

The land has always been important to me, from the literal soil parts from which my meals have come, to the paths I've walked on that have inspired many a discussion or thought. This self-portrait depicts the effect of the places I've spent time in and experienced on my person. In the most literal sense, I am made of these spaces I've wandered through, happened upon, lived in, or visited often. The maps I used for the portrait are sourced from places I have been. The use of the wood nods to the property I've grown up on, which was once timberland. The tracing of the wood grain is a remark on the ways the tree this came from grew; a thought about the myriad ways it could have grown instead. These are things I wonder about myself, the other paths I could have taken, and if I would be a different person, would have grown in different ways, had spent my time in other places.

I explored how we interact with our environments and the spaces in which we find ourselves. I referenced at many maps, from collections of found hand-drawn, to outdated atlases, to artistic representations of emotional maps and fictional lands. I researched the physical manifestation of inhabiting spaces, such as the sunken lanes, or holloways, of Europe, formed by continuous use over centuries. I also considered the emotional side of inhabiting spaces by revisiting many memories of my childhood spent exploring the extensive woods behind my house, pestering my parents with questions of the history of the land I've grown up on, and the traveling I've been fortunate to do.

My worldview is shaped by the place I grew up, and focused by all the other places in which I have spent my time.

Glyn W.

Beginning my research, all I knew was that I like humans. We navigate our environments in incredibly unique ways. We leave marks on places, but places also leave marks on us - they leave us with memories or lessons or a better idea of where we are headed next. I know that the places I have been play a huge part in how I see and approach the world and my life in general. It is easiest for me to speak, write, or make art about something that I can find a connection to, and this is why I approached my paper the way I did. It is written as a series of personal narratives, looking back on memories I have of certain places, and the thoughts they have inspired. An analytical approach to something so broad, so open, as *the interactions between people and places* didn't feel right to me. So these short pieces are meant to be an exploration of ideas, of experiences, and ultimately of myself. I approach this paper as an exploration of physical and emotional landscapes.

1. in which I rejected maps and ultimately became one

I live on three hundred and fifty acres (give or take) of what used to be timberland¹. I grew up learning how to identify edible plants² and poison oak, how to band lambs' tails, how to guide a stubborn llama that's never been trained, how to inspect the feathery butts of chicks and hold them to my heart when they are scared and quivering and silent. When I was five or six, I was warned of the dangers of finding oneself in between a bear and her cubs, was made to practice the pose that takes up the most space to defend against a cougar³, and was asked to never, ever, go into the woods alone. These were the years of being best friends with my middle sister – we donned matching outfits, mine often made of hand-me-downs, and crawled under and climbed over fences, bushwhacked through ferns and brambles, and it was then that I knew the woods and my place in them so well that I did not need to ask myself who I was. The woods and my adventures in them defined me, shaped me. The woods were a free place. No map was necessary to explore them, only confidence and curiosity and, of course, my sister. And more

¹ While there are sections of the woods that have been left alone, growing more wildly with ferns and brambles and skunk cabbage, mixtures of vine maples and your usual Oregonian assortment of evergreens, back behind the eleven acres is the youngest. Standing at the right angle, the trunks line up in a way that even small Glyn knew couldn't be natural. I am reminded by the Oregon Public Broadcasting's helpful historical timelines that Oregon (along with the rest of the Northwest) was recognized in the 1780s by a man named Captain John Meares for having timber especially good for making masts and spars for ships. The trains that only occasionally pass through town and the log trucks that drive too quickly past my house are all carrying felled trees to mills out of the state to be sold. The man who owned the house before us was a part of that business. He planted rows upon rows of the same types of trees. It's a strange part of the woods. It makes me think about how much humans manipulate nature for their own gain, and how long the marks left by that manipulation stay visible.

² Our neighbors, Aline and Steve, who have had white hair for as long as I can remember, and are always playing music, are powerhouses of knowledge on foraging, gardening, and treating the earth with respect and kindness and a sense of awe I have yet to find in anyone else. I can only hope it exists in me. One day when I was three or four, Aline was babysitting me and decided it would be a good day to teach me about edible plants. Promised snacks, I followed her into the woods. I learned to identify lemon balm, a leaf with scalloped edges that smells like a softened version of a lemon. I remember yerba buena, but not what it looks like nor what it tastes like. Licorice fern is bitter and terrible according to most people, but I enjoyed it then and still do now and sorrel is sour and honeysuckle is brilliantly sweet. With this lesson of what the earth can give me, Aline made sure I also learned the importance of finding some way to give back. She's given me packets of flower seeds every birthday since.

³ Cougars, like plenty of animals aren't the child-devouring monsters they're made out to be. Generally, they're just as afraid of you as you are of them. The biggest piece of advice is to make yourself appear as large as possible. The evening of the cougar lesson, my sisters and I stood around the table outside, half-eaten plates sitting full of summer vegetables, the sun still far from the horizon, and placed our feet apart, stretch our arms as wide and high as they would go, and roared at each other. If you actually find yourself facing a cougar, skip the roaring and slowly back away.

than anything, there weren't many opportunities to get lost in them. We would hit signs or a logging road or a neighbor with a rifle before we were far enough off the property to not be able to find our way back home. For most of my childhood, maps were not familiar things. They were brought out only for new places, for forgotten sections of oft-visited cities, for adventures to street markets or museums in different countries. Maps were something that we used on the road trip down the coast into California that one summer, something my dad asked me to pull out of the pocket in the car when we got turned around in Portland visiting friends. Maps were the warped Mercator projections on the walls of my classrooms⁴, the old globe in the back room, something drawn on a napkin by a friend in Bangkok. Maps were everywhere, and yet I felt as though I hardly ever used them. I was content to wander, and as the youngest in a family of five, I never had to lead the way. I found my own adventures everywhere we went, even when I was following someone who was headed to a specific point on a map. You could say that I rejected maps, that I rejected the idea that our environments could be so easily drawn out in lines and landmarks when our experiences of those places are rooted in our emotions. Maps represented the simple, overhead, physical view of a place. But each person that goes to that place will overlay an invisible, personal experience of their interactions with people and things, their emotional state in that place, the memories they will form while there.

I redefined what "map" meant to me. I always thought a map meant some final destination, some unchangeable and unquestionable way to get somewhere. I never thought a map could be anything other than a piece of paper meant to simplify the world surrounding, something I found restrictive, and definitely something I didn't need. But at this point in my life, I am a map in progress. Not the dictionary definition, not exact or fixed or approved⁵. I am a map of the earth and of all the places my feet have touched soil⁶. I am a map of my failures and my frustrations and I am a map of the people who have helped guide me and left a small piece of themselves in the way I approach the world. I am a map of the blackberry thorns that I have caught in my hands and the gravel that was once in my right knee and the permanent bruise that my exit from my mother's body left on my thigh⁷. And so are you, and so are we all. A map does

⁴ The U.S. Geological Survey website says, "Every flat map misrepresents the surface of the Earth in some way. No map can rival the globe in truly representing the surface of the entire Earth. However, a map or parts of a map can show one or more – but never all – of the following: True directions. True distances. True areas. True shapes." We can't show the planet we live on accurately. Part of the issue is that the cartographers that make these maps are trying to put a sphere on a flat surface. I think there's beauty in the fact that humans can't completely depict their home, the Earth, in purely mathematical and scientific forms such as maps.

⁵ The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word "map" primarily as "a diagrammatic representation of an area of land showing physical features, cities, roads, etc."

⁶ In *Crossing Open Ground*, Barry Lopez says, "I think of two landscapes – one outside the self, the other within... The second landscape I think of is an interior one, a kind of projection within a person of a part of the exterior landscape... the speculations, intuitions, and formal ideas we refer to as 'mind' are a set of relationships in the interior landscape with purpose and order; some of these are obvious, many impenetrably subtle... The interior landscape responds to the character and subtlety of an exterior landscape; the shape of the individual mind is affected by land as it is by genes." How I see and experience the world, who I am, is informed by the places I have been.

⁷ Throughout history, maps have been so many things. They have been for explorers, for adventurers, for those who believed the stars held secrets, for art, for those who believed a map

not have to lead somewhere specific, or illustrate the points between which you are traveling. Do we not learn more from the time and space in between than from the simple action of arriving in a place?⁸

2. in which time is a complete lie

Jumping into the water there is always the same: bracing cold, another, tighter ribcage over the usual one, my stomach contracting as though it can escape the shock by lodging itself several centimeters higher. Under the surface, it's dark, the kind of dark it is when a child wakes from a nightmare to the blanketing silence of a sleeping house. I come up gasping, and the horseflies are buzzing and the creek is more than a creek even in the middle of this dry summer, and everyone is laughing or talking or breaking the water around them or pulling themselves out on the smoothest piece of rock they can find, and I am gasping at the light and the sound and the air. This is Sweet Creek, glacier melt carving into the bedrock and creating everything from whispering trickles of water to small waterfalls emptying forcefully into pools clear and so deep they appear black.

Every time I come here it's special. I've been here almost every summer since I was little, sometimes for birthdays and sometimes for no reason at all other than the summer sun is unrelenting and it's beautiful here in the middle of nowhere. I exist immediately here, at the mercy of my memory, because I know that each time I remember this moment, the color of my swimsuit will look a little different, the laughing of my mother will get fuzzier, the cold will be less and less tangible, and the scrape on my knee invisible⁹. In the way that you cannot remember exactly what pain feels like until you are experiencing it, my skin has forgotten the cold and the smooth rocks and will never experience these feelings exactly as they were ever again. Each time I come back to Sweet Creek I will remember each time before, these memories becoming less immediate over the years, less exact. (footnote for memories changing each time you recall them)

was the best form to describe themselves. In the preface to *From Here to There: A Curious Collection from the Hand Drawn Map Association*, Kris Harzinski writes, "In a larger sense, these maps document people interacting with their environment." I used to think maps were meant to strictly direct specifically how one is supposed to interact with their environment. I didn't think that perhaps they were a base layer over which I could layer my personal experience of a place. I learned that maps offer thousands of ways to interpret the spaces you're in, including the option to ditch the map.

⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson famously said, "Life is a journey, not a destination." If we pay too much attention to the end point, we're going to miss all the side roads we could have taken, close ourselves off to the string of endless possibilities that life is.

⁹ Rita Carter's book *Mapping the Memory* says "Memory begins with perception. Every waking moment (and a lot of the time when we are asleep) the brain is taking in information from outside, via the senses, and from inside itself...The world we experience does not really exist...All there is outside is energy..." So, in a sense, none of my memories are what I remember them as. They are buzzing molecules and atoms and energy, not cold water or grabbing swimsuit material. While I love my mother's laugh, it exists technically as sound waves that are not intrinsically pleasant to the ear. I am glad I experience the world the way I do, even if it is not scientifically "true."

The walk to the pool in this memory is along dry, dusty paths that have just begun to sink into the tough red clay that is Oregon soil, and though thousands of feet have hollowed into this space in search of a hike or a naked afternoon or the *perfect pool*, the ground remains unforgiving and hard¹⁰. I wonder about all the other barefooted kids who have run giggling in front of their sisters or brothers or parents or dogs or alone thinking of nothing but *don't breathe in a bug don't breathe in a bug don't breathe in a bug* (was that a horsefly) *faster faster faster* even though their destination is no more specific than forward. I think of all the people I've run into or around on the trails that nobody seems to know about because there's not nearly enough people enjoying this place on any given day. I think of the people that I have never seen who have stood *right here right where I'm standing* and there's a million and one memories in this space alone and the air is so full and I am so full of wonder I think I might burst. Time has never made all that much sense to me and so here I am standing on this bridge at six and at the same time here I am jumping into the water on my birthday and I'm daring my friends to follow me, and I'm sharing this space so thick with other existences and I can almost grab handfuls of the energy here¹¹. If I'm looking for it, every place I've been holds some similar kind of energy. But it's in the woods where I've grown up, on the riverbank of the Siuslaw near my best friend's house, in the water of this creek, where I can find it the easiest. I think it's because I've been raised by these places, learned so many things in them, felt *so much*, that it's just more simple to exist in them.

3. in which humans are pretty darn interesting

I find myself drawn to the overlapping and dusty and knotted and threadbare human histories of spaces¹². Perhaps it is because I am trying to pick myself apart into these histories, layer them under my skin until I can see all the instances that exist in any given Glyn-sized space across the ever-moving and ever-present idea of time. This curiosity was in part born from the things my mother has found in the garden. Sets of mortars and pestles, the occasional arrowhead

¹⁰ I've heard Oregonian red clay is fantastic for ceramics. I've never tested this, but I can attest to its unique ability to stain jeans that aren't work jeans, but are know that you've kneeled in them here. The clear cuts on the hills past my house expose the clay like it is the skin of the earth here, irritated and harsh in color.

¹¹ Robert MacFarlane writes about holloways (or sunken lanes), common in parts of Europe with softer soil rich in sandstone or chalk, trenches marking "centuries-old thoroughfares worn down by the passage of time." He describes them as "rifts within which time might exist as pure surface, prone to recapitulation and rhyme, weird morphologies, uncanny doublings," as well as saying, "down in the dusk of a Holloway, the landscape's past felt excitingly alive and coexistent, as if history had pleated back on itself, bringing discontinuous moments into contact." I hope the walk in the European holloways MacFarlane mentions someday. However, I think any space navigated by more than one holds the energy MacFarlane describes, though perhaps, the more used, the more tangible this energy.

¹² Wallace Stegner, in *The Sense of Place*, briefly captures how I feel about my human perspective on the world, saying, "The deep ecologists warn us not to be anthropocentric, but I know no way to look at the world, settled or wild, except through my own human eyes. I know that it wasn't created especially for my use, and I share the guilt for what the members of my species, especially the migratory ones, have done to it."

or possible shard of pottery have all been unearthed from the same place I've dug up potatoes and pulled carrots. Like most of the Willamette Valley and the valleys surrounding, the one I grew up in had a surely rich, but mostly unwritten (and completely ignored in the classroom) history of First Nation peoples. While I learned little other than the Oregon Trail in elementary school history¹³ (and of course this barely included the people who first inhabited this land), I knew of the people who had lived off the earth my home was built on more than a century ago. Before starting middle school, I spent many sunny hours in the garden. I'm sure my family would disagree here, as I've also always been one to sit hours with a book, but I remember a fair amount of time spent kneeling, digging, planting, picking, and earning the soil stains on my pants in the garden with my mother. Once in a while, a dirt-covered shape was brought into the house, always by my mother or the few people that have helped in the garden over the years, and I would exclaim at its existence. I was delighted at the possibility of having a garden full of history, even though I never pulled anything out of it other than vegetables.

When I was older I realized that my garden was nothing particularly special in the grand scheme of things. Ötzi the Iceman's¹⁴ distant cousin was never going to be found preserved underneath the squash, and I was never going to time travel to the hill where I was raised as someone else's home. I can imagine it, covered in well-worn paths¹⁵ that can no longer be seen, the geomorphology of the streams more than a few feet different, and the hills behind more oak savannah than timberland. I never stopped thinking about the histories of places. I asked my parents about our farmhouse, about what it looked like before they made the changes they did upon moving in. I imagined my bedroom as the sewing room it once was – and wondered who had been there, who had left their thoughts there, their emotions, their memories. Sometimes I would see a shadow at the end of the hall and imagine it to be some glimpse of those who had inhabited this space, my home, years before. I wonder who will inhabit this space in the future, when we are gone. I wonder if these people will feel the memories of my presence there, if they will think at all about it.

¹³ We studied it enough years in a row that we began to call them Meriwether and William. Really. I wonder what the West looked like then. I wish I could have visited the area with them. I think the land's memory of their presence, those footprints on the land, have been drowned by the flood of people that migrated West then and have continued to since. I still like to imagine seeing some of my favorite places as though I was seeing them, wild and incredible and natural, for the very first time.

¹⁴ Ötzi the Iceman was discovered frozen and mummified in the mountains between Austria and Italy in September of 1991. The way his body was preserved in the cold allowed for extensive research to be done, especially the discovery that his body contained the oldest complete blood cells ever identified.

¹⁵ An article in the Utne Reader from July of 2004 discusses psychogeography, a way of navigating spaces, projects in which have included a tour of New York using a map of Copenhagen. The author, Joseph Hart, says, "If you track your own path through a typical day, you'll soon discover that your journey is habitual, that you're slowly wearing a canyon through the same streets, the same sidewalks, day after day." I think we do this in spaces we frequent with our emotions and thoughts as well. Maybe this emotional and mental experience of a place doesn't leave a physical mark, but it is as much a proof of our presence, tangible only to the person looking to feel it.

4. in which I appreciate the Earth as the incredible home it is

It is important that we recognize that places have a history independent of the marks that we make by building and walking and naming and bulldozing. This planet has existed much longer than we have, and yet I think we often view it as belonging to humans alone. A place does not need a poet to be a place¹⁶. Or perhaps our definition of poet is so narrow that we are missing out. Are the patterns created by the push of a current against a snag not poetry? Does the movement of salmon from their rocky birthplace to the salty expanse of the ocean or the new buds springing green and new and tender or the pressure in the air of impending rain – do these happenings not create enough poetry for you? Saying that a place is not a place without the supposed precious attention of humans is to be ignorant of the earth on which your feet rest. We must live gently, putting aside the idea that we are almighty, for the marks we leave on the world are indeed magnificent, but deer create their own sinking paths through the ferns, sparrows build homes too, and hummingbirds write music with their hearts. All of these experiences and histories, human and otherwise, should exist entwined and layered and ultimately as one. We should appreciate spaces as they exist scientifically and in our memories, as buzzing atoms or as flowering fields, and as they have existed for others in the past and will exist for those in the future, birds and cows and pollinators and humans alike.

I don't begin a piece thinking about where it will end, or with a point in mind that I want to make. I approached this as an exploration and as an adventure, and I leave you hoping that you will do the same in the places you find yourself. All of these ideas, which I have picked apart through my memories of spaces, from my thoughts about time to the mental and emotional landscapes we project over the physical, are complex. I do not believe any one of them has some sort of answer, some piece of wisdom I can give you. I have learned mostly about myself through this, about how I am made of all the places my feet have touched soil, about how I have and always will see the world with such wonder. I would like to conclude this asking you to think about the places that have made you, what pieces of your personality they are responsible for. Live a life of memories that stick with you, of places that are never the same each time you visit, of adventures that question everything you believe in. Notice where you are, let these spaces exist while you look both outward and inward, and let them leave their mark on you as you have left your mark on them.

¹⁶ Stegner writes, "So, I must believe that, at least to human perception, a place is not a place until people have been born in it, have grown up in it, lived in it, known it, died in it – have both experienced and shaped it, as individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities, over more than one generation...no place is a place until it has had a poet." While Stegner is writing about the beauty of being human and experiencing a place, his recognition of a place relies on a long human history to exist there. It seems to me that his definition is framed by humanity, whereas I think we must look past that to all that exists other than humans, to pay attention especially to the places that humans have barely touched, and appreciate poetry other than that which humans have written. I do often write about the feeling of human experience and how incredible that is, but I believe I would be ignoring an important part of the world if I did not speak to experiences other than the human one.

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