous because a shipwrecke sailor appeared at her side at the mome he was drowning. • When called just plai Mark, Georgetown resident *Captain* Ma Marr remonstrated, "I have a handle to m

elevators, and suburban shopping malls. New Yorkers, according to folklorist Eleanor Wachs, reveal New York as "a world of chaos and unexplainable violence," although my own forty-six years of experience there (some of it spent in poor neighborhoods) would focus more on the extraordinary sights and encounters, on the city's vitality and variety, its curious fusions of dark and light, the humorous and the horrifying—its constant surprises. I remember returning to New York once after several months in Colorado: it was a drenching hot night in a dirty subway station and nothing was functioning properly. Just as my exasperation with urban life reached a peak, the train came, and I entered a car with such a vividly diverse and sad and funny and dynamic population (and, yes, a feeling of community among strangers) that I was overcome by love for this homeplace that offered so much unfamiliarity in such a familiar way.

We New Yorkers (I was born there) tell our stories of violence with such relish because they make us heroes (or at least survivors); we think they make our place more exciting than most, and us more interesting. I've often told about being burglarized in the early sixties, when we were living in a drug-infested building on Avenue D. One time, the would-be thieves discovered that we had nothing (I hid my life-supporting type writer in the bathtub under a counter of dirty dishe whenever we went out) and, having gone to a lot o trouble to break down a heavily bolted door, were s enraged that they threw my jewelry, consisting entirel of plastic "pop-it pearls," all over the apartment; w found them underfoot for weeks. I was too young an trustful to worry much, even though I realized that th little boy on the staircase who whistled when anyon came up was a lookout, and even though the sounds o warfare echoed through the streets at night. At th same time, there was a warmth I hadn't known before



JOHN PLOOF AND CHICK LOEHR, *Mr.Loehr President of Little City*, 1994. Ploof is an artist/teacher, and Loehr a developmentally handicapped man at the Little City Foundation in a Chicago suburb. Both, from different angles, are preoccupied with power and powerlessness—Loehr confronting lack of respect and space for the disabled; Ploof wondering how he can offer choice to those he works with when "power relationships are inherently unequal." Conventional art interested Loehr very little, but he had messages he wanted to communicate to the world ("Change Before It's Too Late" and "Workshops Are Good Ideas at Little City But Community Jobs Are Better"). Their collaboration led to a series of publicly exhibited signs resembling political campaign placards that expressed Loehr's frustration and desire to control more of his life and surroundings.

name." The reply was, "My mother's old pisspot had one too, but it broke off." • And from a recent newspaper story: a man complained that he was no longer allowed to ride up Morse Mountain."I rode my bike here all my life," he said. "Not yet you haven't," replied the Phippsburg policeman.

Some stories were not told. In the 1940s, my doctor father was consulting at Oak Ridge when it was still top secret. When we arrived in Georgetown, storekeeper Will Todd took my mother aside into the privacy of the frozen food locker and said, "Margaret, the FBI came around asking about Vernon...I didn't tell 'em a thing."

on hot summer evenings, when men were playing dominoes and drinking beer from quart bottles on the sidewalks and women and children were hanging out and Latin music was wafting in the windows. I made up stories about them, and in doing so, vaguely identified with these lives so different from my own. Even though I was only in that building for a year or so and knew few people by name, I moved to others like it, and it was the first time I was emotionally aware of a community outside of my own experience.

Urban attitudes and narratives are also colored with a certain fatalism and exaggeration, as are tales from other places where danger is one of the landmarks, like mining and factory towns, logging camps, fishing villages, or cattle ranches; tales of muggings and burglaries in Cleveland and uprisings in Los Angeles belong with tales of twisters in Kansas ("the storm center of the nation"), "No'theasters" in Maine, flash floods in Colorado, avalanches in Idaho, hurricanes in Florida, and other "acts of God" met and matched by legendary acts of humankind. Acts that are too large to comprehend—such as the earth pulverized in the Nevada nuclear test site or the monster dams that have killed our rivers—are disregarded in favor of smaller acts that can be inflated.

Tall tales, "whoppers," or "blanket stretchers," and the images that accompany them, from montaged postcards to roadside sculptures, throw local conditions into proud relief, lest they be taken for granted. Local heroes play a similar role. Edward Ives says of George Magoon, the survivor folk hero of Down East Maine who does battle with the harsh environment and triumphs over nature: "To tell about George is—for that fleeting moment it takes the breath to pass—to assume his strength along with his spirit of denial. There is sustenance in that for ordinary men." Such tales stem from local pride. They make the place look better and the people along with it. When local stories are unanchored, when the hearers cannot visualize where they take place, then they become what folklorists call the "migrating story," which "floats into a place and becomes temporarily localized, anchored on known and named features in the local landscape."

In an Image

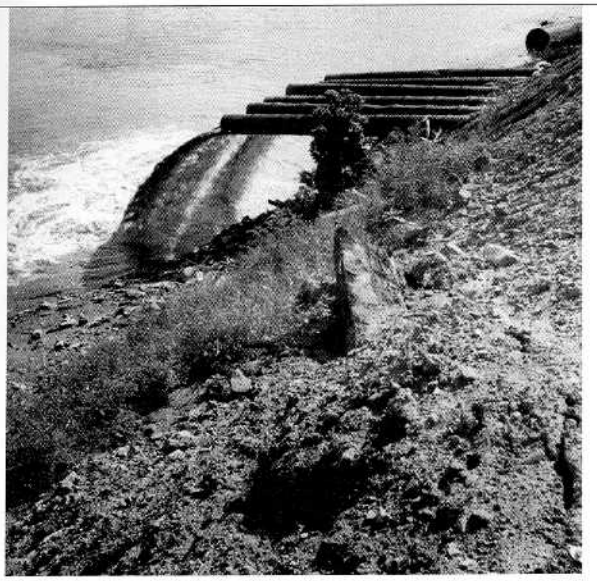
The invention of photography has forever changed human consciousness,
shortening the distances between families and cultures,
while also widening the ruptures in history.
— HUNG LIU

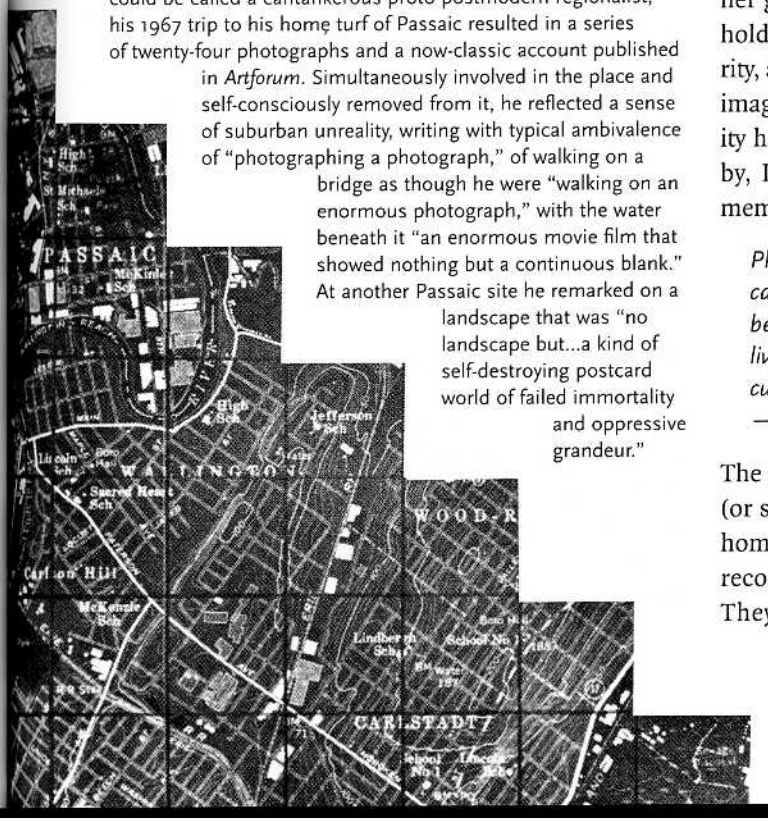
The art in photography is literary art before it is anything else:
its triumphs and monuments are historical, anecdotal, reportorial, observational
before they are purely pictorial....
The photograph has to tell a story if it is to work as art.
— CLEMENT GREENBERG

WHERE GREENBERG CAME FROM (A FORMALIST stronghold he defended brilliantly for decades), this was a disparaging comment on photography; he found literary elements incompatible with "quality" visual art. Where I come from (decidedly outside the stronghold), this is a list of photography's virtues, valuable precisely because they deny art for art's sake. The image-makers I admire are indeed trying to transform landscape photography into something closer to a photojournalism of place (and even propaganda, in the good sense, for ecological organizing) by acknowledging a new and weighty responsibility to "tell it like is is out there." Of course, we're all aware that photographs lie, especially since computers arrived on the scene with their unlimited capacity for visual mendacity; but combined with language—the other source of all our misconceptions—they are what we have to work with.

Beginning in the sixties, Conceptual artists have created a curious genre that reflects a totally neutralized stance toward place, balancing between fondness and scorn, ideology and ignorance. In works like Ed Ruscha's deadpan artist's books from Los Angeles, like the classic *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* (1962) and *Every Building on Sunset Strip* (1966), vernacular naivete becomes stylelessness becomes an artworld style. Local sites are catalogued in an antisentimental, antinostalgic manner, as in Dan Graham's modular images of suburban New Jersey. New Jersey, in fact, is the epitomous state of this state of mind. The opening quotation for "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," (1967), Robert Smithson's classic artwork/essay demythologizing the nostalgic and remythologizing the industrial landscape, is from Vladimir Nabokov: "...today our unsophisticated cameras record in their own way our hastily assembled and painted world."

Documentary photographs of Maine were taken primarily by "interested insiders" or "interested outsiders" who cared enough about the everyday activities of their communities to document them, or to whom such activities were strange and therefore worthy of commemoration. Thanks to the tourist industry, most Maine photography until recently has fallen under the latter category, although the former is the more difficult task. The ordinary is oceanic, hard to separate from ourselves, hard to prioritize. When I was a kid buying ice cream from Will Todd, the much respected proprietor of the old Georgetown Store, it would never have occurred to me to see him as an artist. Yet I recently heard about a large collection of glass negatives taken by





ROBERT SMITHSON, *Negative Map Showing Region of the Monuments Along the Passaic River*, and *The Fountain Monument*, from "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey." (Photos: Robert Smithson, courtesy of Nancy Holt). Smithson could be called a cantankerous proto-postmodern regionalist; his 1967 trip to his home turf of Passaic resulted in a series of twenty-four photographs and a now-classic account published in *Artforum*. Simultaneously involved in the place and self-consciously removed from it, he reflected a sense of suburban unreality, writing with typical ambivalence of "photographing a photograph," of walking on a bridge as though he were "walking on an enormous photograph," with the water beneath it "an enormous movie film that showed nothing but a continuous blank." At another Passaic site he remarked on a landscape that was "no landscape but...a kind of self-destroying postcard world of failed immortality and oppressive grandeur."

Photoeditor Ellen Manchester emphasizes the importance of helping writers, historians, and specialists in various fields "learn how to read photographs and to reconsider photography's importance in understanding and defining historical and contemporary attitudes toward the land." Such skills are crucial. How can "experts" be expected to read landscapes if they cannot read pictures? Perhaps the only lay people who are really able to interpret social landscapes are locals—those who can recognize subtleties of change within a place over time, who know what the lumps and bumps once were and what has replaced them. But even local people need help in reading images, need education about what to look for outside of their immediate experience. "Between an exposed photographic plate and the contingent acts whereby people read that inscription and find sense in it lies the work of culture."

"Do I believe in this photo?," asks Chicana artist Amalia Mesa Bains of a beautiful 1913 photograph of her grandmother and family in Mexico. "I have to. It holds for me, like a transitional object, my own security, ancestry and legacy, my own 'Mexicanidad.'...This image is 'true' for me because its open permeable quality has become a historical site where, as the years go by, I accrue and imbue meanings deep in archival memory, fantasy and curiosity."

> *Photography has been so central to African Americans...more than any other artistic practice, it has been the most accessible, the most present in our lives....[Snapshots] enable us to trace and reconstruct a cultural genealogy through the image.*
>
> — BELL HOOKS

The snapshot is the personal photographic equivalent (or support) of the local narrative. In lieu of ancestral homes, over the river and through the woods, we have recorded oral histories and old photographs to visit. They permit us to go back along a path and notice

Will Todd in the early 1900s. Transcending the common family portrait, they show Georgetown life with flare and detail. Nationally known professionals F. Holland Day and Clarence White also worked in Georgetown.

When part-time Georgetown resident Vance Muse found an album of turn-of-the-century photographs in an antique store, his interest was piqued by images of same-sex couples and the history of "passionate friendships" in those days. He traced the album back to a wealthy Philadelphia family who summered on Bailey Island in Casco Bay. After intensive research, Muse has written a book on the photographs and organized an exhibition (shown at Brunswick's Pejepscot Historical Society in 1996).

things we missed when or if we were "there." Photographs are seen both as "facts" and as ghosts or shadows. They are the imperfect means by which we fill the voids of memory in modern culture, to preserve the remnants of a world that has disappeared. Often we don't even know who the people in the photographs are, or where they were taken.

Most old family photographs are simultaneously tantalizing and unsatisfying. I can spend hours perusing mine, extricating the fragments of narrative, knowledge, and empathy that are left to me. Yet I'm struck by their unbridgeable distance, their consistent failure to represent what I really want to see and know about the past. It seems as if "the wrong pictures" always got taken. What appears is a peripheral view dictated by convention, by a lack of connection between known familiar reality and the social formalities of picture-taking that maintain relationships established in the nineteenth century. However, these images are what we have left, the deeds to our pasts.

Family histories are transparent or opaque layers over maps of places we've never seen. Many of us come in touch with our family history only sporadically, through parents' and grandparents' stories. Home movies are now being studied as indicators of local history: the Center for the Study of Southern Culture in Oxford, Mississippi, runs an outreach program to alert people to the way local family films can counter the images made by outsiders and give insiders a forum within which to clarify and expand their own places. Even funeral homes advertise "tribute programs," memorial videos made from family photos and footage.

A family still in place is a direct tie to our own history. Barbara Allen writes poignantly of "the genealogical landscape" in south central Kentucky as revealed in years of conversations and driving local routes with her mother-in-law. ("Which way did you come?") The local landscapes are small and detailed, changing within a few miles. Every place is identified with a family; whether or not they still live there, it remains so-and-so's "homeplace." "That generational memory produces an emotionally powerful sense of place that almost defies articulation....this sense of interconnectedness of people and land [constructed in conversations], thus seems to be at the heart of the southern sense of place." "If I could see a *name*," says her mother-in-law of a house with no marked mailbox, "I'd know *where* I'm at." Impermanent, landless tenants, on the other hand, are not on the map. A family displaced and divorced from place is already distant. Returning to the homeplace when it has been swallowed up by a development, a strip, or a barren wasteland, when familiar names have vanished from the neighborhood, is like visiting a grave.

MARY LOUISE INGSBY-WALLACE-THOMPSON (with digital collaborator Rashda Arjmand), *Piano...Paid*, c. 1993. This is a portrait of Rosa Lee Ingsby-Wallace, described by her daughter Mary as "a very determined young black mother ....reaching and working for her dreams." In 1928, with the money she earned as an expert seamstress (she made the suit she wears in the picture), she bought this piano—"the only one in the neighborhood." Remembering her mother, who died when she was in kindergarten, Mary Thompson says "the piano has been a part of my life for twenty-five years and I still have the beautiful scarf and flower vase that used to adorn it." This piece and the short essay accompanying it is part of "Extended Family: Reclaiming History," a project directed by Esther Parada with the Afro-American Genealogical and Historical Society of Chicago, projected to become a book and a website.

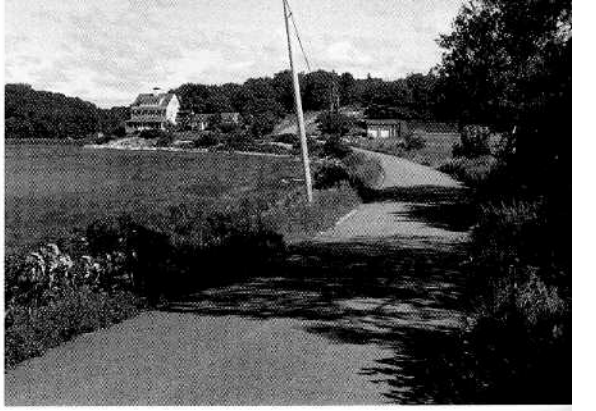
Francis Oliver, the last surviving Georgetown male named Oliver in a line that goes back to the 1600s, with the house where he was born, 1996 (Photo: Peter Woodruff). A cantankerous local wit and world traveler, Oliver walks the roads, sticking cans and bottles on branches to chastise the litterers, creating a kind of public art in the process.

Mythic pasts meet and mix in archival photographs of places as well as in family albums. Stories, photographs, and memories often contradict each other. Sometimes our memories are so strong we can't believe our eyes when confronted by our own pictured pasts: the big house on the hill looks modest in the picture and the beautiful aunt who died young seems kind of plain. Sometimes we see through our lives to those of our forebears and their sites. Sometimes we know them firsthand, the places where those stories "took place," although these days we are more likely to visit elderly relatives in nursing or retirement "homes" than to spend holidays at the family homestead.

Images can survive but lose their places. Once I was going through family pictures with an elderly cousin when we came across an unlabeled snapshot of a small white clapboard house. She had no idea what it was and wanted to throw the picture out. I insisted on keeping it. But why? The house had been disconnected, come unglued from any historic or personal context. Its meaning lies buried forever. Yet it holds its place in family history, independently. It belongs in the album, unlabeled. Photographs root other places in one time, one moment. I recall my grandparents' house in Marlborough, Massachusetts, as a small clapboard house on the edge of a factory town, with a big yard, a small orchard, a vegetable garden (I can still smell the equally sweet scents of blossoms and decay), and a farm across the street where my father had worked as a boy. The tiny gas station my grandfather leased after retirement from the shoe factory, within walking distance, was heaven for a visiting city child; I could treat my friends to Necco Wafers from the glass case inside and soda pop from the ice-filled Coke cooler outside. It was always early or late summer when we visited; in all my recollections, in all the pictures, the sun is shining; my white-haired grandmother with the soft Canadian-accented voice and flowered housedresses even baked cookies. The last time we drove by this "homestead," long after my grandparents' deaths, the town had engulfed it and the house had become a Chinese restaurant.

In recent years, there has been a flurry of "rephotography" projects in which memory (an earlier photograph) is juxtaposed with present experience (a contemporary shot of the same place, from the same angle). Sometimes the contrast reveals "lost wilderness," and sometimes just the opposite—when the site of a thriving mining town, for instance, has "gone back to nature." (Sometimes strange matches are made, as though one image has been laid over another in a double exposure.) Jan Zita Grover contends that the stories told by vernacular photographs of altered landscapes have been misrepresented by contemporary interpretations: they were not about "what we have destroyed" but about "what we have built.... people were proud of their interventions in nature.... It is a perversion of their historical presence to ignore them for a mere testimony to a past that never was."

Local newspapers have taken up this "Then and Now" idea. The captions are usually perceptual and ahistorical, along the lines of the cartoon: "What has changed in this picture?" The road was dirt, the screen porch has been added, there were no power lines. This is a strictly visual presentation, offered less for edification than for entertainment. At the same time, such comparisons cannot help but trigger curiosity and memories for those alive in, say, 1909, when the road *was* dirt, the power lines *were* inconceivable.



There are frequent letters to the editor about inaccuracies. People care about the landscapes of their childhoods. At the Hopi Cultural Center in Arizona, old (and often demeaning) photographs by Anglos of the mesa villages are perused for relatives or remaining views and structures with equal enthusiasm. The process of familiarity overwhelms, at least temporarily, the grating colonial memories.

Family connections and memory draw us into the photographed spaces rather than leaving us gawking at the window. We "read into" those spaces with vocabularies based in our own lives. The late British photographer/theorist Jo Spence developed with Rosy Martin a "reenactment phototherapy," based on old family pictures, paralleling landscape rephotography. Concerning the porous nature of the combined image and interpretation, she wrote, "we should use photos to ask questions rather than to show facts." Many contemporary photographers have made substantial photo-text series about their own families as a way to explore culture and place, in which they have tried to avoid both convention and idealization. Karen Ellen Johnson, for example, uses family papers and old as well as new photographs in several bodies of work about her Midwestern family. She explores not only poverty, alcoholism, infidelity, and the strength of maternal bonds but also their context—the unfulfilled expectations of rural families that have left the farm. Her work centers on "the interplay of memory and artifact...the boundary between cultural icon and personal relics." Such boundaries and tensions define place, as well as private and public spaces.

Women's reciprocal approach to looking into places reflecting a different set of lived experiences of land and place, might be called "vernacular." In a 1994 essay on women's landscape photography and the ways it has been subordinated to men's visions and domination of the land, I argued that perhaps the "feminist landscape" is an "acculturated landscape" incorporating a critique of landscape altogether by being more attuned to the local/personal/political than to the godlike Big Picture. (I should note that many feminists consider this viewpoint complicit with dread "essentialism.") I suggested the reason that there have been no women photographers to play Eve to two generations of Adams (Ansel and Robert) is that women's frequently calmer and more intimate approach to landscape is not exciting enough to appeal to a public taste formed by the dramatic (and possessive) spectacles of the BLM (Boys' Landscape Movement). Photographer Linda Connor, along the same lines, suggests a

KAREN ELLEN JOHNSON, *Approaching Mom*, 1949/1995, silver print with ink. Johnson grew up in a working-poor family in the Midwest. The first generation to leave the farm, her parents were influenced by rural family expectations but, torn by poverty, alcoholism, and infidelity, their marriage dissolved. The handwritten text here reads in part: "With a 'pride of possession' gaze, Grandma presents me to the camera...Mom watches from backstage. I stare yet again at this image, trying to decipher the layers of meaning presented there...." About her exhibition (at the 494 Gallery, New York, 1995) also titled "Approaching Mom," Johnson wrote that she was probing "the economic, cultural and psychological terrain which influenced my experience of being mothered" and dealing with "the dialectic between private memory and public history" as it is exposed in artifacts like family pictures. Highlighted by an artist, casual snapshots can tell volumes about people and place.

The George and Abigail Todd House c. 1890 (photographer unknown), and in 1996 (Photo: Peter Woodruff) looking North down Kennebec Point across the neck between Heal's Eddy and Sagadahoc Bay.

Few women photographed in Maine. The best known is Chansonetta Stanley Emmons of Kingfield. But Emma D. Sewall, who lived in Bath, made images of rural, coastal working life and women's work between 1884 and 1899. In the 1930s, the FSA sent Jack Delano to shoot "the trailer life and boarding houses scene" of the Bath Iron Works. His "evocative photographs of lonely men in smoky bars" have yet to be reprinted. Berenice Abbott documented Route 1 up the coast in the early 1950s and

connection between a male dog's territorial pissing and the "Bob Loves Ginny" she saw carved into a thousand-year-old pictograph. (Would Ginny choose to commemorate her own affection on one of the hundreds of adjacent *blank* rocks?)

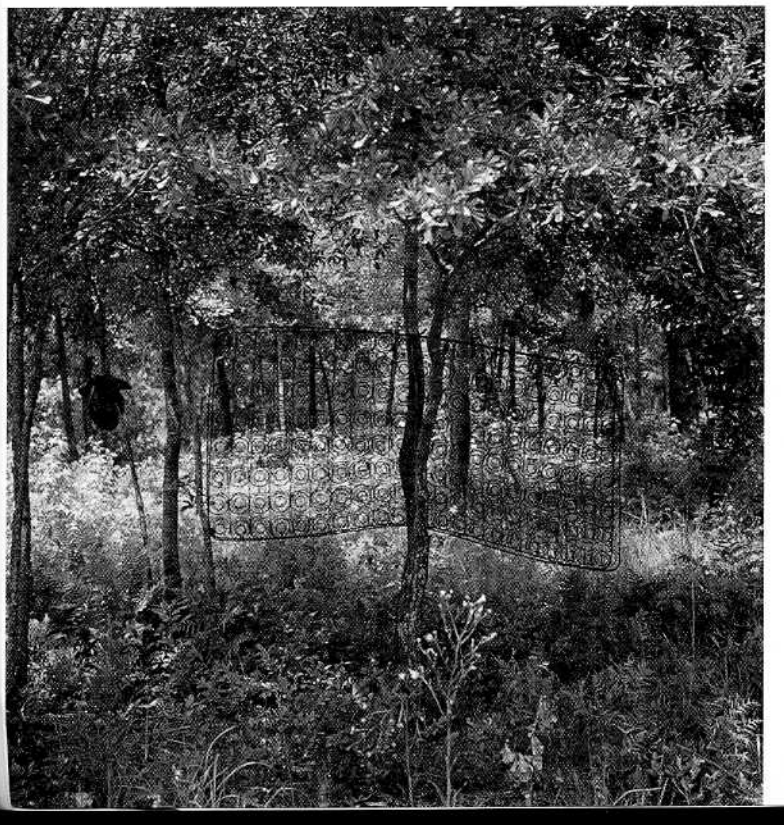
If men find the unknown irresistible, as Susan Griffin has suggested, many women feel the same way about the known. With some irony, Connor puts it this way: "we are nature, so why venture very far?" Christine Battersby, scrutinizing the ways both the sublime and the picturesque in the nineteenth century were equated with women's bodies and sexuality (regular and beautiful, irregular and ruined) has called for a "cross-eyed" feminist gaze that disturbs "the directness of the male gaze by looking in (more than) two directions at once," raising the difficult question of "how a photographer who is seeking to develop a specifically female viewpoint on the landscape of patriarchy can prevent herself being read as simply merging back into that landscape."

Carrie Mae Weems achieves this kind of visceral identification in her work on the Sea Islands off the Georgia/Carolina coast. Years earlier, disoriented in her graduate study of photography that seemed to be going nowhere, she found her way when she read Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Are Watching God*. It led her to a degree in folklore and the development of a unique body of photo-text work concentrating on language, culture, family, and place. In 1992, the Sea Islands project emerged when she *Went Looking for Africa* (the installation's title) in the Gullah culture, where some of the African American inhabitants can trace their ancestry and their religion back to the Temme tribe of West Africa, as well as to the Seminole

published *A Portrait of Maine* in 1968. John McKee caught Maine's seamier side. "His image of a traditional street scene of Old Orchard Beach," writes C. Stewart Doty, "complete with 'no parking' signs, placed tourism in a new light," as did "the 'no trespassing' signs that deny Maine people's access to the shore, and open sewer pipes into the ocean." In 1978 the documentary task was taken on by the Salt Center for Documentary Field Studies in Portland. Oddly, the coastal images included in its most recent anthology are the least interesting group, as though the coast had been "done" to such an extent that even the best photographers were wearied by the weight of its past.

Indians. "I'm really only interested in spiraling deeper and deeper and deeper into this cultural place that I happen to occupy," says Weems. She wants her work, under the right circumstances, to be "a catalyst to memory, a catalyst to some sort of action, a part of a force, a movement for something bigger." And she is adamant about her art's distance from the first person, describing it in terms of resonance—"a communal voice, a voice of a group, a voice of a class."

Weems's straightforward photographs are usually unpeopled, although the inhabitants are always present in their created landscape, even in their absence. The images show homes, stores, churches, graveyards, extended by texts drawn from local lore. She uses installation techniques to endow her photographic series with a rhythm, a substance beyond photography or art itself which is the product of her folklife studies and her lived experience. Images are accompanied by suggestively formatted texts from proverbs and legends: next to the picture of an old brick slave quarters is a house-shaped block of text that begins, "when you move into a new house remove old spirits by washing around the windows and doors with vinegar water," and ends, "never build an addition to your house. A home can never be extended." Elsewhere, history is traced in one line: "Gola/Angola/Gulla/Gullah/Geechee," leading from an African nation to a patronizing diminutive for its cultural descendants. In one photograph, leaning hubcaps are set carefully on end. These are what Robert Farris Thompson has called "flashes of the spirit," charged objects that function as spiritiual magnets and deflectors, legacies of African religions. But Weems makes clear that her references are not just about ethnography as entertainment and "not just vernacular culture—it's class." In this as in many of Weems's images, the culture *is* the landscape.



CARRIE MAE WEEMS, *Untitled*, silver print, from the 1992 installation (of photographs, texts, and ceramic commemorative plates) *Untitled (Sea Islands Series)* (Photo: courtesy PPOW, New York). A lacy mattress spring hanging from a branch is almost invisibly integrated into the land, at once barrier, ornament, and sign. bell hooks interprets this image as revealing "the place of technology in agrarian black life...the mattress spring that becomes the backdrop in a natural, pastoral world, where it appears in union with nature." While other images in this series are more overtly anecdotal, the mattress suggests more stories than it tells, hovering, as does much of Weems's work, between formalism and folklore.

Out of Place

I only love my country when I am far and away. Elsewhere—that's where I belong: the vast diaspora. Nowhere and everywhere.
— ILAN STAVANS

The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land.
— HUGH ST. VICTOR

A wandering Jew is at home only in time.
— STEPHEN KERN

Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the disembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present.
— HOMI BHABHA

IF LANDSCAPE IS A WAY OF SEEING, THERE are potentially as many landscapes as individual ways of seeing, or at least as many as cultural ways of seeing —although some people seem threatened by this degree of multiplicity. Otherness and familiarity are reinforced by impressions of landscape. Backgrounds inevitably affect foregrounds. Part of the yearning for a homeland left behind is a sense of space and place that differs from the hybrid one that has come to be seen as generically "American." Given a choice, people often immigrate to geographies that remind them of home.

Studies of place and identity overlap in many ways. While the U.S. continues to think of itself as a "young" nation, an American national identity actually preceded those of Italy, France, and other countries that were just knitting together various states and cultures into nations; "It was Americans who became Ohioans and Iowans and Oklahomans and Oregonians, not the other way around as in Europe." Everybody in the United States is in diaspora—diffusion.

Maine is the second whitest state in the Union, surpassed only by Vermont. Aside from Jamaican, Mexican, and Central American migratory workers who pick apples and blueberries, and the African Americans posted at the Brunswick Naval Air Station, among other military bases, multiculturalism in Maine is mostly a matter of Anglo/Franco relations. The Protestant Scotch/English settler population (augmented by Irish Catholics in the early 19th century) has long been leavened by French Canadians from Acadia.

One of the best-known local 19th-centur paintings, by John Hillings, shows the burn ing of Old South Church in Bath in 1854 one of a series of attacks on Catholics an new Irish immigrants by the "Know-Noth

The more recent the move, the rawer the wounds of people wrenched involuntarily or unhappily from their homelands, and the more hope battles with hostility. We North Americans don't see ourselves as refugees, as victims of wars and natural disasters, but our frenetic mobility is externally driven and a culture is changed whenever it is joined by new groups. People like me, whose ancestors (on one side) have been here for centuries, are being swept into a new culture just as surely as newcomers are. An increasing number of our towns are border towns, wherever they are located; they are a great undigested diversity, currently described as a "salad," a "mosaic," a "stew," or a "patchwork quilt," rather than as a "melting (down) pot." This vivid ethnic mix changes everything, from the look of our neighborhoods to the food we eat. But one of its ingredients is a powerful urge toward assimilation and homogeneity, accompanied by a need to focus on the present which allows only a few selected Americans to recall and value their past. Cultural interpretations of space may vary from place to place even as recent immigrants insist they are "Americans" first and foremost.

> *The second generation here are not interested in their ancestors [because] we have never told them of the realities of life [in Ireland], and would not encourage any of them to visit....When we left there, we left the old world behind, we are all American citizens and proud of it.*
> —ANONYMOUS IRISH IMMIGRANT

A major cultural factor within any group is the period, means, and reasons for immigration. Those Native people who were here when Europeans first came, those English who came for religious freedom and/or civil freedom, those Africans who were shipped here involuntarily for labor, those Asians who came under restrictions disallowing family members, those Irish and Italians who arrived under duress of famine and poverty, those Russians who were escaping pogroms and war, and those Mexican, Central American, Caribbean, and Asian people who take tremendous risks to come without permission, hiking over fortified borders or rafting rough seas—each group comes with a different set of needs and expectations.

Immigrants are often involuntary exiles. The Irish word for immigration actually means "exile," which in turn implied death; when famine forced the Irish to migrate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, wakes were often held for those who were leaving the homeland and would probably never return. In past centuries, first generation immigrants were called not "Americans" but Swedes, polacks, limeys, canucks, hunkys, hopping frogs and other less flattering epithets. Hyphenation came later. Today, many Americans "live on the hyphen," or as Coco Fusco has put it, in a hybrid space that can be seen as "a shelter between cultures." They are identified by two words, balanced between where they come from and where they have gone—Native people who return periodically to the reservation, Puerto Ricans and West Indians who go back and forth between North America and the islands, for example. Yet many people who are said to "live between two cultures" do not; they live as alienated outsiders within one culture. Deculturation and deracination hits every individual life in different ways, so some remain attached to their origins while others find new homelands; still others remain suspended forever over the abyss, in what Amalia Mesa Bains has called "a landscape of longing."

A hybrid culture can be fertile ground for multicenteredness, while assimilation can be a weapon against history, burying multiple pasts under a single marker. Richard Rodriguez, a gay Chicano writer and commentator whose resistance to "multiculturalism" has made him an outcast in many progressive Latino

ings." In 1875, James Healy of Maine, a former slave, was consecrated as America's first black Catholic bishop. The Irish perceived him as having "indelicate blood" (though he was part Irish) and religious bigots burned down the Catholic Church of St. Joseph in East Machias in protest.

In 1995 a nine-year-old girl from Greenville, Maine, won the national prize offered by a dinnerware manufacturer for a plate design "honoring America's multicultural character."

When Arthur Davis opened a Bonsai nursery in rural Woolwich, his friends asked him what a black man would do "in that all-white, frigid, godforsaken place?" He likes it, and the business is a success, since the Maine climate is especially favorable for Bonsai cultivation.

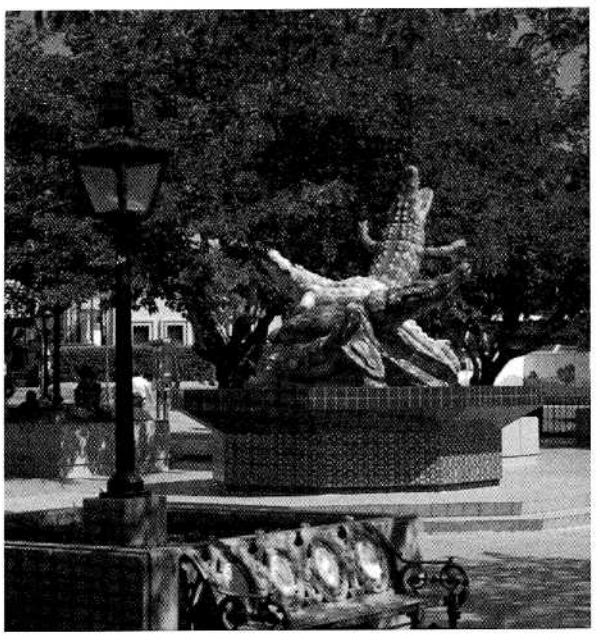
circles, enters the fray with a complex argument that assimilation can be a subtly aggressive act against the dominant culture. When asked if he felt more Mexican or more "American," Rodriguez replied perversely that he felt more Chinese, since he lives in San Francisco, which is strongly colored by that culture. He also reverses the history of the conquest of the Americas, wondering who has assimilated who. As a *mestizo* (mixed blood) he writes:

> *I represent someone who has swallowed English, and now I claim it as my language, your books as my books, your religion as my religion—maybe this is the most subversive element of the colonial adventure. That I may be truest to my Indian identity by wanting to become American is really quite extraordinary.*

Coming from the other side of the political spectrum, Mexican-born-and-raised performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña also advocates mixture as a weapon against conformity and repression. He contends that he no longer has a one-word identity because he is geographically defined as Mexican, Chicano, and Latin American; he is *Latino, chilango* or *mexiquillo, pocho* or *norteño* or *sudaca*:

> *We witness the borderization of the world, byproduct of the "deterritorialization" of vast human sectors. The borders either expand or are shot full of holes. Cultures and languages mutually invade one another. The South rises and melts, while the North descends dangerously with its economic and military pincers. The East moves west and vice-versa. Europe and North America daily receive uncontainable migrations of human beings, a majority of whom are being displaced involuntarily....the weary travelers, the dislocated, those of us who left because we didn't fit any more, those of us who still haven't arrived because we don't know where to arrive at, or because we can't go back anymore.*

Despite the fragmented configuration of all our centers, common ground among ethnicities can be offered by geography; a long string of communities along a river's banks may have more in common with each other than with inland towns closer by. And

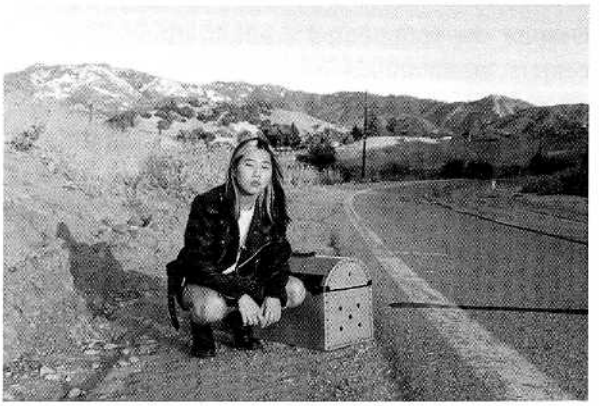


LUIS JIMENEZ, *Plaza de las Lagartos*, fiberglass and misting fountain, installed June 1995, San Jacinto Plaza, El Paso, Texas, 9' 1/2" x 9' 1/2" x 10' (Photo: Frank Ribelin). When Jimenez was a child in El Paso there were live alligators (*lagartos*) in a pool in the central plaza; they had been there since the 1890s, but were removed to a zoo in the mid-'60s because people abused them. The plaza continued to be called, unofficially, *La Plaza de los Lagartos*. Years later, now a nationally known sculptor commissioned to make an artwork for the plaza, Jimenez brought back the alligators, which form an emotional link with many residents' childhoods: "It was the best part of going to Downtown," recalls Irma Salazar. "We would just sit there and look at them. They didn't do much, but it was a real thrill to see them." Rearing up, jaws agape, Jimenez's creations are more spirited than the lethargic originals. A fine mist is supposed to keep them wet and lifelike, but after the sculpture's dedication—a major event, prompting news stories and personal reminiscences—it was turned off because it made the pavement slippery.

A conductor of the New York Philharmonic (a patient of Dr. Robert Read, husband of the influential matriarch Anne Lauriat Read) built a house in 1905 but stayed only a few summers on Kennebec Point, because he was Jewish and did not feel welcome in such a WASP's nest. These attitudes have been slow to disappear, although younger generations have begun to culturally "marry out" of WASPdom in various directions. Until very recently Jewish families (and homosexuals) have not been made to feel comfortable by some residents. A Jewish friend of mine, who insisted on stalking around L.L. Bean country in shorts, heavy city shoes, and knee high black socks, swore never to return; another couple of close friends rented on Kennebec Point for years, but

within each town there are the class-based boundaries: "the other side of the tracks" is a geographical distinction, like " the folks on the hill," "east side, and west side." Commonality can also be imposed—by fear of the Ku Klux Klan, by the impermanence of migratory workers' camps, and by the architectural homogeneity of company towns, where ethnic tastes and decoration are suppressed.

Subtle cultural markers that hint at the history of towns and areas can be caught by a good eye and ear. John Coggeshall writes about ethnic geography in the town of Herrin in the "Egypt" region of southern Illinois (where towns are named Cairo, Karnak, or Thebes, and coal mines attracted Polish, Slovak, and Italian immigrants). The Polish communities gathered around Catholic churches in which old customs were nourished and place names from the old country maintained. Slovak homes were identified by the fences around them. The Italians, late arrivals, weren't able to name streets or cities after their original homes, but they established a conspicuously Italian business center and residential neighborhoods in which everyone had a grape arbor and a vegetable garden.



STILL FROM MAMA BLUES, 1993, a 30-minute color film by Jae Soh, written with Nina Blake, starring Debbie Ha, Adam Thompson, Eric Dickey, Stacy Chun and Bok-Nam Cha. The film follows Christina, a hip young Korean American woman, as she hitchhikes from Alaska to Los Angeles's Koreatown in search of her mother, whom she finds just as two young African Americans rob her liquor store. In an attempt to find a home and an identity, Christina confronts racial and generational obstacles. Jae Soh shot the film two months after the riots in his hometown of Los Angeles, but had written the script some time before the rebellion.

> *Our life depended not on the time clock, as in America, but on the seasons. This is much more exciting and interesting than working in the city, where every day you go to work at the same time and do the same boring tasks. Our agricultural schedule was flexible, diverse, closer to nature, and enjoyable.*
>
> — ANONYMOUS VIETNAMESE IMMIGRANT

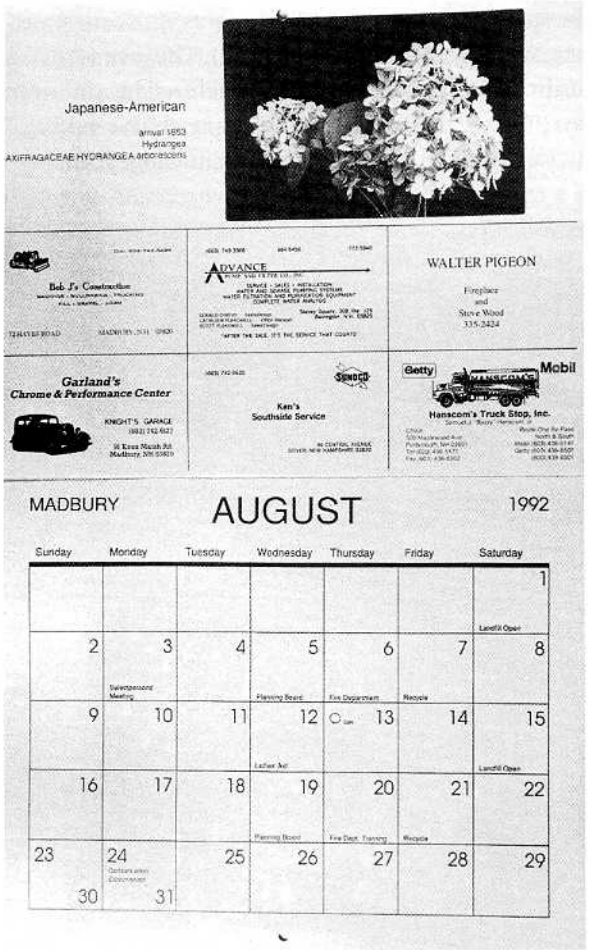
Asian immigrants have their own singular memories and bonds to homelands, which they share indirectly with Asian Americans. Like indigenous people generations before them, the Chinese in pioneer California saw latent fertile soil and uses for wetlands and other marginal areas, in "weeds" that were underestimated by Americans. This "ability to see the potential in the most mundane things may be the greatest contribution of the Chinese immigrants," says Sandy Lyon. Today we hear similar strains from the accounts and oral histories we are just beginning to receive from the recent wave of Southeast Asian immigrants. (In spring, next to a hiking trail I frequented in Colorado, there were often Vietnamese women collecting plants I didn't recognize on the trailside.) For many Vietnamese displaced during the "American war," leaving their native villages, homes of their ancestors, was almost as wrenching as migration to another country. The importance of place and nature in Vietnamese art has crossed the ocean with immigrants, and it figures prominently in Vietnamese reminiscences and art.

Given the deep ties of first-generation immigrants, and the agrarian heritage of many who have come here, there is surprisingly little written or visual material on

settled on Indian Point where the population was more diverse and they were not scornfully called "renters."

Maine's small African American community dates to the 17th century; by 1764 the census listed 322 free black people and slaves, two of whom supposedly lived on Kennebec Point in the late 18th or early 19th century. (One, called "Old Black Joe," may have lived in my meadow.) Thanks to "revisionism," the black history of New England is finally being explored. Tiny Malaga (Abenaki for Cedar) Island, nearby at the mouth of the New Meadows River, was unique in Maine—home to a small group of black, Indian, mixed race people and other outcasts for about a century until they were evicted en masse by state officials

place and specific experiences of place in Asian American experience, although there is a good deal of powerful art on the impact of displacement on identity. Patricia Limerick has written eloquently about the obstacles to writing an evenhanded multicultural history of landscape without firsthand sources other than those of high-handed white men. In her search for Asian American responses, as part of a project to understand the American landscape as discovered from West to East, she has gone to the literature, beginning with the poetry scratched on the walls of Angel Island in San Francisco, the vantage point from which most Chinese immigrants "discovered" Gold Mountain, as they called America. (There are also Chinese poems scratched into the walls of Ellis Island.) Limerick attributes the paucity of information about Asian immigrants' responses to the landscape to the "failure of records and not a failure of response," noting that there were few land-owning literati among them to do the recording. It is almost always the relatively leisured middle class that does our looking for us and provides our memories.



This is a challenge that was taken up by Korean American artist and activist Young Soon Min in her complex 1994 installation DMZ XING, commissioned by Real Art Ways, in Hartford, Connecticut, and displayed at the Hartford Civic Center Mall, among other venues. Suggesting that crossing into a metaphorical demilitarized zone is the core of immigrant experience, Min constructed an open circular room of glass and mirror panels, illuminated by flashing red lights, to tell the stories of refugees to Connecticut from Cambodia, Laos, Korea, and Vietnam, based on interviews conducted over a six-month residency. They are interwoven with the artist's own immigration experience, which ends with these words overlaid on a

DOROTHY IMAGIRE, *Madbury Community Calendar*, 1992, Durham, New Hampshire. Related to New England-based photographer Imagire's "alien-nation" series, concerned as is most of her work with the mixed-blood's confused sense of divided community, this is a plant calendar based on the Community Club's "multicultural" garden, cultivated by the artist and others. It includes plants that are Japanese American, Italian American, South African American, Russian American, and so forth. Imagire (whose background is Japanese and Iranian) came across a book on the origins of plants and was surprised to find so many of those common to Madbury were "from away." The botanical language made her "rethink words like colonizers, invaders, natives, immigrants, and aliens," she wrote. "I hope the origins of the plants inside this calendar surprise and please you too."

because they "offended the propriety of everyone nearby." (They also threatened a burgeoning tourist industry, although turn-of-the-century postcards suggest they were a curiosity in themselves; Holman Day, among others, photographed them.)

Malaga was founded by a former slave and fisherman who squatted there with his white wife and children. Economic recession forced the community into joblessness and in 1903 aid was requested from Phippsburg, which was disinclined to add to its welfare rolls and argued that Malaga belonged to Harpswell. It was called a "no man's land," where poverty and intermarriage combined with lack of good Yankee planning ahead made "March Hill" an annual obstacle. But one writer noted that the Malaga residents

self portrait: "For those of us whose histories have been marginalized, or who have been colonized or displaced, or have lost a 'heartland,' memories are all we have...we must re-member and re-invent and create new contexts for our histories and ourselves."

"Fundamentally," writes Vishakha N. Desai, bicultural Asian Americans "no longer have the choice of belonging to one place, one culture, or one country. Their sense of 'home' is no longer equated with an unqualified sense of belonging...." When artworks by Asian Americans do deal with place, they tend to do so through global politics or through tourism—the most alienating experience of place. (Best known is the work of the late Tseng Kwong Chi, who appointed himself "unofficial abassador of China" as he saw and photographed the sights of North America wearing a "visitor" badge.) The sense of an unfinished journey pervades much Asian American art. "It's a journey back that I am always taking," writes Filipina American poet Jessica Hagedorn.

JOAN MYERS, *Garden, Gila River, Arizona*, 1985. Platinum-palladium print. At every camp, the internees built ponds, public and private gardens, planted fruit trees and vegetables. Kango Takamura recalls that in the first year at Manzenar, the place was shadeless and miserable, but eventually, with the addition of water, "the green grows up. And mentally everyone is better." Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston mused over the garden ghosts on her return to the camp: "It was so characteristically Japanese, the way lives were made more tolerable by gathering loose desert stones and forming with them something enduringly human. Each stone was a mouth, speaking for a family, for some man who had beautified his doorstep."

were "not vicious...and they extend the rude hospitality of their island with touching warmth and sincerity."

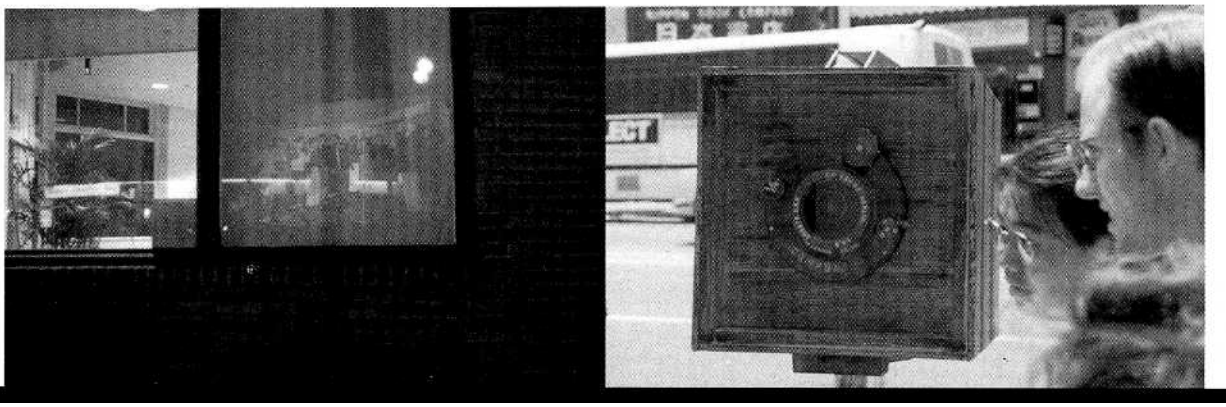
In 1912, however, the state took control of Malaga, evicting 56 residents, paying only one family for its land. The buildings were torn down and even the graveyards were exhumed; no trace was left on their native ground. Some built rafts and drifted downstream to seek new lives, but most were transported to Pineland, then a school for the "feebleminded," where many lived out their lives. One resident reported their fate in a 1912 *Bath Independent*: "Eliza Griffin has moved over to the main, but she visits the old home every day so not to be homesick nor to give up her rights....The others of us are having hard times to find homes anywhere."

The generational sense of loss felt by a "floating population" of exiles applies with particular intensity to the first-generation Japanese-American farmers (*issei*) who were instrumental in "taming" and irrigating the west; and to 110,000 of their second and third-generation descendants (*nisei* and *sansei*), most of them American citizens, who were unconstitutionally interned in desert concentration camps during World War II by the infamous and unconstitutional Executive Order 9066. This "mistake of terrifically horrible pro-portions," as John Hersey called it, was not just the result of war hysteria but of a long history of anti-Asian sentiment on the West Coast, where prewar analogies were made between a "Japanized" California and a "Negroized" South. Over half the first American-born generation of Japanese Americans had worked in agriculture, teasing far more from the soil (when they were legally allowed to own land) than the average Caucasian farmer. When they were forced to abandon their lands and crops in 1942, one strawberry grower asked for a few days deferral so he could harvest; it was denied, and in anger he plowed the berries under, an act of justified bitterness for which he was arrested by the FBI as a saboteur.

By the time the absurdity of the internment finally became apparent in 1944 - 45, many West Coast Japanese Americans had lost their land, houses, and possessions to the government, tenants, or vandals. This second internal exile was often more painful than the first. For the *issei*, the American landscape was a foreign land with potentially fertile soil on which they worked, and worked wonders; for the *nisei* their birthplace was suddenly rendered sterile and futureless, symbolized by the barren, desolate places to which they were banished in the western deserts in 1941.

The poetry and memoirs of Japanese Americans torn from their urban or farming lives and thrown into dry, windy, dusty desert concentration camps are poignant testimony to the deracination other Americans have suffered less noticeably. "All residential blocks looked alike, people were lost all the time," recalled artist Miné Okubo. Toku Shimomura wrote from the camp in Minidoka, Idaho: "What a view! I have never seen such a dust storm. We were sent to such a harsh place." "City of Dust" in "surroundings as bleak as a bleached bone" is how Yoshiko Uchida described the Topaz camp ("Jewel of the Desert") in Delta, Utah. "The floor is carpeted with dust, wind-borne / dry alkali, patterned by insect feet. / What peace can such a place as this impart?" wrote Toyo Suyemoto Kawakami.

NOBUHO NAGASAWA, *Toyo Miyatake's Camera*,1993, bronze, 18" x 18" x 20 1/2". Little Tokyo Historic District, Los Angeles (photos: copyright Gary Hulton and Leslie Aboud). This oversized replica of the camera Miyatake used surreptitiously in Manzenar is one of Nagasawa's proposed series of thirteen small sculptures for Little Tokyo, spanning Japanese American history from 1843 to 1942. Miyatake's camera, as Michael Several observes, has become "a symbol of defiance and resistance" to internment. It stands on a corner where the photographer had played as a child and had his professional studio before and after the war, still operated by his son and grandson. At night, slides from Manzenar are projected from the camera onto a window in the new Japanese American National Museum.



One of the saddest tales of bigotry on Kennebec Point is recorded in a biography of Molly Spotted Elk, an extraordinary Penobscot modern dancer. It took place in 1923 at Camp Overlook, run by Mrs. Brown Rich Bowen, where Molly, aged 20, was hired to teach then-popular "Indian lore." (It was a coup to have a "real Indian" in residence.) Although she won a poetry contest and was well-liked, she was dismissed for stealing some jewelry and maybe even a canoe. "We didn't believe Molly took those things," recalls fellow-camper Dorothy Crocker Reed. "It was almost like a frame-up." (Camp Overlook was briefly succeeded by Camp Shelta-Sea for boys. Long after both camps' demises, we had Wednesday night community square dances in its main hall until the

Yet when landscape photographer Ansel Adams arrived to document Manzanar, in the water-deprived Owens Valley of California in 1943, he was first taken by the "grandeur of space....I believe that the arid splendor of the desert, ringed with towering mountains, has strengthened the spirit of the people of Manzanar." He saw the camp as a "suitable haven" for "war-dislocated minorities." As Jan Zita Grover has pointed out, Adams focused on the distance—panoramas of the "sublime" landscape, and close-ups—portraits of the internees nobly sacrificing their lives to a patriotic whim, avoiding the contextual reality of bleak, treeless lines of barracks. He shot the cramped interiors with a wide-angle lens that made them look far more commodious and few of his images begin to suggest the freezing winters and burning summers, sandstorms, lack of privacy (and, of course, freedom). Adams was given much more leeway than other, more critical and political photographers like Dorothea Lange, but he too was ordered to decontextualize Manzanar, to document this "city in the desert" without showing guard towers, guards, or barbed wire. Photographs by the internees might have revealed these disjunctions between the outsider's and insider's views, but photographs were either censored in camp newspapers or internees were forbidden cameras. Toyo Miyatake smuggled one into Manzanar and his images were exhibited with Adams's many years later.

It was not the fearful landscape, but Japanese Americans' culture that lent them strength. They brought their farming genius with them to the barren land, cultivating thousands of acres to make the camps self-sufficient. Sometimes they were able to combat the devastating lack of water and greenery by creating an alternative landscape, or recreating their memory landscapes in miniature, making small ponds, gardens, parks, vistas and dioramas in the arid wastes. At Manzenar they built a Japanese-style "pleasure park" with pool, stone paths, wooden bridge and shelter; it must have been a surrealist vision of elsewhere in that landscape, and an unmistakably ironic symbol of hope and cultural resistance.

> *I was only an American Negro—who loved the surface of Africa and the rhythms of Africa—but I was not Africa. I was Chicago and Kansas City and Broadway and Harlem.*
>
> — LANGSTON HUGHES

African Americans, "first in legal bondage and later in economic peonage, constituted a kind of peasantry in the South." Their historical relationship to the land they lived on has been unique, still diverging hugely from that of other immigrants long after slavery was ended. The black families of white landowners, for instance, were given no part of their heritage. After the Civil War, former slaves found their forty acres and a mule insufficient to avoid becoming tenant farmers, or sharecroppers, and with every new Jim Crow humiliation and every lynching, more black people left for the North. The Great Migration, so movingly documented by the painter Jacob Lawrence, was bittersweet. Though "glad to escape from oppression, nostalgia for the more pleasant associations of the homeland assailed the exiles," writes Arna Bontemps, whose family went from Louisiana to California. They were "homesick for familiar speech, faces, and scenes," banding together in social and fraternal clubs named for their homeplaces —the Alabama Club, Mississippi Club, Vicksburg Club.

"Back then, no matter where you lived, *home* was where you came from, and it was just natural to go home to do something as important as having your child," says a character in Marita Golden's *Long Distance Life*. Later, when she urges her father to come North too, he tells her: "That farm, little as it is, is all I

floor began to give way. Today the camp provides summer cabins for the Brown/Moore families.)

For at least 11,000 years, the Kennebec has been inhabited by Native groups. Historians are divided as to the precise identity of those living in coastal Sagadahoc but they appear to have been western Etchemin, ancestors of the contemporary Penobscots, with the Abenakis—"People of the Dawn"—living inland up the Kennebec and inhabiting the coast later. They were part of a larger group called Wobanakiak, which, according to Tomas Obamsawin, "better describes the region that we inhabit...'Aki' means land or earth, and the 'ak' on the end of the word signifies plural or 'all' of the land where the sun rises."

know.... Sides, they can't run us all out. That land's got more of our blood in it than theirs. Not all us s'posed to leave. Some of us got to stay, so y'all have a place to come back to."

Some of those who stayed behind, tied to, but not necessarily attached to, land that was usually not theirs, nevertheless held hopes for it, as in Robert Hayden's poem:

> *And if we keep/Our love for this American earth, black fathers,/O black mothers, believing that its fields/Will bear for us at length a harvesting/Of sun, it is because your spirits walk/Beside us as we plough; it is because/ This land has grown from your great, deathless hearts.*

Still others held a sense of historical loss expressed in the old spiritual "This World Is Not My Home" or in Jacqueline Joan Johnson's contemporary statement: "No matter where I lived, geography could not save me." It couldn't save her, but she acknowledges that three years as a child "in the land of my ancestors" marked her for life: "Charleston, my new home, was a place of okra gumbo, she-crab soup, shrimp and grits, day-old cheese-rolls and little jars of flowered sachets, red, red stockings that never matched anyone's complexion and lace hankies knotted in the corner with my money in it...."

Despite the extreme deracination of the African American communities, culture kept them going, and it moved with them. In some areas (like the Sea Islands, off Georgia and the Carolinas), true communities with deep roots remain to this day, founded when African Americans held on to title to islands in white territory or actual islands where their ancestors had landed. Fighting off both state and private developers who are buying up local residents' land and destroying longstanding customs and ways of life in order to accomodate a growing tourist industry, those on Sapelo Island, for instance, have already suffered the destruction of oyster and crab harvests on which they have traditionally depended. Sulaiman Mahdi, of the Center for Environment Commerce and Energy in Atlanta, who has worked with Sapelo Islanders, says "the issues of black-owned land and reparations cannot be dealt with in isolation from issues of ecological and economic justice. How we treat the land is reflected in how we treat the people who live on it: the protection and preservation of one demands the protection and preservation of the other."

Underlying any discussion of African Americans and the land is the harsh question as to whether the South is a "racist landscape," unloved by or unloveable to those who have suffered in it. A reply is provided by Carol Stack's book *Call to Home*, in which she documents an unprecedented return to the South by the children of the Great Migration to the North. "Speak of the South as you will," she says, "but you still have to speak of it; there is no forgetting a southern upbringing." The returnees go back not to urban strongholds where change has settled in but to tiny rural communities where life will be harder than anything they have known in the North. They are looking for something else, something that is both inexplicable and undeniable. Stack quotes Earl Henry: "When you return to your homeplace, you go back to your proving ground, the place where you had that first cry, gave that first punch you had to throw in order to survive."

Melvin Dixon has explored "the dilemma black American writers have faced in resolving their sense of homelessness or in exploring the often puzzling relation between land and family." In their search for a home in this world they have created alternative American landscapes in art and literature that narrate journeys, havens, refuges, and freedom. Dixon identifies these as wilderness, underground, and

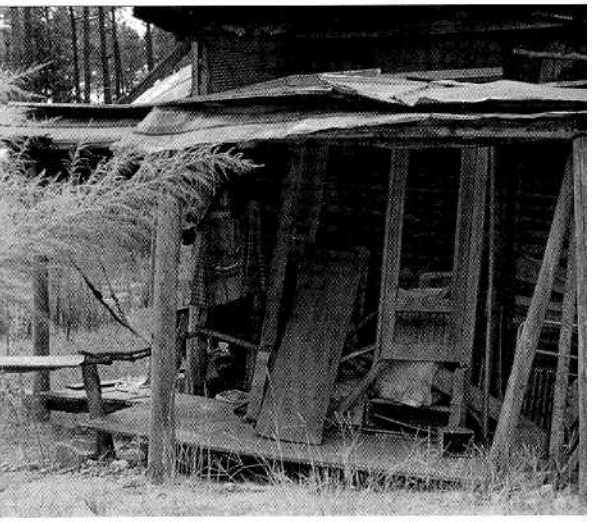
Today the Penobscot reservation consists of some 200 islands in the Penobscot River between Old Town and Medway, about 4,800 acres, plus 55,000 acres of trust land "protected" by the US government and about 89,000 acres that are "unprotected." Indian Island is the largest settlement, with 600 people, and about 1200 Penobscots live off the reservation.

"One of my friends lives in the suburbs of Nashville," says a Passamaquoddy man, "and it is just like being in a container, which is subdivided into a hundred square blocks and everybody is in their own little block. My friends didn't seem to know too many neigh-

mountaintop—"broad geographical metaphors for the search, discovery, and achievement of self." Wilderness was the spiritual harbor where enslaved Africans held their religious and political ceremonies, hidden deep in woods or swamps, where they ran to escape as well. (In the twentieth century, "brush dances" were still held in the remains of western Kentucky "wilderness.") Underground was also hidden, as in the underground railroad, getting down to move up and out. And the mountaintop, in the work of Toni Morrison and the famous speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., is the reward for "riding out" oppression.

Ruby Lerner has remarked sadly how chauvinism and self-loathing in the black and white South have led to devaluation of the local, a loss of self sufficiency and self esteem which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, black and white people in the south do share a sense of the landing, and of cultures embattled but interwoven. At rare moments the complexity of race and racism is transcended by consciousness of a common (if injust and unequal) history.

After the Civil War, many African Americans moved west with great optimism. The town of Nicodemus, Kansas, was founded in 1877 by black homesteaders lured to a promised land promoted by the railroads; as the birthplace of abolitionist John Brown, Kansas had a certain mythical appeal. Called the "exodusters," the settlers thought they were headed for freedom, but whites, alarmed by the influx of some forty thousand African Americans, met them with biased laws and racist violence. Eventually two thirds left the state that had been anticipated as "the land that gives birth to freedom" and the black farming communities slowly disappeared. Writer Ian Frazier, touring the Great Plains a decade ago, saw a display in the Fick Fossil Museum in Oakley, Kansas that said, "Today, the once-prosperous town of Nicodemus is



BEVERLY BUCHANAN, *Mary Lou Furcon House—No Lady*, 1990, original photograph in color. For years Buchanan, raised in the Carolinas and now living in Georgia, has concentrated her sculpture, pastels, and photographs on rural Southern shacks, endowing them with color, life, and stories that would be unavailable to outsiders, often naming her works in honor of the people whose homes inspired them. Her professor father had written his thesis on African American tenant farmers and her parents had taken documentary photographs in the late '20s. As a child Buchanan had visited and slept over in such shacks, which "are not just about black people," she says. "They are based on people I knew growing up who were black. Once I grew up I saw other people living in similar conditions." Buchanan's photographs are portraits of places, like her sculptural shacks, their narrative doors closed to viewers until opened by the artist. The inhabitant's presence, or absence, is tangible; here the coat hanging on the porch is particularly eloquent. Furcon was elderly by the time Buchanan met her—fiercely independent, proud of her gardens and of the home she had built herself from logs, sticks, twigs, and found materials.

no more." Fond of ruins, he went there, and found a living town in the midst of its annual Founders Day Weekend. While watching the six Robinson sisters dance to Prince's "When Doves Cry" with an attentive black and white audience, wheatfields under vast sky hovering in the background, Frasier had a place-induced epiphany:

bors around them. That's not the case here. But if we continue heading that way without that sense of community and tribalism, I'm sure we'll end up that way....And we have a much greater price to pay; it's more painful for us. When we see the language disappearing, for example...When we see some good customs dying—and for these customs, it wasn't just a matter of doing a particular activity, it's the reason for doing it and how we did it—those are the things that are really important."

A Penobscot man who lived alone, self sufficient, for 26 years in the woods, says he did so because "You should know

Suddenly I felt a joy so strong it almost knocked me down....And I thought, It could have worked! This democracy, this land of freedom and equality and the pursuit of happiness....Nicodemus, a town with reasons enough to hold a grudge, a town with plenty of reasons not to exist at all, celebrated its Founder's Day with a show of hats and a dance revue....To me, and maybe to some others in the room, the sight of so many black people here on the blue-eyed Great Plains was like a cold drink of water....I was no longer a consumer, a rate payer, a tenant, a card holder, a motorist. I was home. The world looked as I wanted it to....Did people use to feel like this all the time? Was this what those old timers were looking for, and finding, on the Great Plains?

In the late eighties the words "bridges," "boundaries" and "borders" became popular as titles for exhibitions and conferences in the field of cultural studies. As Jeff Kelley has put it, "stereotypes loom largest at the border, beyond which awaits *the other*, threatening to cross." The gist of most progressive analyses in these forums was the blurring of boundaries, the porousness of national, racial, ethnic identities, the unstable, shifting ground on which any of these are constructed, and the creation of a hybrid state. As Gloria Anzaldua has written of all working-class people of color (and it could be extended to the rest of us), "our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people." I don't recall anyone mentioning Robert Frost's "good fences make good neighbors," especially in view of the U.S. government's apparently contradictory plans to erect a huge metal barrier on the U.S.-Mexico border to defeat undocumented workers and simultaneously to install the North American Trade Agreement, which condones runaway shops and the use of cheap international labor. Fences mean you have something to hide or protect.

Fenced into reservations, most American Indian nations epitomize displacement. They cannot *return* to a mythologized "homeland" because it has been here all along and they are still here. Laguna Pueblo writer Paula Gunn Allen says that "a tribal member's estrangement from the web of tribal being and the conflict that arises are the central preoccupations of much of contemporary American Indian literature." The past, distorted by loss, tragedy, outmarriage, and reinvention, is only accessible by a flawed route through the reservation, which sets dire poverty as well as natural connection in relief against the dominant culture's wealth and disregard for "nature." Like immigrants from elsewhere, Native Americans often live in or between two worlds—city and reservation—moving back and forth between the two, living in both lines and circles.

This is not to say that the reservation is frozen in the past, but that the present time and space are, from some reports, perceived differently there, in rhythms with the land or in dissonances formed by dissimilarity. Despite casinos and tax havens, the reservation stands for an indigenous nation's historical landscape, whether or not it is the actual geographical site. It is a symbol of all the land previously occupied or seasonally traveled. Similarly, the bitter controversies taking place today over indigenous sacred sites are argued on ground that shifts between two cultural understandings of place; and, predictably, they endow the dominant culture with the right to decide what is and is not authentic for any other culture. U. S. law demands archaeological proofs of settlement and use where only philosophical or symbolic proof may be forthcoming.

New respect for indigenous ways parallels the growing nostalgia for small-town America. Pueblo peoples in the Southwest, who live in towns and have been in place for longer than anyone else on the continent, now epitomize belonging. This is because of their gift for constructing the places where they landed,

more about your surroundings where you live....We depended on nature for our livelihood. For everything, we always lived with sharing—that's the only way we could live."

"In my traditions, back where I lived, I lived in style," he says. "The woods was my source of materials." "It was my drugstore, where I got all my medicines. It was my lumber yard, where I got all my materials [for carving], and also my meat marke Rabbits come in the fall, partridges come the fall, deer.

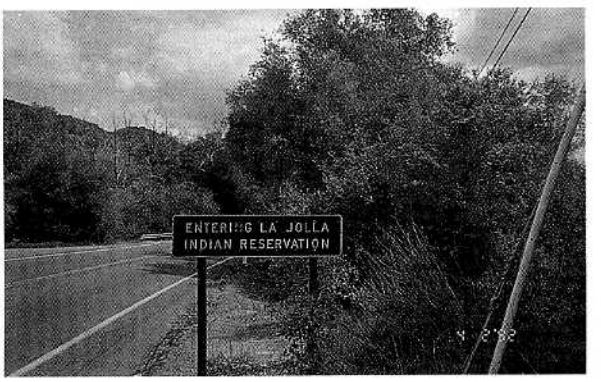
"Then I'd go on a summer diet, organ foods, such as greens, dandelions. I plante

making them a "homeland since the beginning of time" despite their own long migatory histories. Yet they too know displacement. According to Paul Gonzales, an arts adminstrator from San Ildefonso Pueblo, Native people returning from the cities to which they were banished by relocation policies in the fifties, "feel they have lost an entire lifetime...so *everybody's* looking for a place to belong."

Yet here too, looking for firsthand responses to land and landscape from land-based Native cultures is a frustrating task. Native Americans have had good historical reason to keep their most important feelings and knowledge to themselves, to maintain a kin of emotional sovereignty. Indian views of nature hav been so overstated, misunderstood, and abused in th last three centuries that it is difficult to sift out an perceptions about landscape or place from the litt we have actually been told. One story that rings tru and exposes another way of seeing place is told b anthropologist Dorothy Eggan: A Hopi asks an Angl woman to close her eyes and tell him what she see from Hopi House at the Grand Canyon: "She describe the landscape she has seen—the brilliantly colore walls of the canyon, the trail that winds over the edg of it reappearing and crossing a lower mesa—and th Hopi responds, 'I know what you mean...but you words are wrong.' For him the trail does not cross; does not disappear: it is only that part of the mesa tha has been changed by human feet. He says, 'the trail still there even when you do not see it, because I ca see all of it. My feet have walked on the trail all the wa down.'" In other words, "one envisions the whole i order to understand the trail; or, by envisioning th trail, one understands the whole."

Modernist art by contemporary Indian artists offe access to Native perceptions through a cultural languag that has been forged between the two views of art. Y it also differs from Euro-abstraction, which it ca

JAMES LUNA (Diegueño-Luiseño), detail from a ten-page magazine piece, "I've Always Wanted to Be an American Indian," 1992. The title is quoted from a white man to whom Luna responded with a visual verbal description of his homeplace, the La Jolla Indian Reservation in Southern California. Along with photos of handsome children, a neat church, and bucolic landscape, Luna lists, deadpan, the disproportionate rates of unemployment, murder, and death on the reservation, and the number of tribal members jailed, on welfare, mentally ill, or suffering from diabetes and cancer. He says that despite the painful statistics, "I would live no place else because this is my home, this is where my people have come. I also know that this place, like other places, is the reality that we Indians live; this is it. This isn't the feathers, the beads of many colors, or the mystical, spiritual glory that people who are culturally hungry want. Hey, do you still want to be an Indian?"



a small garden there, cucumbers and a few things.

"Right around the last of October when things began to get frost, then I begin to build up on bone foods, more bacon, muscle foods you eat, like joints, that's like gelatin, you eat that. Then in the winter, you ice fish.

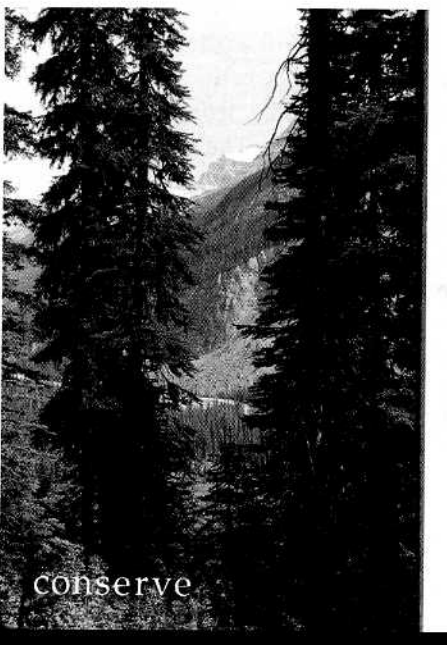
"Certain seasons of the year, I plant. They first start in May...June you have another one, July you have another one,August you have another one....September's the last thing you get, because everything's gone to seed then, it begins to lose its strength. It begins to go the other way....

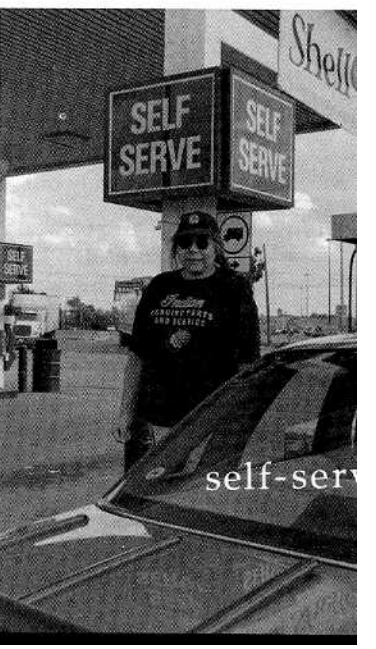
"I don't only gather for myself. I gather for

formally resemble. Land is not localized but symbolized in ways that include local detail, deeply embedded in any larger view. Art commenting on land use—especially treaty-protected land, water, timber, range, hunting and fishing rights—is also inseparable from land symbolism, since such rights are tribally considered religious and moral as well as economic issues.

> *In the language of the Yuchi people, there are no words for lines of demarcation, boundaries, borders, or landscapes that are measured, surveyed, designated, and set aside as the sole possession of one. In the Yuchi language, the word for land,* SAAH-CHEE, *is ephemeral and evolving....Our relationship with the land is that we are more and no more than the space we occupy at once....it is the land herself that has true possession of us as a people, and this is reflected within the Yuchi tongue, as we bend and learn to conform to the language of the land.*
>
> — JOE DALE TATE NEVAQUAYA

There is little "landscape" as it is generally understood in Native American painting or photography. There is no such word in indigenous languages and no such retrospective, passive concept of the land. Nor is there any "earth art" by Indian artists, despite the overwhelming influence of indigenous cosmologies and architectures on mainstream earthworks. American Indian land imagery is often based in a ritual understanding of what is sensed and seen, a far cry from European pictorialization. When Salish painter Jaune Quick-To-See-Smith curated a 1991 exhibition of Indian art about land, she called it *Our Land/Ourselves*, implying a dismissal of conventional boundaries between self and place, nature, and culture. The title reflects the complex and problematic relationship of Native people not only to "their" land—the fragments they have been forced to "own"—but to their "Land." It embodies a sense of place that transcends the use-oriented notions of the dominant culture as well as the domestic specificity, the "coziness," that appeals to Euro-Americans. Similarly, Russell Means has pointed out that the popular image of the earth as a goddess means "you would have to see it as an extension of human beings, which is a distinctly Christian sort of view. We Lakotas look at it in the exact opposite way, that humans are an extension of the earth's life-giving nature." According to the Santa Clara Pueblos, the breath of the land is





PATRICIA DEADMAN (*Canadian Tuscarora*), *Conserve, Self-serve*, Duratran prints from the "Serve Series" 1994. The five large prints, or five words, of the "Serve Series," question the meaning of "service" related to modern Indian life. Deadman encourages viewers to recombine the words, to create our own social and ecological interpretations of: *preserve* (mountain goats in captivity), *reserve* (a painted tipi), *deserve* (an object being passed between two shadow figures), *conserve* and *self-serve*. In the landscape, Deadman comments on notions of "wilderness," and in the self-portrait on self-sufficiency and sovereignty, taking responsibility, "doing things for yourself because no one will do it for you." She asks via the t-shirt ("Indian Genuine Parts and Service"), "What does it mean to be Native today?"

all the people.It's not only the material things I help them with. It's also the spiritual things.

All the things they want to find out, the Passammaquoddy, Micmacs, Penobscot, Maliseets, they come here...."

And a Passamaquoddy man says: "In the Passamaquoddy world, we are as much of a victim to the Madison Avenue version of living as anybody else...And I really think that's a sad sign because when you lose that sense of community, you have two choices: either chaos, or the other one, you start compartmentalizing your life as you would in suburbia..."

gathered from the air, bringing with it authority and power; and according to the Navajo, human breath is garnered from the wind.

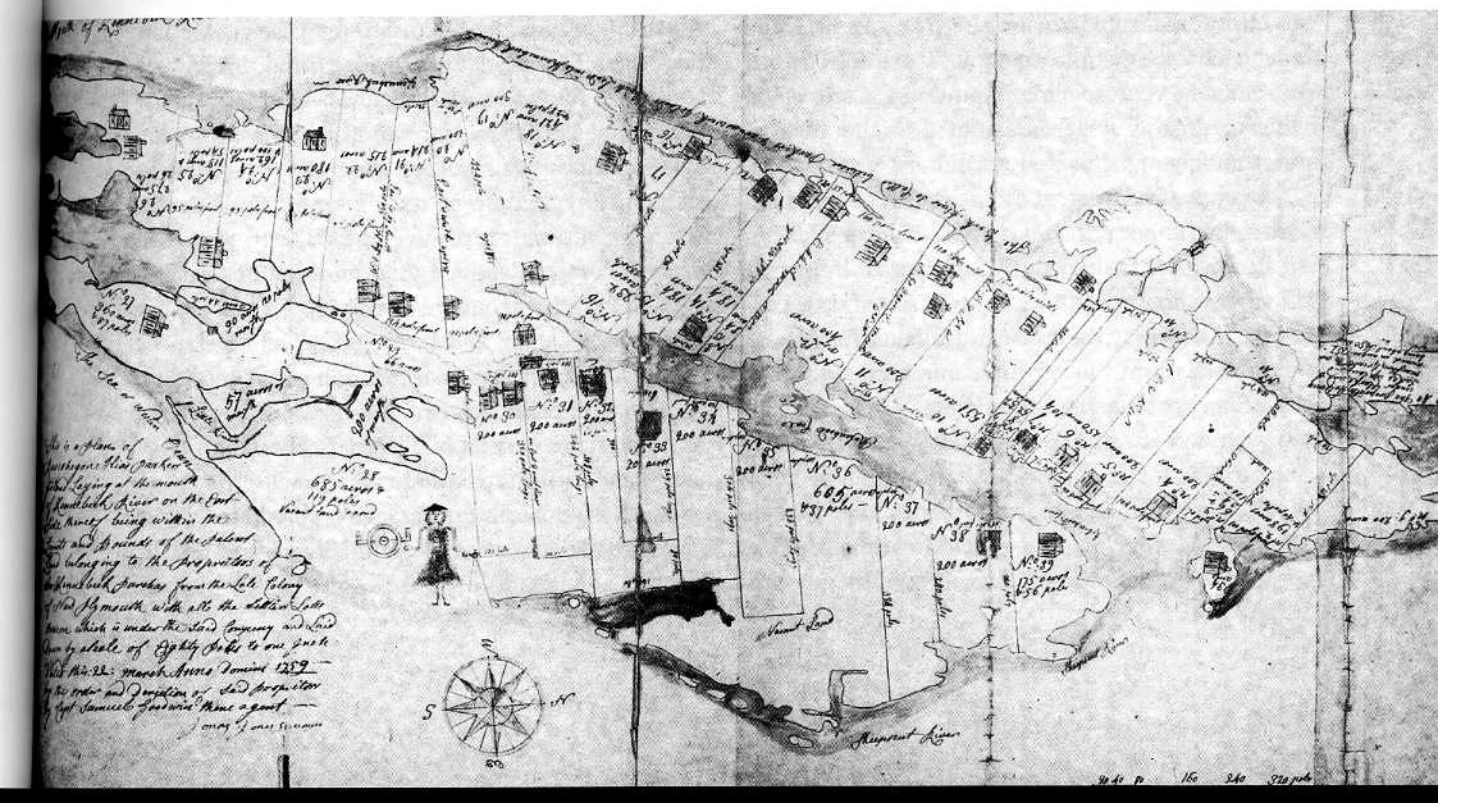
> *[White westerners] think of time as linear, flowing from past, to present, to future, like a river, whereas Nompenekit [a local Native man] thinks of it as a lake or pool in which all events are contained.*
> — JOHN HANSON MITCHELL

Time being part of space, and the Native understanding of time as sacred being crucial to ceremony and ritual, the loss of land was a disaster, says Vine Deloria, but the related destruction of ceremonial life was even worse. He argues that forced adaptation to secular, mathematically measured time has produced a fundamental sense of alienation, making "Indians strangers in a land that was becoming increasingly strange—as whites changed it to suit themselves—and that old ceremonies might have provided an emotional bulwark against this alienation, but their prohibition only increased the feeling of exile among people of the tribe." Contemporary Hopi photographer Victor Masayesva says that photography can be seen "as ceremony, as ritual, something that sustains, enriches, and adds to our spiritual well being." His film *Hopiit* is what Westerners might call a "portrait of a place"—Hopiland seen for once through Hopi eyes, in the Hopi language, casually as well as profoundly, from the inside, as a place, not as a sight or a site. The film's pace is leisurely but not really "harmonious" in the Western sense; watched from an Anglo vantage point, it is slightly disturbing, a curious combination of distance and intimacy, which is the way so many of us experience place. In fact, there is something that can seem vaguely unsatisfactory to the mainstream eye about what little Native American landscape photography we do see. This is due not to aesthetic failings but to the way it is less self-conscious than what we are used to, than conventional training leads us to expect —as though the land is being allowed to speak for itself, with a certain de-emphasis on the frame.

When filmmaker Sol Worth and anthropologist John Adair were teaching film on the Navajo reservation, they noticed reflections of the Navajo respect for movement and balance in a preference for the circular pan as a camera technique. Of Mike Anderson's film, *Old Antelope Lake*, for instance, they wrote: "not only must the sequence be in a sunwise direction around the lake, but also certain shots must be followed by the appropriate animal and direction of action. The time element isn't very important in this film....What was important to Mike was that we first saw the source and then moved all around the lake showing the unity between the natural things and the human beings in the environment." Of Al Clah's *Intrepid Shadows*—the film "least understood by the Navajo and most appreciated by 'avant-garde' filmmakers"—they remarked that a variety of landscapes are shown in static shots; movement is introduced by a young Navajo poking at a spider web, a rolling metal hoop, a Yeibichai mask wandering through the landscape, moving faster and faster in complex circular, spiral and chaotic patterns, and the shadow of the camera man getting longer and longer.

On and Off the Map

It is not on any map; true places never are.
— HERMAN MELVILLE



Previous page: 1759 Map of Georgetown Island (Courtesy the Georgetown Historical Society), surveyed by Jonas Jones. The island was parceled off into lots, showing only four houses standing on the three Points, including one on Kennebec Point, where the Todd house was built twenty-four years later, and one on Bay Point (perhaps the long-sought 17th-century David Oliver house, since it was the site of a later Oliver house that burned in the 1950s). The colonial history of Georgetown was erratically mapped, with names and even bays or islands added and subtracted on different charts. In 1759 the Kennebec Proprietors described "Rascohegan alias Parkers Island" (later Georgetown) as "in general very Rocky—more than half, except the marsh which is Considerable..."

WHEN I WENT A FEW YEARS AGO TO PAY MY New Mexico taxes at the local courthouse, a clerk and I pored over the county's huge crumpled, dog-eared property map. It overflowed her desk and fell in awkward pleats to the floor, sticking up like cowlicks in the many places where it was patched by penciled notes taped over each other. The information too was vintage. There was no record of the last two owners of "my" land, nor of its subdivision. For a panicked moment I felt my place did not exist.

Place history is most often recorded in maps. People from oral traditions carry detailed maps in their heads over years; the rest of us depend on outside sources. In the seventies, anthropologist Hugh Brody solicited "map biographies" from British Columbian Native people whose culture was threatened by an oil pipeline. Within this cross-cultural collaboration, memories and stories of land use and lives were overlaid upon official spaces; subjective visual layers together form a multivocal history approaching an "objectivity" that could not have been written in words alone. The same people also possessed a large old "dream map," covered with marks and trails revealed to them in dreams, which constituted another form of understanding of life as well as land.

The gap between image and lived experience is the space in which both dreams and ideas are created, as reflected by the Gitskan and Wet'suwet'en in British Columbia, who worked with a professional cartographer to create an atlas, "a beautifully crafted set of images" describing "how people immigrated to their present territories, the meaning of ancient place names, where berries grow, and where to catch salmon." The Inuits make relief maps that have been called "environmental mimicry." An Inuk elder told an anthropologist that he had drawn intricate maps of an area from memory but then had thrown them away, because it was the act of making them that was important. The extraordinarily accurate Pacific Islanders' stick and shell navigation charts may date back forty thousand years. There are maps scratched into the earth and, in Kenya, detailed maps of rainfall are made with seeds on the ground. Inspired by indigenous cultures' inventive mapping procedures, Doug Aberley has written about local empowerment through homemade maps based on honest descriptions of what people actually know about where they live. In the process of "re-inhabiting" places, he predicts, "maps will also be sung, chanted, stitched and woven, told in stories, and danced across the fire-lit skies."

As a young man, writer William Least Heat-Moon was guided around Lafayette/Yoknapatawpha County for a day by William Faulkner's stepson: "Until those hours with him," he wrote, "I had never really known what it is to travel *into* a country, to go bodily into a topographic dreamtime." Kent Ryden calls Faulkner a "literary cartographer," fusing exterior and interior maps, nonfiction and fiction, to map the visible and the "invisible landscape." He points out that Faulkner's famous map of Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, complete with references to events in his novels, "demonstrates a keen awareness of the way in which history piles up on the land, of the way terrain absorbs and recalls history, of the way narrative is an unstated component of any map and thus of any landscape." Faulkner's county map has no external boundaries. It is all center, which can be read as a metaphor for its lack of borders, its extension of the local into the global on one hand, or the local focus inward, on the other. I'm reminded of Blaise Pascal's definition of nature as "an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." In an almost feudal assertion of author(itarian) or artistic license, Faulkner inscribes himself as "sole owner and

The island's 80-mile coastline had provided harbors and temporary homes for European fishermen for over a century before English settlement began (encouraged by Massachusetts Governor Shute, who offered 100 acres, free transport, a paid schoolteacher and a minister, to tempt colonists and rid the area of Indians). The original 17th-century grantees in the area were Oliver, Parker and Rodgers.

A wonderful series of names describes the lower Kennebec to the mouth: The Chops, Long Reach, Doubling Point, Fiddler's Reach, Bluff Head, Squirrel Point (named not for the creature but for the ship that carried a governor to parley with the Indians on Lee Island), Parker's Head, Cox's Head, Gilbert Head, Popham, and Hunnewell Beach.

proprietor" of the 2,400 square mile county, with its population of "6,298 whites" and "9,313 negroes."

For most of us the map is a tantalizing symbol of time and space. Even at their most abstract, maps (especially topographical maps) are catalysts, as much titillating foretastes of future physical experience as they are records of others' (or our own) past experiences. For the map-lover, maps are about visualizing the places you've never been and recalling the ones you have been to. A map can be memory or anticipation in graphic code. While there are probably some armchair map-lovers for whom connoisseurship is paramount, most are lured by the local, imagining places as they peruse the spaces delineated. We are field trippers, hikers, explorers, would-be travelers, or just daydreamers. We can follow with a finger the channel between islands, imagining a smooth sail on a crisp clear day, or recalling the terrifying sound of nearby surf breaking on a reef unseen in the fog. We can spend cold winter nights poring over contour lines and wondering if there will be an open gate on unmarked ranchroads, trying to reconcile old, vague maps of desired places with new detailed ones that look like totally different locations, anticipating the moment when the backpack is cinched and the first steps are taken up that concentrically lined incline. The thin blue line of a stream can summon up a remote canyon leading to a long-forgotten ruin, the heat of the day, the talus rumbling underfoot, the prick of cactus on a bare leg.

Local places remain stubbornly hidden from the systems of control and ownership. John K. Wright notes, "the interior of my place in Maine, no less than the interior of Antarctica, is a *terra incognita*, even though a tiny one. Indeed, if we look closely enough ....the entire earth appears as an immense patchwork of miniature *terrae incognitae*." This might be a description of Least Heat-Moon's intriguing book *PrairyErth*, a place portrait structured by the twelve quadrangles of Chase County, Kansas, over which the author walked and talked to assemble their stories. This "deep map" was an extended quest for the whole revealed by all the parts: "The least I hoped for was a topographic map of words that would open inch by inch to show its long miles."

Maps are "embedded in a history they help construct," according to designer Denis Wood. Where some aboriginal maps depend on inherited knowledge and mean nothing to the uninitiated, our own modern maps work in the opposite way—they make public that which we cannot see, and we are supposed to trust their accuracy and authority. Wood deconstructs the official North Carolina state highway map, its choices and legends, then concludes: "It is not that the map is right or wrong...*but that it takes a stand while pretending to be neutral on an issue over which people are divided.*"

Official boundaries can also be internalized; county, state, and national borders have become identity makers. "Speaking of the new computerized "cartographic regime," John Hitt writes, "the whole earth is catalogued. Including, perhaps, your own home." Mapping in the Western world developed from the depiction of particular places, the warmth of narrative delineation (with pictorial cartouches and fanciful guesswork filling in the gaps of the unknown), giving way to the chilly climes of abstract documentation of neutralized spaces. As literate people began to describe and document further and further afield, the juxtaposition of local knowledge and foreign fantasy gave way to a mechanistic and "scientific" process that has become increasingly detached from place. Today, construction of a map may not even demand the cartographer's presence on the land. The narrative

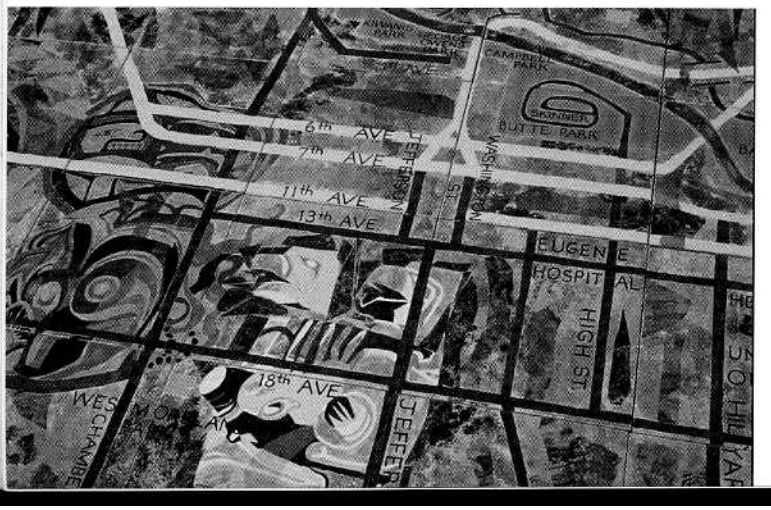
The only extant maps of the long Native history of Sagadahoc are those made by archaeologists, marking the sites of shell middens and camp sites. They also make microscopic maps of specific excavations, test pit by test pit, stratum by stratum, artifact by artifact. Sometimes these investigations reveal lost topographies—streams that have dried up or moved, forests that were cleared, fields that were plowed. We have considered mapping small areas in different periods, perhaps as a kind of artwork.

In the early '90s the Kennebec Point Associates commissioned a map made of the Point on which everyone's private names for places were to be recorded. Not much was new to any of us; our history is as communal as it is personal.

that leads from the concentric circles rippling out from "around here," to the rectilinear lines of official surveys, to photographs taken by machines from high above the earth is a story that begins here at "home" and ends out there in "space."

The need for a map to go to or imagine a place for purposes of religion or survival differs from the more cerebral or political need to fill in the blanks, to own vicariously by recording. J. B. Harley has demonstrated the map's "double function in colonialism of both opening and later closing a territory.... In this view the world is full of empty spaces ready for taking by Englishmen." Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century maps of North America omitted Native peoples and "took on the appearance of a window through which the world was seen"—the European view, or overview.

JOYCE KOZLOFF, *Eugene*, detail from *Around the World on the 44th Parallel*, 1995, ceramic tile mural in the Library of Mankato State University in Minnesota (tiles produced at the Tile Guild, Los Angeles). Since the 1970s, Kozloff has been making public art based in local information conveyed through regional decorative patterns. Eugene, Oregon is one of the twelve cities represented in this series of colorful, idiosyncratic maps that combine culture and topography to characterize a city. Eugene and the dense, misty forests of the Willamette Valley are represented by primordial foliage and Salish Indian motifs. The other North American cities included are Toronto (icy Lake Ontario and symbols of English heraldry), Burlington, Vermont (Lake Champlain and the tie-dyes of the Counter-Culture), and Mankato (fertile farmland, boys fishing, and Woodland beadwork patterns).



The "naturalization" of maps—the myth that maps show the world the way it really is —veils the fact that maps are cultural and even individual creations that embody points of view. They map only what the authors or their employers want to show; resistance is difficult. They are "powerful precisely to the extent that the author disappears." Artists trying to combat and expose hegemony, on the other hand, put their names on their work and are vulnerable in their individualism; they lack the social power of the nameless mapmakers who, like the image-makers of the mass media, determine how we see and are not called upon to take personal responsibility.

> *"The map is not the terrain.... What your map does not show," the skinny black man told her, "is that the floods in December washed away a part of the road. I see the floods didn't affect your map."*
> — DONALD WESTLAKE

Two versions of a place can both be cartographically correct, but as John Hitt puts it, "each will reveal a completely different view of the landscape." Cartographer Mark Monmonier has written a book called *How to Lie with Maps*, and the introduction to *Goode's World Atlas* warns, "because a well-drawn map creates an aura of truth and exactness, the cartographer should caution the reader against interpreting the generalized data too literally." As "map feuds" develop, everyone is going to have to become far more map literate so as not to be fooled by exploitative agendas as we learn to look around.

If maps exist to order and record the world, the world fights back. Even the most seasoned map reader does not know what to expect until s/he gets "there" (chamber of commerce brochures notwithstanding). Not only do most maps omit vegetation, landmarks, and built structures, to say nothing of current history

Georgetown Island (about the size of Manhattan) is almost split in two by Robinhood Cove, which runs from the back of Sagadahoc Bay up past Robinhood village and into Hockomock Bay. A few miles upriver Georgetown overlaps on the west side with Arrowsic. These two big islands are connected to each other by a bridge and to the towns of Woolwich and Bath by two more bridges, all built in the 1920s and 30s.

The USGS maps traditionally measure the coastline at 3,600 statute miles, but a new study on GIS doubles it to 7,040 miles. If the tiny coastal islands are included, the Maine coast is another 2,471 miles longer (not counting some 1,000 ledges), all dependent on disagreements as to tidelines and where the seacoast stops and riverbanks begin.

and economics, but most are out of date, and the scale is beyond untrained imaginations. The topography changes slowly, but the landscape is constantly transforming itself. (So are we; the depth of individual emotion engendered by place is also unpredictable.) An apparently isolated stream has been polluted, a bridge has washed out, a back road has been paved, a forested area clear cut or slashed by a power line, a village abandoned. What looks like a secluded beach is noisy with jet skis. A picturesque local retreat is now a shoddy development or a gated hideaway ringed by *No Trespassing* signs. Much is revealed about how maps relate to places as we move back and forth between the two. All over the country, alternative mapping projects are being used as catalysts for bioregional community organizing, augmented by conferences, newsletters, local history booklets, murals, and celebrations.

Geomatics, the new digital information technology that analyzes and manipulates geographical images, is beginning to be used by environmental activists and indigenous people to reclaim their lands, to monitor and protect their land bases—a better defense than guns, says Bernard Neitschmann. They are making syncretic maps that reflect traditional knowledge and occupancy history through memory. In Canada the Assembly of First Nations has involved sixty-one communities in remapping the Great Lakes Basin from an indigeneous perspective; the Nunavik Inuit are gathering information on ecology and land use; others use geographic information systems (GIS) to map fishing resources. Miskito Indians in Central America have produced a map of their ocean reefs (in their own language), working with small boats, scuba divers, and satellite images.

Yet some things remain the same. Tools for the analyses which would unveil the interests behind most maps are not widely available. (What we can't see won't hurt us?) Satellite imaging is hugely expensive and used primarily for spying and other governmental agendas. Neither system nor images are made available to "locals," although there are any number of local uses for such technology. Access to new technology is always out of reach of the grass roots until someone resists through invention. For instance, John Broadhead, an environmentalist working with the Haida in the Queen Charlotte Islands, found the general public there baffled and put off by dense specialized data on the dangers of excessive logging; on a desktop computer with widely available software, he created a simple visual map of logging on the islands, which clarified damage to the ecosystems and proved to be a highly effective organizing tool.

The mapmaking process can also bring together disparate elements in a community. In the sixties, geographer William Bunge proposed a "Society for Human Exploration" that would map from different human viewpoints, including children's. (If only we could read animals' mental maps.) Local people would lead expeditions to create "oughtness maps," whose goals were to change rather than merely map the world. In the early seventies, the New Thing Art and Architecture Center in Washington, D.C., proposed a map of the Adams-Morgan community "drawn for the people who live there... to give our community a picture of itself—to define our territory." Architect John Wiebenson drew the map and "found all sorts of neat things that only the children know about"—like some park steps that make "great grandstand seats to watch the subway construction."

Mapping change is one challenge. Mapping desire for change is another, which has long appealed to visual artists. The Surrealists' 1929 map of the world parodied the hegemonic motives of mapmakers by

We read nautical charts more often than topo maps. The small islands immediately offshore from Kennebec Point are intimate elements of the local geography: the lighthouses, now automated, on Seguin and Pond, the wooded strongholds of Salter's and Stage hiding their Indian and colonial histories, the two rock Sugarloaves, and Wood, with its sandbar to Popham. Long Island, with its Spinney homesteads, should also be counted in, as it lies just across "the creek" (Long Island Narrows) from Bay Point and boasts the grandest old house around, on Gilbert Head. (Elizabeth Etnier, married at the time to artist Stephen Etnier, wrote a romantic book in the thirties about fixing the place up, which entranced me as a child.)

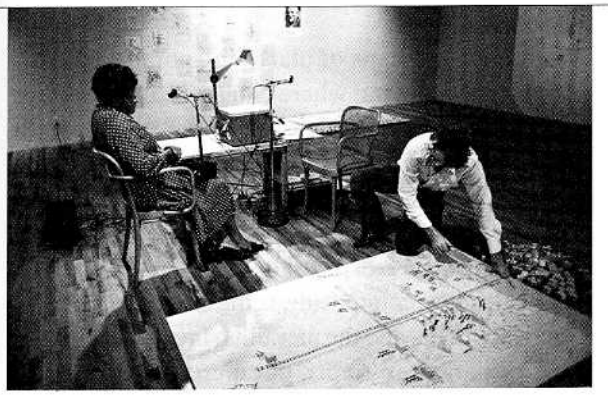
eliminating the United States altogether, enlarging Russia, China and Alaska, and promoting Easter Island to the size of South America. In the eighties, several artists (notably "border *brujo*" Guillermo Gomez-Peña) mocked the West's successful imposition of "top and bottom" on a spherical globe—a view that has become so internalized that we have trouble even recognizing North America when the directional hierarchy is reversed and South America is given "top" position. Other artists, notably Peter Fend, have worked with the Petersen projection of the world—a correction of the four-hundred-year-old Mercator projection's scale distortions—which has a similarly disorienting (and imperializing) effect. At the time of the G7 Summit in Halifax, Canadian artist Peter Dykhuis made an exhibition of "world views"—world maps published by each of the G7 countries: "Seeing them all side by side, the differences between maps are striking. Aspects of their design and choice of colour seem to embody national stereotypes—the Japanese map looking understated, with light, cool colors, while the Italian map is bold and funky, with wildly curvaceous lettering. Each of these superpowers locates itself towards the centre of the world, and relegates the rest of the world more or less to the margins."

Equally selective from a subjective viewpoint, individual environmental memories have been developed into the concept of "cognitive" or "mental" mapping, which has been useful for a number of different disciplines, and is particularly appealing to artists. Mental mapping often reveals class lines, as in the centrality of a bowling alley or an upscale coffeeshop in people's lives. Bridging psychology and geography, for example, Florence Ladd asked a group of urban African American youths in California to draw maps of their neighborhood and received widely diverse interpretations of a single area which helped her to understand "where they were coming from." Cognitive mapping can also be linked to the renarrativization of art by Conceptual artists and feminists in the sixties and seventies. In 1961, the Surinamese-Dutch Conceptual artist Stanley ("this way") Brouwn exhibited scribbled pencil maps made by people in Amsterdam from whom he asked directions to a well-known landmark. Unintentionally subverting objective space with subjective perceptions, these maps became compelling vortices of eye, mind, and body. A few years later, the Japanese expatriate artist On Kawara mapped out his daily life with date paintings, serial lists, maps, and newspaper clippings; the series were titled "I Got Up," "I Went," " I Met."

Some other artists who have employed the visual power of maps range from Smithson's "non-sites" (p.55) to the British "walking sculptors" Richard Long and Hamish Fulton, whose quite dissimilar arts consist primarily of documenting long walks through various international landscapes, to those like David Wojnarowicz, who have used maps as lifelines to connect body and travel; the routes on his collaged maps suggest bloodstream and nervous system. Douglas Huebler's early conceptual works (some titled *Location Piece*, others *Duration Piece*) transferred the sculptor's obsession with space and scale onto maps, freeing him from the physical object and permitting works that followed the forty-second parallel cross country through the U.S. mail, mapped the country state by state from an airplane, and were exhibited simultaneously in several places.

In 1972, Roger Welch made his "generation pieces" exploring the gestural vocabulary, subconscious associations, and conscious memories of his own family, often using old photographs to trigger dissimilar memories from those pictured there; in *Front Porch* (1972), he and his father and brother wrote captions to a photo taken of the three when the artist was an

Salter's is often thought to be so named because fish were salted on it, but it was owned in the 1600s by Thomas Salter, a grandson of John Parker. Now it belongs to the Blisses of Kennebec Point and is a favorite traditional picnic spot. Seguin is the highest and second oldest of Maine's 62 lighthouses. The wooden structure, first (miserably) occupied by one Count Polereczky de Polereca from 1796 to 1802, was replaced by stone in 1820 and by today's 40-foot granite tower in 1857. Seguin has its stories—of pirate's treasure and a piano-playing ghost, another ghost who plays with a bouncing ball, and another who cries on the rocks for her drowned children. It is the foggiest lighthouse in the country, and its doleful double honk, not quite syncopated with Pond's one



ROGER WELCH, *The Laura Connor–Marshville, North Carolina Memory Map*, 1973. Work in progress: interview at John Gibson Gallery, New York. (Resulting diptych of ink, photographs, phototext, and wood blocks collaged on plywood, 48" x 170" x 4").Welch wanted to break with the traditional artist/model relationship and turn the gallery into a studio. He sought out the oldest people he could find, from various backgrounds, who had lived as children in small towns here and in Europe, and invited them to the gallery to describe their homeplaces before an audience, while he created a simple relief map. The four all-day "performances" were recorded and taped for inclusion in the final works. Welch recalls that "it absorbed some seasoned gallery visitors more than they had expected," and many returned week after week. In 81-year-old Laura Connor's interview about Marshville in "the horse and buggy days," she chides Welch when he asks her if something was on the "other side of the street": "You will say streets! We didn't have any streets...just dirt roads."

infant. While videotaping his father's recollections of his childhood home in New Jersey, Welch realized the artistic potential of the memory map. His 1973 New York exhibition consisted of a series of "performed" interviews with elderly New Yorkers which resulted in memory maps of their hometowns. He wanted to make work about "the importance of place not as a grand earthwork carved in the desert but as a personal, spiritual, mental form we each carry inside us, a sculpture carved by memory and exposed by simple conversation." Welch differs from most Conceptual artists in his sincere interest in people and egalitarian collaboration with them, which is more often characteristic of feminist artists; and he differs from sociologists and documentary photographers in the inventive and often visually striking presentation of his data, arrived at, he says, by "chipping away at the real place and leaving exposed that memory place." In 1974, In Milwaukee, he interviewed Kitty Ewens, who was 100 years old, and the completed artwork inspired a six-generation family reunion. He has also worked with the future. In 1990–91 he asked children to draw over old photographs and describe the future of their town (Austin, Texas) as well as to project their personal futures. The next step would be to make the process and the results more accessible to a community that might emulate them, not as art but as a means of knowing themselves.

Artists are harking back to the premodern, subjective map that "concentrated on geographical meanings" and offered "as full an impression as possible of the lived texture of the local landscape." In the process, artist and viewers become acutely aware of migrations and colonization. Houston Conwill's ongoing series of public works are based on maps that overlay American physical geography with the events and inherited meanings of African American history. They document a complex spiritual pilgrimage through spatialized time. In contrast to Conwill's macrocosmic journeys, Aminah Robinson concocts from brilliantly colored fabrics layered microcosmic maps of her local neighborhood in Columbus, Ohio.

Even as artists and art writers have begun to read geographers, and geographers have begun to acknowledge the fact that theirs is a visual science, the theories may meet, but the ways of seeing remain distinct: "the geographer's work entails map interpretation as well as direct observation, and he makes no distinction between foreground and background," wrote Marwyn

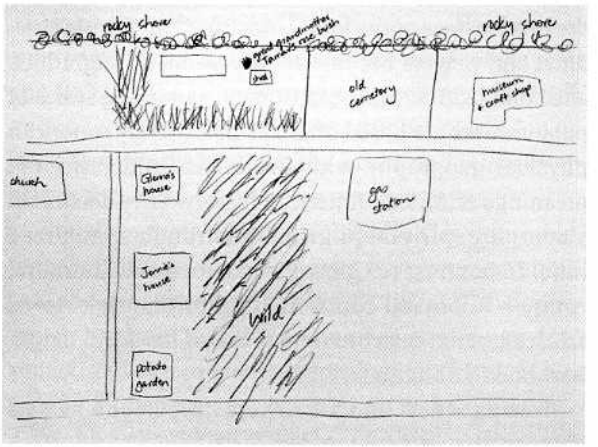
higher note, was the mesmerizing background music of my childhood, sorely missed since automation made both boringly regular. In 1995 the present owners—Georgetown's Friends of Seguin—celebrated its 200th anniversary with much fanfare.

On a map the islands' forms are static, but from a boat they change shape and apparent size depending on the angle, and in a fog they loom with ominous unfamiliarity. We once rowed to all of them for excursions; now motor boats make everything easier, although sailing in a small boat without a motor at the mouth of the Kennebec, with its colossal tides and currents, can still be an adventure.

Mikesell. Despite the centrality of maps, says Cosgrove, the field of geography has persistently ignored the graphic image. In the early seventies there was a call for the development of an "image geography," which would include ambience, meaning, and the likes and dislikes of people living in a place.

Since the late seventies, Canadian artist Marlene Creates has been making works that deal with human perception and occupation of places. Working in remote areas, she likes to overlay "a fragile moment on an enormous natural and historical past." Creates became interested in cognitive mapping when she noticed the differences between directions on the tundra given by Euro-Canadians and Inuits: the former focused descriptively on landmarks whereas the latter depended more experientially on contour. *The Distance Between Two Places Is Measured in Memories* (begun in 1988) initiated a series of works combining hand-drawn memory maps of places in Labrador and her native Newfoundland where elderly people had lived long ago, with their portraits, photographs of the places now, and a small pile of stones, sand, sticks gathered there, suggested by the narrative. Thus document, personal recollection, and sensuous evidence form a multilayered portrait of the place recalled. Included, however implicitly, is the artist's journey and experience there, and the prevailing image of Labrador, in particular, as an empty, unexperienced place, and finally, its desecration by the military.

The beauty of maps, and the reason they aesthetically approach, even surpass, many intentional works of art is their unintentional subjectivity. This is why they have been so important to the cultural construction of landscape. A map is a composite of places, and like a place, it hides as much as it reveals. It is also a composite of times, blandly laying out on a single surface the results of billions of years of activity by nature and humanity.



MARLENE CREATES, detail of *where my grandmother was born*, from the series *Places of Presence: Newfoundland kin and ancestral land, Newfoundland 1989-91*. (Installation of this section is 20' long, consisting of fourteen photographs on a wooden shelf under six memory map drawings and seven text panels; also "natural souvenirs": a framed group of aspen leaves and a single large beach stone.) The "Places of Presence" series, which reveals patterns of rural land use from generation to generation, centered on "three precise bits of 'landscape'" where Creates's grandmother, grandfather, and great grandmother were born. In the hand-drawn memory maps and spoken texts, her Newfoundland relatives recall their lives and the land on which they were born. Some have remained there, others have moved. She sees this work, which she executed "with my heart pounding in my chest," as "a net that was set at one point in the flow of people, events, and natural changes that make up the history of these three places."