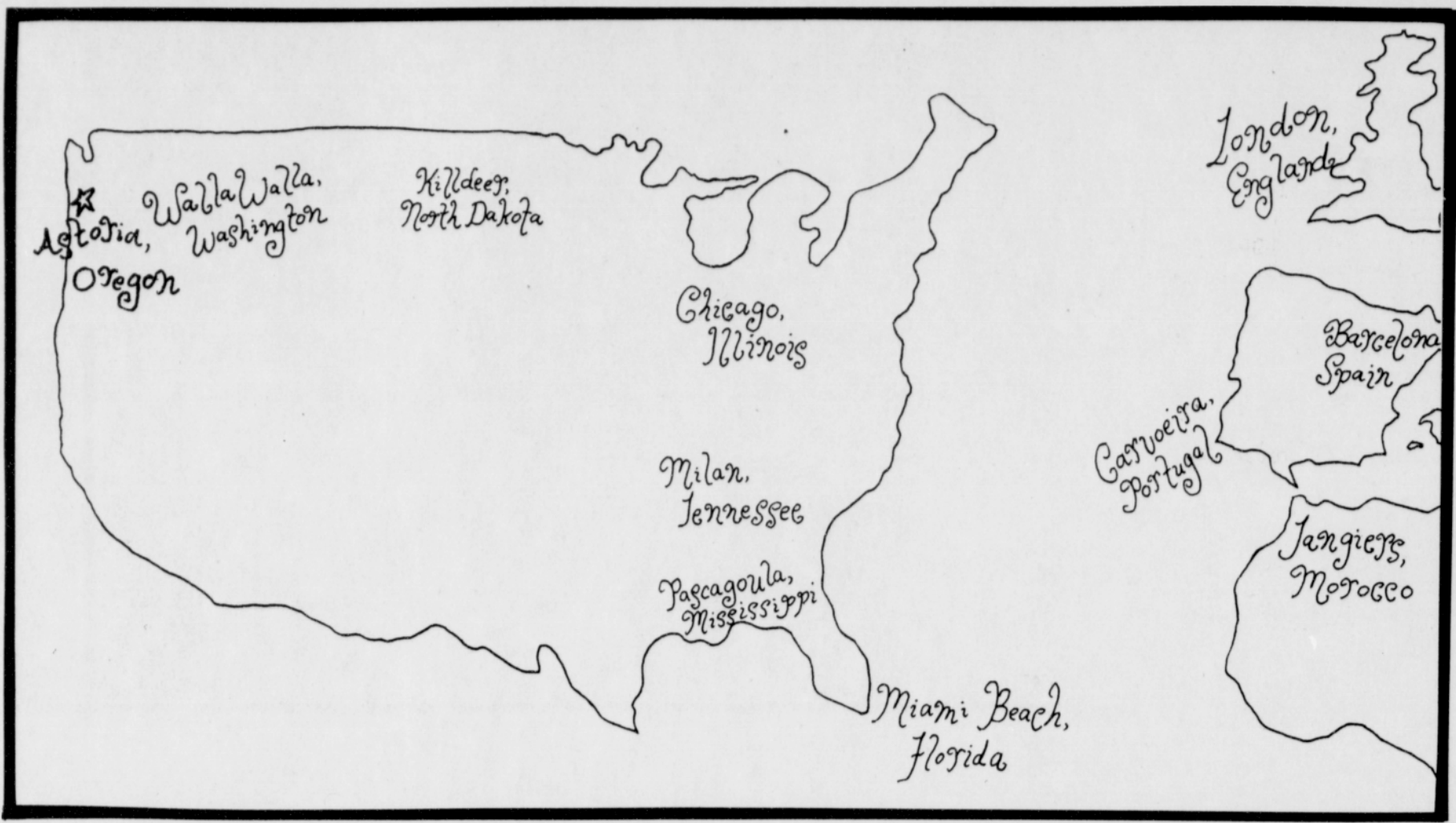




MAP BY TERESA BARNES (ITEMS SHOWN NOT DRAWN TO ANY SORT OF REASONABLE SCALE)

road poems by teresa barnes

i moved to astoria four years ago, and even though i consider it my "heart home," as my friend miranda would say, for most of the time lived here i secretly harbored a fantasy of walking out of town. i dreamed of leaving my possessions and responsibilities, asking for nothing and taking only what was offered. so on june 10th, 2005, after much talk and fanfare, i hit the road. although i began my journey on foot i also traveled by car, bus, plane, canoe, motorcycle, and the handlebars of a red bicycle. i made it to the south on july 18th and after spending time with my family there i traveled to spain. i stayed in spain for two and half months and returned to astoria on november 23. i met many amazing and generous people along the way, and collected the kind of lessons and stories you can only learn the hard way. here are a few of them.

my journey

my journey has taught me the pleasure
of soft things she said
like the white stone in the sea
i stood out on to look even further from home
(like the back of your neck she thought
as she touched it in her mind).
i stared at a moonless sky
she told him, so far away, and thought of you.
he smiled at her and understood nothing.
she touched him with her roughened hands and
tried to remember the boy she left behind,
but she saw then how the green of his eyes
had changed and knew that they would
never look again as they once had.
there was only one star, she said
and the harder i looked at it
the further away it became.
she remembered (but did not say)
how she had seen less and less of it
until it disappeared entirely;
how in the end there was only an immense blackness
as the light that died
so long ago
finally faded from her sight.

cala ratjada, mallorca (11/5/05)

it's kinda like

that tugging feeling that you can't quite
put your finger on girl
you know this one
it's like
everybody's movin' on without you.

well i guess you ran so hard
you knocked that pedestal
right out from underneath your feet —
the boys back home are still singing and
it's something like
doin' fine.

even the dog's found someone new i hear
and that's nice, i don't mind,
it's almost like
life's painted over my old walls
there's warm tea here as well, you know
and in the end
who can really say
if it's better with the milk in first?

cala ratjada, mallorca (10/20/05)

road lesson #41

well you learn pretty quick
what it means to love the folks you meet unconditionally —
(on the condition, of course,
that you won't put out for a ride).
you learn to take shit, to smile
graciously and say no thanks
when asked if you ever fool around.
when he tells you that he's not going to rape you or
drop you off in the middle of a cornfield,
or a desert,
you learn to be thankful.
you learn to ease up on yourself
about that resolution to quit living in fantasy
and five minutes later you're smiling out the window at those
flowers, at the lawn sculptures of everything
in southwest indiana.
because you owe him nothing now,
not even conversation.
when he tells you that he's sorry he offended you,
you learn to say well yeah you were a jerk
but i forgive you.
and after a while,
perhaps,
you learn to mean it.

somewhere in indiana, idaho, etc. (7/7/05)

ANTI-LOVE POEM

Sometimes you don't want to love the person you love
you turn your face away from that face
whose eyes lips might make you give up anger
forget insult steal sadness of not wanting
to love turn away then turn away at breakfast
in the evening don't lift your eyes from the paper
to see that face in all its seriousness a
sweetness of concentration he holds his book
in his hand the hard-knuckled winter wood-
scarred fingers turn away that's all you can
do old as you are to save yourself from love

~GRACE PALEY



HUNG BY YOUR PLASTIC STRINGS

Come, be a puppet with me. The
puppetmaster is our feelings for
each other. Please come, let's
hurt each other. I'll release
my thoughts then it is your turn to
reject them. Don't worry, we're
puppets, we don't have emotions, we're
hollow. Come, please, be hollow with me.

~ERICA MARTINEZ