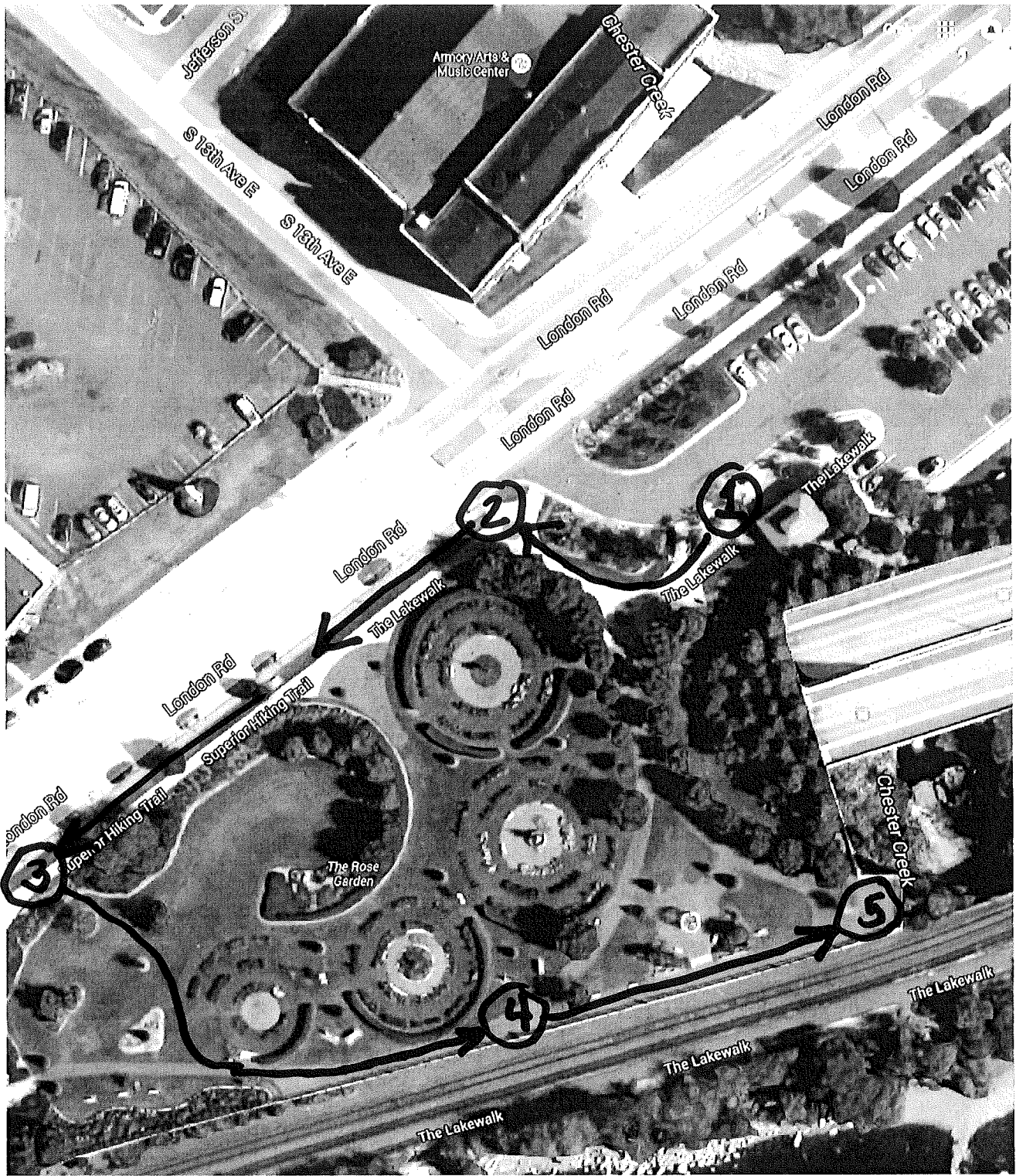


## **Borne Ceaselessly** (Working Title)

I want to write a “critical history” of the myth of American self-recreation set in Leif Erikson Park on the lake shore of Duluth, exploring themes of American identity, change, self mythologizing, and disguised origins. This critical history will combine the styles and purposes of academic literary/historical criticism (such as R. W. B. Lewis’s *The American Adam* or Sacvan Bercovitch’s *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*) with those of biographical/historical music criticism like David Hajdu’s *Positively 4<sup>th</sup> Street* and Greil Marcus’s *The Old, Weird America*.

I was originally drawn to this idea by the location of the old National Guard Armory across the street from the Rose Garden, where Robert Zimmerman (a young Bob Dylan) saw Buddy Holly and other famous musicians perform in 1959. Holly died with others in a plane crash three days later. This concert was one of the formative experiences that inspired Dylan to pursue a musical career in New York’s Greenwich Village coffee houses, where he re-invented and mythologized many pasts and personas for himself. I was struck by the parallels between that aspect of Dylan’s story and the character Jay Gatz from Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, who, in the 1925 novel, gets himself hired onboard a wealthy man’s yacht in Duluth and sets sail to travel the world with a changed name and a new invented identity. Gatsby later becomes rich and mysterious, living in a Mansion outside of New York. Both Dylan’s and Gatz/Gatsby’s stories happen to start here—at the Armory and the Duluth harbor entrance, within sight of each other from the Leif Erikson Park—and both stories end in the East, with fame, riches, and “greatness” for both Dylan and Gatsby which entail an erasure of their pasts in Duluth (and the Upper Midwest) and the ordinary facts of where they were from and who they really were. I could also look into the life of Leif Erikson, whose statue stands in the Rose Garden.

Maybe I could also make something of the fact that the Rose Garden itself is an invented disguise: it is a layer that sits on top of I-35 which runs underground. A couple miles north of Leif Erikson Park, I-35 changes name, like Zimmerman/Dylan and Gatz/Gatsby, to become Highway 61, made famous by Dylan’s album *Highway 61 Revisited*. I-35 is also built on top of Chester Creek, which empties into Lake Superior at the Rose Garden through a culvert. The subterranean creek is like the real Zimmerman and the real Gatz: covered but still flowing, still in there, repressed but undeniable. I want to argue that this myth of self-creation and self mythologizing through disguise, transformation, and denial of the past is a characteristic of the American identity and the American notion of individuality. I want to leave the walker, looking east over the lake as if toward some young American’s future, but aware of the fact that they must turn their backs on where (and who) they are, and with some sense that the past cannot be denied: as Fitzgerald writes at the end of *The Great Gatsby*: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne ceaselessly into the past.”



## Locations

*Format used:*

*[Location #]. [Name of Location]: [Views, Gazes, Objects used in this location] ([notes on topics, memories, quotations, sources, etc.])*

1. Parking lot/Welcome Building: Old Amory Building across the street, Chester Creek? (Dylan, Buddy Holly, 1959 - 1966, identity, Hajdu's *Positively 4th Street*, Marcus's *The Old, Weird America*)
2. Walk toward town, views of bridge, harbor, ships (Jay Gatz reinvents himself as Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*, the yacht, buys clothes in Duluth, the world)
3. Leif Erikson statue? (Age of Discovery vs. be discovered, vs rediscover yourself: clothes, styles, family, background, disguise, self mythologizing)
4. Lake, looking East, the future, (to face the future you turn your back on the past: the Amory, the hill, Hibbing, North Dakota. Both Dylan and Gatsby reinvented themselves starting right here, but turned away, tried to invent other pasts to match their intended futures: Upper Midwest to East, New York, coffee houses of Greenwich Village, wild 1920s parties in the mansion in Two Egg, searching, green light. In disguise, denying the past, the literally true... Layers)
5. Railing down at Chester Creek: (Rose Garden of Leif Erikson Park is a layer, I-35 runs beneath—becomes Highway 61 a couple miles north—and beneath that the buried Chester Creek, runs right under the lobby of the Armory where Robert Zimmerman remembers Buddy Holly “looking right at” him)