The Cartographer's Lament

While other kids were playing hybrid football
I was drawing outlines of South America. I
fell in love with the concept of scale. Chile
was my favorite, its skinny profile made me
pee each time I drew it in place. Later
I added capitols & a legend for elevations.

I once squeezed France into a tight wad
& unraveled it in Italy. It didn't fit
so I sent it back to its proper place. Spain
was jealous so I gave it a longer coastline.
Portugal didn't seem to care one way
or another. I figured it was full of port.

I loved messing around with the Matterhorn,
indicating its existence with a big "+"
which I felt didn't justify its majesty.
I'll go there one day I told myself and see
it with my own eyes, rent a chalet on a small
lake, sit on the porch with some wine & cheese,
take it all in.

I honed my cartographic skills so well
that I expanded my horizons into most
of the other continents. Antarctica was never
a challenge -- nothing there but blue ice &
sorrow.

My father insisted that I play football
to keep me socially grounded. The kids
were shocked that I could kick a football
so high into the air that angels intercepted it
& ran it all the way to the line of scrimmage,
which by the crudest of estimations, lies
somewhere between Bogota & Rio de Janeiro.

John Dorroh

John Dorroh travels as often as possible. He inevitably ends up in other peoples' kitchens exchanging culinary tidbits and telling tall tales. Once he baked bread with Austrian monks and drank a healthy portion of their beer. Six of his poems were nominated for Best of the Net. Others have appeared in over 100 journals, including Feral, North of Oxford, River Heron, Wisconsin Review, Kissing Dynamite, and El Portal. He had two chapbooks published in 2022. He lives in rural Illinois, USA, near St. Louis.

Cobalt Poets Series # 663 ~ June 3, 2025