

Graffiti #10



into the
Future
we go

1998 —————>

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FRONT LINES

Don Root

Happy February! Here in Eugene, that means yet more gray skies and rain. But up in the mountains, it means snow! And as all skiers know, there's no business like snow business.

I worked in snow business for seven years in my 20s. I was a lift op at Alpine Meadows in Tahoe. If I could move back there and do it all over again today, I would. It was possibly the most fun day-to-day life I've ever had, in one of the most beautiful places in the world. And back then you could afford it.

Having grown up in San Diego, I discovered skiing late in life. I was in law school at UC Davis when I first hit the slopes. I remember my first chairlift ride, being in the middle of a

“Are you okay?” one asked. How was I to answer? Physically, yes. But mentally? If only I could have melted right into the snow!

triple chair with housemates Eileen and Jennifer, one on either side, them holding me up as I glided down the top lift ramp toward the first ski run of my life. And I remember that run. Magic, pure magic, even though then my best effort was a rudimentary snowplow.

That experience—not just the skiing itself but being out in the mountains, out in the elements—was amazing enough for me to drop out of law school and head straight to Tahoe for a job as a lift op.

My dad had recently bought a new car and given me his old one—a 1967 Dodge Dart—and I promptly sold it for \$500, which paid first month's rent on a room in a house on the west shore and still left me \$200 to get by on until my first paycheck. Try that now. My dad was not pleased, but I did what I knew I had to do.

My interview at Alpine Meadows went well. My interviewer that day was impressed when he saw I'd done two out of three years of law school. He suggested if I loved skiing so much that I'd drop out of school to do it, I might want to consider actually finishing law school and getting a job in the legal department at Alpine Meadows. Maybe I should have done that. I'd probably have a shnitzy house in Tahoe now if I had. Oh well.

In any case, after spending every workday on the slopes, my skiing soon improved dramatically. Downhill skiing was a lot of fun, particularly in spring when it consisted of a few hours of turns in the morning and a few hours of margaritas on the sun-drenched deck in the afternoon. But at some point along the way, I tried cross-country “Nordic” skiing, and that was where I found my true love.

To be out in the snow-covered wilderness away from all people was like a dream-come-true for me. The intense quiet of the snow-blanketed woods in winter is unlike anything you can experience anywhere else, with the possible exception of the middle of the desert somewhere. Focus your ears right now on the sounds around you. It's loud, isn't it? Full of manmade

noise. Humans are irredeemably noisy creatures, and I've come to believe that most people are actually afraid of silence. I guess they've got to have noise to distract them from thinking about their own insecurities, which segues nicely into my story about a particularly memorable day I once had cross-country skiing at a tracked but little-used Nordic ski resort outside McCall, Idaho.

Skiing away from the resort's lodge in late morning on a quiet spring weekday, I had the trails all to myself. Quickly falling into an efficient rhythm, I soon found myself far from civilization in a silent, snow-covered landscape. It felt like my own personal paradise.

As the day progressed, the sun began to beat down ever so therapeutically. I stopped, doffed all my cold-weather layers, and traded them for just the pair of skimpy running shorts I had in my daypack. Now shirtless and nearly pantsless, my skin reveled in the sensual mix of warm sunshine and brisk, snow-chilled air.

I stopped for lunch—still having seen no one—and then decided to return to the lodge while pushing myself hard on the way back. How fast, graceful, strong, and Zen-like could I be, kicking, gliding, and skating my way back to civilization?

I took off like a shot, with clean powerful strides. The snow submitted willingly to my skis, which thrust me along like a Greek god returning to Olympus. Faster and faster I went; stronger and stronger I felt. My spirits rose, and I marveled at the mighty animal grace of my own human body. What joy, to know the full capability of my own mortal vessel!

I was nearly back to the lodge, sprinting over the snow now, when I rounded a blind curve and suddenly came face to face with two gorgeous young women skiing slowly toward me on parallel tracks, a mere twenty feet away.

Clad, as I was, in nothing but a few ounces of skimpy fabric, I instantly felt like a streaker. My face flushed, and maybe other parts, too; I probably looked liked a skiing beet. Nevertheless I tried my best to act cool and nonchalant.

Without breaking stride, I lifted a ski pole to wave a greeting—surely they must think I'm an Olympian! And then. Oh, then.

When I lowered that pole, I somehow managed to place it right in front of my right ski tip. In a flash I found myself flying through the air like a wannabe Wallenda and performing an epic face-plant right beside the two astonished goddesses.

I will forever be in awe of the composure those ladies showed at that moment. Holding back (no doubt with extreme effort) a resounding chorus of giggles, they glided up and stood over me.

“Are you okay?” one asked.

How was I to answer? Physically, yes. But mentally? If only I could have melted right into the snow!

Despite that ego-obliterating experience, I still love Nordic skiing and can't wait to get out there again soon. I'll be the guy bundled up in 27 layers, carefully inching along by you. See you out there! ☺ ☺ ☺

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AND TO OUR DONORS (AKA “ANGELS”) THIS ISSUE:

Martin Ley, Leo Rivers & Stephen Swiftfox

You guys keep us rolling over! Dog bless you!

Graffiti

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Find past issues and additional submissions online at: graffiti-magazine.com

ON THE COVER: “Existential Crisis,” by James Otter

FAQ

HOW DO I SUBMIT WORK?

- **Email to:** graffitieugene@gmail.com
- **Snail-mail or hand-deliver to:**
Graffiti, 1292 High St. #129, Eugene OR 97401

FYI: At that street address you'll find PakMail, not Graffiti's swanky corporate offices, the location of which remains a mystery, even to us.

NOTE: Your work isn't judged. This isn't a contest, and it isn't competitive. We don't “consider” works; we publish everything we receive (libel and copyright considerations excepted). It's simple: You write it (or draw it) and send it in. We either print it in the zine or post it on our website.

DOES GRAFFITI ACCEPT PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED WORK?

Only if it was self-published, and really, we'd rather not. The purpose of Graffiti is to encourage new creations, not replay old ones.

DO I GET PAID?

No. And neither do we.

DOES I GOTTA RIGHT GOOD?

No, but if you have something to say, you want people to understand it, right? Dictionaries are cheap—even free online! If you use one, you'll always have perfect spelling. It's that easy. Grammar's a little harder, but the more you write, the better you'll get. As a rule, we don't edit. What you give us goes as-is.

WHAT LENGTH WORKS ARE ACCEPTABLE?

For printing in the zine, anything under 800 words makes us happy. Submissions longer than 1,000 words will probably be posted on the website instead: graffiti-magazine.com.

DOES GRAFFITI ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS FROM OUTSIDE LANE COUNTY?

Yes.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE BUBBLY?

Veuve Clicquot, but that's a huge splurge for Graffiti. Feel free to drop off a bottle for us at PakMail. Hey, it's our anniversary!



Art by Jean Murphy

FAIRY

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villagery,
Skim milk, and sometimes labor in the quern
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that "Hobgoblin" call you, and "sweet Puck,"
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
Are you not he?

ROBIN (PUCK)

Thou speak'st aright.
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal.
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale,
The wisest aunt telling the saddest tale
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me.
Then I slip from her bum, down topples she,
And "Tailor!" cries, and falls into a cough,
And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh,
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there,
But, room, fairy! Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

OBERON

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA

What, jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence. I have forsworn his bed and company.

OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton. Am I not thy lord?

TITANIA

Then I must be thy lady. But I know
When thou hast stolen away from Fairyland,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest steep of India?
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskined mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

Graffiti program notes: In this production, Oberon is played by Jeff Bezos. Phillida is played by Lauren Sánchez. Money plays Hippolyta, Oberon's "bouncing Amazon, buskined mistress, and warrior love." Theseus is played by the FTC. Titania is played by MacKenzie Scott. Fairy is played by Joe Q. Public. The role of Robin was unsuccessfully sought by this zine's publisher. It was first offered to Hunter S. Thompson (who was unavailable, due to being dead) and then offered to Andy Borowitz, who would like to thank his acting coach, Bernie Sanders.

—Bill Shakespeare

Noah and the Big Spill

Stephen Slater

The Lord said unto Noah: The End of all Flesh is pretty much a done deal, for the earth is full of sodomite crud and yuppie scum and I just want to chuck the whole stinkin' shebang. When Noah heard this he knew it was time to chase a few down the old gullet. He was already reaching for the wineskin when the Lord said: Put that rotgut away, I want you to build me an ark. But Noah didn't know diddysquat about building an ark, so the Lord said: it's more or less like a giant houseboat, only with a lot more storage space and none of those cutesy knickknacks with nautical motifs. And Noah said, Okeydoke, and started buying lumber, lots of lumber, so much lumber that his neighbors began talking among themselves about property values and zoning laws. Yet nothing could keep Noah from the Great Work. It wasn't long until he had cobbled together a vessel that would have made even Herman Melville quit his day job. Then, for forty days and forty nights, it rained poodles and schnauzers like all get out. And all those pairs of animals the Lord told Noah to bring into the ark? The stench was unspeakable – high heaven wasn't high enough, and even the Lord had to hold a perfumed handkerchief over his schnozzle. After a brief bout of vomiting, he said unto Noah: Be fruitful and fornicate, and gentrify the earth, 'cause next time round it sure as hell won't be water.

tua res agitur

Stephen Slater

A bright spring morning downtown: heat radiates from the surfaces of the busy city. Just outside one of the taller buildings a crowd has gathered, gazing at something on the sidewalk. A young woman in her late teens approaches the throng of spectators, who continue staring in silence. "What is it, what happened?" she asks. At first no one answers. Finally, as the ambulance crew makes its way to the shattered body on the sidewalk, a man with a cane turns toward her and says, "You won't always be young." In a nearby street a garbage truck is making its rounds, the machinery whining as another load is dumped into the back. Flies gather at the pool of liquid that remains.

A Novelette

Jordan Howell Rose

Her eyes are fixed on the mechanism of his smile. Dissecting it each and every time the pulleys work to pull the corners of his mouth open like a heavy set of theater drapes. Ultimately revealing the main event of the night.

While his smile is bright it would be overzealous to say his teeth were adding to any of that impression. Her father was a smoker. And while 10 years of staving off the craving demonstrates great discipline, Brownie points won't do much to ease a pack-a-day habit.

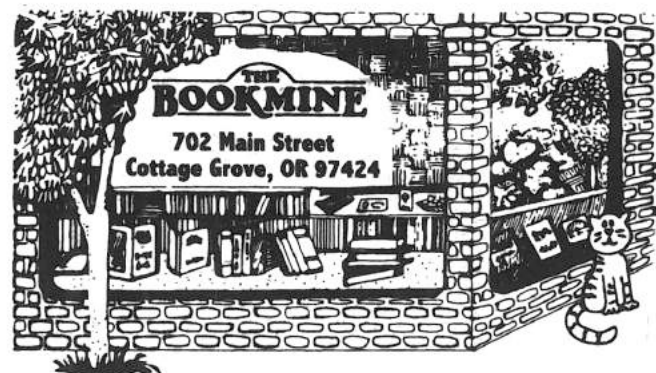
Perhaps her love for her father clouds her ability to see clearly, but she has always thought of his face as the notably neighborly kind of face. The kind that you would have a better inclination to trust if you were down on your luck and badly needing the kindness of strangers to be your ticket back home.

All this said, on the rare occasion that she had a friend over often they would nervously exchange niceties and take every opportunity to exit stage left (as they say on Broadway).

Her father is not a callous man. But written in the fine print of his face is a very sad story and evidence of seeing things (outside of Sunday cartoons) at far too young an age.

The lines of his face are one of the first things you see,
Preserved by salt water left over from many years at sea.
His battle scars evidence of decades spent trying to keep his head above water;
To provide for his family. To keep everyone alive. To unsee what was seen.
And to live as if these weren't his prerogatives.

Soon enough time resumes,
And the pulleys rotate to close out the show.
His face softens and the scene around them takes precedence,
Everything is normal, as it should be.



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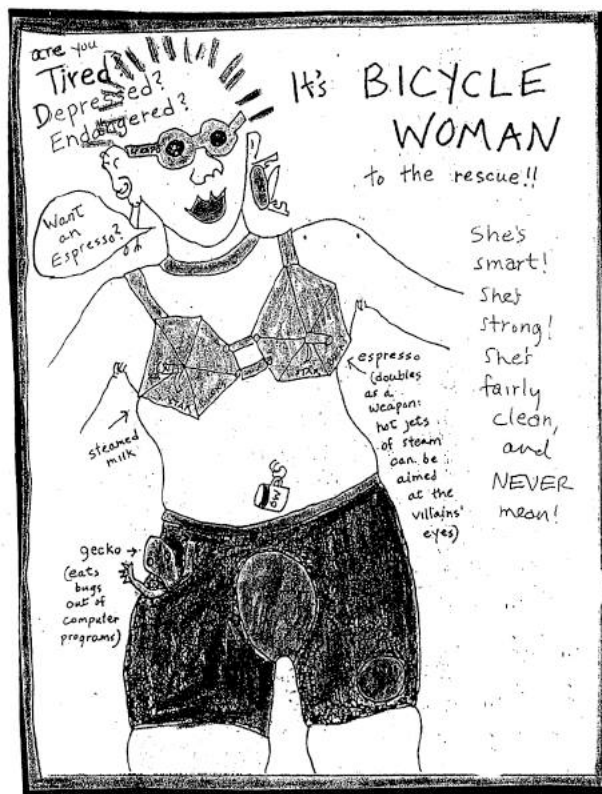
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NEW ON THE WEBSITE! (www.graffiti-magazine.com):

- artist Jerry Ross, on vision limitations and the bardo
- Wes Hansen, on fallacies in orthodox quantum theory
- Al Fry, on the Lost Vibratory Secrets
- more poetry by James Otter



Bicycle Woman

by Jean Murphy



↑ the gecko's first bite - but not the last

Just the Facts

Two
fat black crows
glance sidelong
at the dog
not intimidated
not intimidating
just stating
Here we are



Poem by **Dan Liberthson**
Art by **Cassandra Mettling-Davis**

The Walk

He might as well be vegetable,
a limp bunch of celery,
rain-soaked road kill,
a dog-skin rug

for all the life he shows
sleeping the day through
until longer shadows trigger
some hormonal havoc.

Then up he jumps,
to speed around the room
and climb me like a tree
with taunting squirrel atop.

Now this dog, who lay
heavy as a hog in mud,
is lighter than a springbok,
energized to run the world,

bring to justice any
trespassed bird or cat,
savage any other dog
so foolish as to glance at me.



Suddenly my dog has eyes so dark,
so fevered when they fix on mine
and search the tissue of my brain,
I too begin to flare and pulse
and cannot find a single thought
within my fevered mind,
just the bite of surging blood,
the joy of hunting side by side.

Poem by **Dan Liberthson**
Art by **Cassandra Mettling-Davis**

Vibrant Echoes

In bloom
In alignment
Obviously miscalculated few things
- like love and lust and longing

Blessing this mess
Blessing this soul

Cosmic magic happens
Universe fills my cup!

New Moon
New Moon
Please fill my cup!

Fergul Cirpan

Eugene is all about...

Tarot decks and oracle cards
Crystals and clear skies

Playful and joyful
Nature's naughty ways
Hippie, yuppie
Sad and rainy

Drum circles and loveliness
Somewhat loneliness

This place is full of trees
Letting go of their leaves

Trees don't talk
They rarely smile and nod

This place has some good lovers
Some good good loving

Hippie Christmases and things.

Fergul Cirpan

Alive Ecstatic

Tingling with new life

Endless forms
Slowly surrendering bruised petals

Always being reborn
Spreading wings
Preparing for another flight

Another chance to rise
Remembrances, releases, raptures...

I'm excited to see who I become, again.

Fergul Cirpan

Full Moon in February

Thomas Avery

Silver orb of moon shines through black silhouette of treetops
rising over rooftops and street lights glowing its luminous
white light of night.

The full round disc of moon decreases in diametrical size
from what can be seen by the naked eye
as it rises higher midway in the night sky.

With gravitational tug and pull through the long bright night
the dormant plants slowly work their way up out of the ground
pushing closer to the surface.

There are some of us humans who cannot sleep from all this
moon madness.

We become intoxicated and wired on moon potion.

It is out there lighting up the darkness of night
casting shadows through the trees, reflecting on the rivers,
lakes and ponds beaming down out of the midnight heavens.

The full round ball of iridescent light floats through
the stratosphere casting its cold blue glow over desert, mountains
and ocean.

It recedes behind the rainclouds above the valley of grasslands and forests
buried in gray mist and fog.

And farther out in space it fades dropping out of sight as the sun rises
burning its orange pink flame in its place.

With it comes a shift from early clear cold crisp sunlit days to
dark wet skies and light rain, reminding us that Spring is not far away
but Winter is not yet over.

A Hundred Times, A Thousand Times

Haley Leonne

A hundred times I asked him not to, and a thousand times he did.

When your voice echoes in the mind of an addict, it seems to be a suggestion,
not a command.

It is a song stuck on repeat, like an annoying tune from the radio that plays in
a loop and haunts every thought and decision. It is an echo of an option, the
echo of a life that could exist.

But when the future comes, it is too late. It is too late to put the bottle away. It
is too late to say you are sorry. And it is too late to take the other path.

Because when you are an addict, there may only be two paths in the fork of
life. And if the wrong path is taken, that is the period at the end of the
sentence. There is no epilogue, there is only the end.

And the end is just that.

The end.

But for the ones who suffered with, a new path juts forward. A new path of
grief, pain, but also acceptance. A path of humility. A path that is haunted, but
a new path nonetheless.

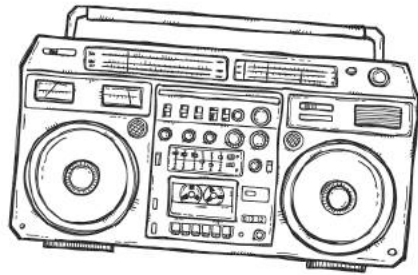
A path forward.

... Psst! Hey you!

Yes, you! Graffiti depends on you to send us your creative
work! Fiction, nonfiction, poetry, line art, photography—
whatever you create. Don't be shy! Do it today! More
than once if you feel the urge! Be in the next issue, okay?
Email your writings and/or artwork to
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hardcopy to: Graffiti, 1292 High St. #129, Eugene 97401

Turn it up!

by Morgan Smith



When I crave a positive distraction, music saves me. It might be a perfect medicine for the mind. All through the day and night, the beats, and the melodies... the rhythmical poetry... it takes me away to a higher place.



Chrome Bull DLX



Duckwrth
Released: October 23, 2023
Tracks: 13

Jared Leonardo Lee, AKA Duckwrth, studied design at Academy of Art in San Francisco before going into music.

This is a dance album, understood from Duckwrth himself in an interview on okayplayer.com. The third track, "Ce Soir" is a sexy, bumping song. In English, its French title means "tonight" or "this evening." Next, I like "Super Saiyan" for the strong beats and smooth vocals. It's probably my favorite. The common thread of France-inspiration comes through again in "007 (Jersey Mix)," where he feels like James Bond. The final track is an alternate version called "007 (OG Mix)." One more thing... Duckwrth, being a Taurus, is the self-described "Chrome Bull."

Grassroots



311
Released: July 12th, 1994
Tracks: 14

Pronounced "three eleven," the five member band was formed in 1988 in Omaha, Nebraska.

Being #2 on my Top 25, it was inevitable for 311 to appear in this column. It is the rare fusion of Rock, Reggae, Hip Hop, and Punk, along with the polished vocals of Nick Hexum and the unmistakable Doug "SA" Martinez which makes them ever modern. *Grassroots* — their second album among 13 — was chosen mostly because it contains my overall favorite track, "Omaha Stylee." It's a uniquely delivered origin story. Overall, this album is already turned up... a dance party might become a mosh pit. And they put on a floating concert, the 311 Caribbean Cruise... it's a goal.

Private Space



Durand Jones & The Indications
Released: July 30th, 2021
Tracks: 10

Meeting at Indiana University, they joined up to play American Contemporary R&B and Retro-Soul.

Smooth. The time melts away with this band's velvety sound. I discovered them when they were among the openers of a Rebelution concert at the Cuthbert Amphitheater, in Eugene, Oregon. Listen to "Witchoo," as it has 25 million plays on Spotify — a few people like it. Really though, I would want you to listen, not for its popularity, but because of the thumping, upbeat sound that might have you adding it to a party playlist. Next, "Ride or Die" opens like a candlelight love song... and it is. Overall, this album is just what they're going for... 70's-modern-soul.



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ART HOUSE NOTES

- The Kubrick Series wraps up with the iconic "2001: A Space Odyssey," Feb 23-29
- Coming in April: "Gone With the Wind," 85th Anniversary Screening



misha kagutaba

Quality of Life

John Zerzan

Here in technological society, the Dataverse, the qualitative has overwhelmingly given way to the quantitative. Everyone can see what is dominant, even as humanness, the unique, manages somehow to survive.

The resistance to this version of existence, while taking many forms over the years, has rarely emerged as a cardinal issue. Probably because, in the main, it is experienced as an inevitability, hence irresistible.

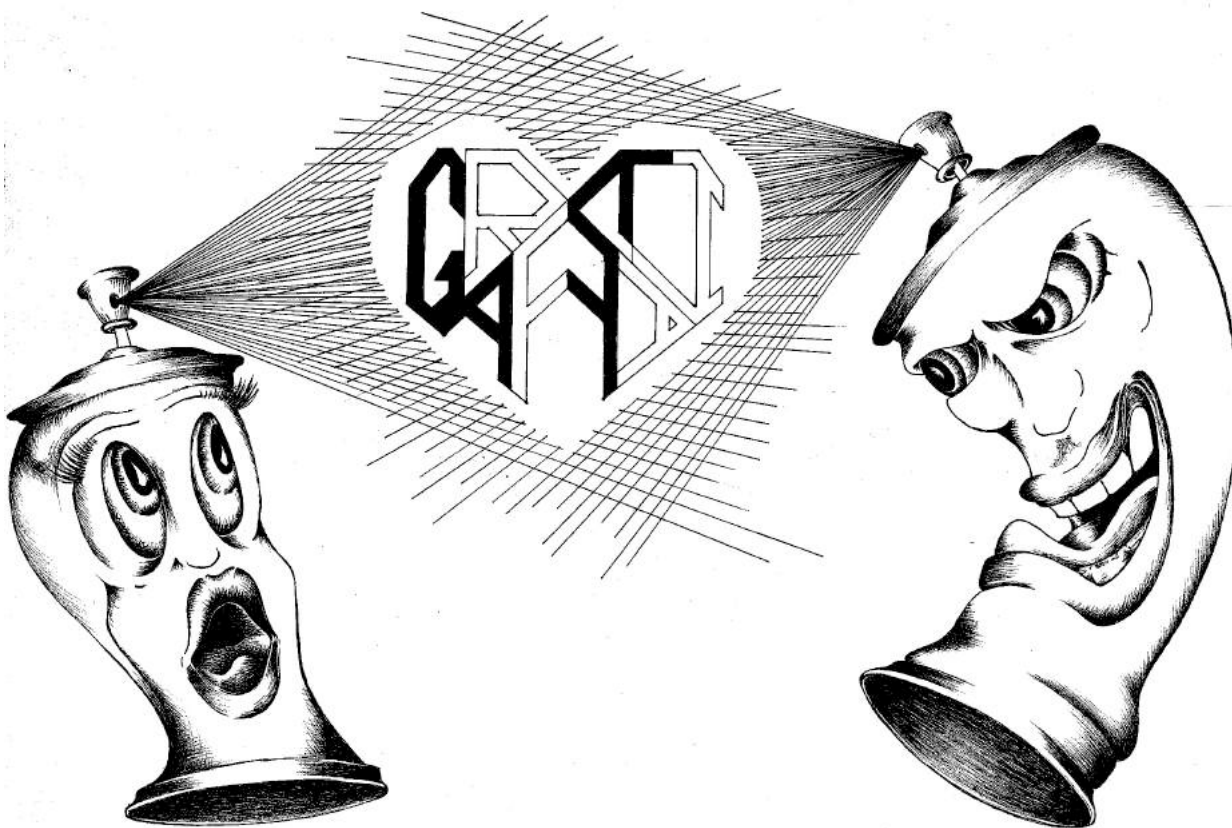
Today collapsing civilization presents a similar, parallel picture. It is the "elephant in the room" that all can see but few really acknowledge. All of its features, more and more dire and anti-life, are on full view.

Its downward momentum affects all of us and pathological symptoms show up in every part of society. One aspect of a general retreat is a growing reliance on prosthetic-type solutions, which only further reduce our agency and autonomy. One can now order almost anything from the couch: cars, food, clothes, etc. Machines that "exercise" passive bodies, step-into shoes, the e-Evie Ring for ease of removal: no exertion of any kind! (Keeping in mind that there are differently abled folks who actually need such assistance.)

In terms of popular culture, a similar decline of quality is evident. My personal examples include: emoji, Hallmark-card like excuses for personal, original expression; so much music that is dumbifying, eminently K pop; comic book novels and movies; cage fighting and pro wrestling. Fashion seems to have replaced any trace of subculture or bohemia as an alternative space.

Also in a flattened, texture-less society, where the social exists mainly as "social" media, are the endless recalls. A high-tech vista in which cars, packaged foods, even jetliners are less than safe.

Quality? As in qualified, qualification? Obviously departing, as civilization decays further on a daily basis. ☺ ☺ ☺



Graffiti: Somewhere between innocence and cynicism lies art.

Art by Wes Hansen

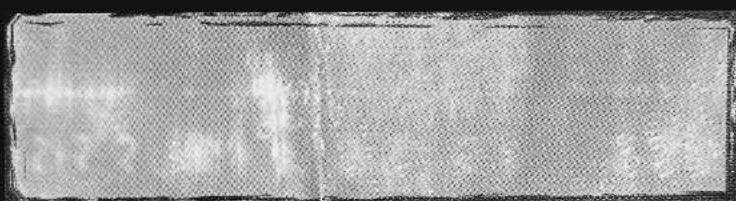
Dan Liberthson, Novelist and Poet

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www.liberthson.com / liberthson@gmail.com



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ROD WILLIAMS

Author

joyousshambles@gmail.com

"An Americana Singer for the Twenty-First Century"
 "Celestial Springs (Stories)"
 "The Light Don't Shine No More"



What the Hell?
 Watch
 MishaKagutaba
 on YouTube



Artifacts

How do we keep the memories we make?

A leaf falls,
twirling a graceful pirouette
An image that lasts in my heart
I pick it up and take it home.

Burnished, smooth to touch
this rock is just begging
for me to touch it.
I do.
Cool, unimaginably soft
its solidity reminds me
of how soft I am.
I take it home.

A feather, a reminder of flight
I wonder where it has been
can momentarily see the
outline of the land from above
Fiery red, a flicker's I'm sure
What other stories can it tell me?
I pick it up and take it home.

A heart reaching for another heart
words scribed on parchment—
falling like a leaf
begging like a stone
flying like a feather

The record,
of a fledgling
a dream
a hope
a beginning

I write it down,
pick it up
and give it away.
But, the memory
I take it home.

Ed English

Come

Come away with me,
where the air is clean,
and the past?
Just a leaf floating in the wind.

Poem by **Jim Smith**
Art by Erica Snowlake

Probably, finally

Somewhere in the world,
there is probably a tree that sprouted
the same year I was born and has
been growing alongside me ever since.
But I have never seen this tree.
Somewhere high up in the sky,
there is probably a bird with a
nest made with some of my hair
but I have never seen this bird.
Somewhere deep in the woods,
there is probably a squirrel I stopped
my car for that is living a lifetime.
But I have never seen this squirrel.
Somewhere in the dirt,
there is probably a worm I moved
off of the sidewalk
that made someone's garden very happy.
But I have never seen this worm.
I could have sworn I've seen these all before,
but I was probably just dreaming.
I used to think dreams could become true,
but it was probably time to grow up.
One day I grew up, but I probably looked lost.
Probably looking lost,
I found myself next to a tree.
It probably felt familiar.
And for once I looked up
and I saw the bird
and the squirrel
and even the worm.
And suddenly the tree felt familiar.
Twenty one years later, I finally sat down.
I finally stopped dreaming.
I finally felt grown.
I finally felt found.
I finally found that tree.

Collin McConnell



The Tall Tale of the Four Cans

Dick LaForge

On a recent week-long bicycle ride in Upper Peninsula (UP) Michigan, our tour leader requested that we make up, for presentation to the group that evening, a Tall Tale somehow connected with items seen along the road. Road trash. "Road booty" is what she actually said.

Not long ago, three cans of beer were riding beside the driver of a pickup truck on a quiet road in UP, Michigan. They were Busch Lite, Big Deal Brewing, and a tall shapely can of Michelob Ultra. It being a warm day the driver got thirsty, and soon all three cans were emptied, and tossed through that little window into the bed of the truck.

Having just been full of beer, they were feeling lite and a little tipsy. Big Deal cast an eye on Michelob and said, "You are a tall, shapely can, can we get married?"

"Yes why not, then let's canoe to Canada," Michelob replied. "Then we can canter over to Kansas City and then Cancun. We can smoke cannabis, play canasta, and eat candy. And, I want a bird."

"Sure, we can have a canary."

"No, I want a Toucan."

"Why that?"

"Because Toucan live as cheaply as one can can," explained Michelob, flapping her pop-top tab seductively.

They were surprised by a voice from the truck bed. An old flattened can said, "You might think you are a Big Deal, and she is a Honey-dew, but you are only cans, you cantaloupe."

Busch said, "They are only canoodling, don't be so cantankerous."

Flat said, "Seriously, get out of here if you can, or you will end up worthless like me. Flattened cans can't be redeemed for cash. I feel crushed."

Big Deal was a canny can. "Can we get out of this truck? Maybe we can use you as a sail and bounce out."

UP is a windy place, and soon the truck bounced and they flew out and landed along the side of the road.

"Cangratulations!" they said to Flat. "You are not so useless after all. Now we can get picked up by someone and redeemed."

"Nobody can see us in this grass," said Michelob. "Maybe I can stand on you two and be more canspicious."

After some cannipions, they accomplished this.

Shortly thereafter, a bicyclist was heading their way. His mind was on roadside booty, as he needed to find some and make up a Tall Tale about it. But people in UP are pretty tidy, and there wasn't much trash, except the occasional can.

"Cans, cans. You can redeem cans for cash. That's real booty," he thought.

Then he noticed a pyramid of three cans.

"That's unusual," he thought as he stopped to pick up all four. "Maybe I can make up a Tall Tale about them."

After dinner, it was time to tell Tall Tales. The biker got up with the four cans. But he had not thought of anything.

"I can't do this," he thought in panic. "I had better cancel my tale." He sat down.

The cans were stunned. Big Deal muttered: "This can collector is an idiot. He can't concoct a canfabulation about us. If only we could canfer with him. We can't win the Tall Tale prize after all."

"But we can still be redeemed,"

Bush said. "We are not worthless."

"Speak for yourself", said Flat, sadly.

"You are flat, but don't feel crushed," said Michelob. "We all can be recycled, and come back as full new cans! Then we'll have a beer together."

And so they were, and did. Moral of the story: If you work together, you can do more than you think you can.

☺ ☺ ☺



Art by Jean Murphy

Buddha in Batopilas

Armando Cacciatore

"You ssssee," said our guide, holding up the large bottle with admirable steadiness, "normally you'd call it a *caguama*, a 'sea turtle.' Urp! Excuse me. That's the gin-, gen-, uh, generic term for it. But these Pacíficos, they call 'em *ballenas*, which means 'whales,' 'cause they make this beer in Mazatlán."

This tidbit of Mexican folklore failed to cheer nine of the guide's ten clients, whose once-a-year paid vacations were rapidly heading south—or in this case north. Each of us had paid roughly \$1,000 for an adventure-travel experience in Mexico's Barrancas del Cobre, which we gringos call "Copper Canyon."

Empty *ballenas* began piling up on our table like beached whales on the shores of disillusionment. Perhaps gringos should not come to Batopilas.

The trip itinerary, which sounded foolproof back in the States, had us flying to El Paso and being put on a bus to Chihuahua. There we would meet the guide and board a train to the mountain town of Creel, on the canyon rim. From Creel, a day's van ride would take us down to the canyon-floor village of Batopilas, where we would load our gear aboard mules and begin a five-day guided trek west—up and over the Mesa San José to the village of Urique on the other side. That was the plan. In México, things seldom go according to plan.

Copper Canyon is actually six interconnected canyons (*barrancas*) formed by tributaries of the Río Fuerte. Deeper than the Grand Canyon, these impressive gorges are home to the Rarámuri people, who, until the 16th century, lived all across the plains of Chihuahua. But then the Spaniards arrived; they renamed the locals "Tarahumara" and forced them into slavery mining silver. Those who escaped fled into the remote reaches of the Barrancas del Cobre. Today it's not silver but green—marijuana—that's the big moneymaker in the Barrancas del Cobre; the Rarámuri live in careful coexistence with the Mexican cartels running the show.

When our group arrived in Creel, we were surprised to meet with the wrath of local innkeeper Margarita. It seems someone at the tour company had mistakenly prebooked everything at Copper Canyon for one day earlier than our scheduled itinerary. Margarita had expected us the day before and had held the rooms, turning away paying guests. She was not pleased. Fortunately, she had enough rooms available to put us up for the night. Our guide, fluent in Spanish, patched over that crisis, but a bigger one lay ahead.

The next day we boarded the vans that took us from Creel down the narrow, winding road to the canyon floor at Batopilas. Once there, we were supposed to meet Nabor, the Mexican muleteer who would shlep our gear on his mules over the Sierra Madre to Urique. But when we arrived, Nabor was nowhere to be found; he had been ready and waiting the previous day, but due to the scheduling snafu, he had assumed we were no-shows and taken work elsewhere. And as in Creel, we now had no rooms reserved for the night.

Which brings us back to the *caguamas*, excuse me, *ballenas*, at El Puente Colgante restaurant in Batopilas, where we sat, all but one of us looking dejected, drowning our sorrows in mass quantities of *cerveza*. Empty *ballenas* began piling up on our table like beached whales on the shores of disillusionment. Perhaps gringos should not come to Batopilas.

We all awaited sage words from our linebacker-sized Texan guide, who by then we had affectionately nicknamed "Big Dog." Eventually his words emerged through a hops-and-barley fog.

"If Nabor . . . urp!
"If Nabor doesn't show up by noon tomorrow," he said with some effort, "I'm gonna pull the plug on this trip. We'll head back to Chihuahua and you guys can take it up with the company."

Nine out of the ten client faces sagged. The tenth was bright-eyed and grinning. We noticed.

"Hey Bryant, why are you smiling?"
"Y'all gotta learn to lighten up," he said. "Me? I'm in MEXICO! Drinkin' a cold 40! Life is GOOD—I'm on va-CAY-tion!"

"He looks like a Buddha," observed Paulette, a lawyer from Key West.

"Buddha on vacation," said Big Dog. And from that moment on, we called Bryant "Buddha."

Truth be told, I doubt any one of us was *too* distressed at that moment. The *cerveza* was kicking in nicely, and Batopilas is a magical place. It occurred to me that if I ever got around to writing the Great American Novel, the back patio at El Puente Colgante would be an excellent place to do it.

Big Dog chugged the remainder of his *ballena* and got up to leave.

"I'm gonna go find us some rooms and look for Nabor," he said. "I'll be back in a bit."

And with that he was gone, leaving us to ponder our fate.

"What are we going to do?" asked Paulette anxiously.

Vicki, a lithe 30-something with an intriguingly sensuous and dark aura about her, had an idea.

"I'm going to go buy a knife," she said.

Was she joking? Some of us let out a polite, possibly nervous chuckle. But Buddha let out his hearty belly laugh.

"Vicki, you're killin' me!" he roared. Then he lowered his voice and turned to her. "Please don't kill me."

His comic timing was impeccable. The table degenerated into fits of laughter, and we did what we had to do. We ordered another round.

About an hour later, Big Dog came back with news.

"The good news is, I got us rooms at a nice hotel," he said. "The bad news is, Nabor has left town."

"I found another muleteer for us—Trini," he continued, "but the route to Urique goes through big pot farms, and Trini doesn't know the growers. Nabor did. Without Nabor, we can't go that way. So, here's the deal. I did a different trip a few years ago—a loop out and back from here in Batopilas. Not to Urique. It's safe, but it's not the trip you signed up for. If you guys want, we can do this other route. If not, that's fine, and we can head back to Chihuahua tomorrow. What do you say?"

"Yay!" we cheered. "The new route!"
"Yay for va-CAY-tion!" chanted Buddha.

"Where do I buy a knife?" wondered Vicki.

Hours later we had settled into our digs at the Posada Real de Minas, and I found myself sitting precariously at a table in the hotel courtyard with Big Dog, Buddha, and a rapidly disappearing bottle of Hornitos Reposado. Bud-

dha and Big Dog were discussing Vicki.

"That Vicki. Whoa!" Buddha said, words slipping unmolested through his eternal grin. "There's an animal in there that's got some serious bones in the closet. I hope you have a Bible and a seat belt when that comes out!"

"Argh mrgh prphltette" laughed Big Dog, tequila spraying out his nose.

"Have another shot!" said the bottle.

At that moment, the two-headed Trini appeared out of nowhere, hoping to talk with Big Dog. But he looked at the three of us, and the bottle, and immediately grasped the situation. A dreamy look crossed his faces.

"Sí, sí," he said. "When the tequila comes, it is very beautiful."

About that time, I got up and staggered back to the room I was sharing with Big Dog. The bed was a black hole that sucked me in, instantly depriving me of consciousness. But at 4 a.m. I was awakened when the door opened and Big Dog stumbled in and sat down on his bed.

"Howzit go—" he managed, before dropping over sideways and going comatose until morning.

Apparently after I had excused myself from the tequilafest, Big Dog had gone into town with Trini and chanced to encounter two lovely young American women he knew from previous stays in Batopilas. They had invited him over to their hotel for dinner and divertissement. Apparently both were good.

The next day, blindingly bright and not so early, we headed off on a five-day adventure for which none of us, including Big Dog, had planned. It went off without a hitch.

We climbed out of the canyon to the beautiful, forested rim, where we visited with a Rarámuri family at their humble home.

We traversed the canyon walls for a time, getting sweeping views across the vast canyon system.

We descended back to the canyon floor and camped next to a Rarámuri hamlet, exchanging heartfelt cross-cultural communication with the locals despite none of us speaking the Rarámuri language.

We hiked to an outdoor tequila still hidden in a side canyon and got free samples of homemade hooch from the proprietors—I deemed it undrinkable, but it was no doubt well suited to wound disinfection and arson applications.

And we got caught in a torrential downpour that thoroughly soaked my old, leaky tent. It was then, much to my surprise, that Vicki invited me to stay in her tent. With her. All night. Oh my god! Was it safe? Should I risk it? Would she carve pentagrams on me in my sleep? But I was cold and wet, and she was warm and dry. I accepted her invitation. Turned out she still had no knife, but interestingly, she did have massage oil. It was far nicer in her tent than mine.

Back in Batopilas at trip's end, we were all riding the high at what our initial misadventure had become. Thanks to Big Dog's experience and grace under pressure, we had enjoyed a memorable impromptu encounter with Copper Canyon and its inhabitants.

As we waited for the vans back to Creel, a grinning Buddha was the first to thank our guide, slapping him on the back and giving him a big ol' man-hug.

"That was one killer va-CAY-tion! Best I ever had! Thanks, Dog!"

"Hey, you know what they say," replied Big Dog. "*Cuando la vida te da limones, haz limonada*. When life gives you lemons, make lemonade!"

"Ha!" Buddha bellowed. "Screw the lemonade. Let's go get a *ballena*!" ☺

Not Much Fun

Life just isn't much fun anymore
With aching joints, rheumatism,
Stiff back and hemorrhoids.

We are starting our golden years

Insomnia and indigestion.
Gout and acid reflux.
Sore shoulders
And painful knuckles.

This is what we have
Worked so hard for
All our lives.
Every day, hour, minute
We die just a little,
But not enough to notice.

We peer at our progeny,
We let them lift
And transport the heavy loads.

We see our kids as we once were,
We see ourselves as we are,
And we remember our
Fathers and Mothers
And know what we will become.

Bill Gunn

A Poem

Touch a pen to a blank
Piece of paper
And it explodes with words.
It explores life, death,
Close calls,
And the little things
That have meaning.
Feelings, family, friends,
Current dogs, past dogs.

Thoughts, discourse,
Forgotten memories
That flash back
With details, images
And vivid metaphors.
Long dead thoughts,
So dear at the time
Come alive and are reborn.

You spill it all,
And all is over
In an eye blink,
And you are drained,
Empty as a coveted bota
In a high country cabin.

Sick to the stomach,
You have to carry on
With aching joints,
Withered skin.

You have to tell your truth
As you see it,
As you have lived it,
As you handle it
When things go bad.

Bill Gunn

Family Snapshots

In family snapshots,
I'm the sullen old
grey-haired fucker
in the back of the six-pack,
dogs sometimes included,
sometimes not.
Everyone is smiling,
all happy,
except for the old bastard
in the background
that looks like he
just swallowed shit.
I am happy for a
happy-faced family,
I just show it
in a different way.
I used to smile
when I was young—
ever so young,
a long time ago.

Bill Gunn

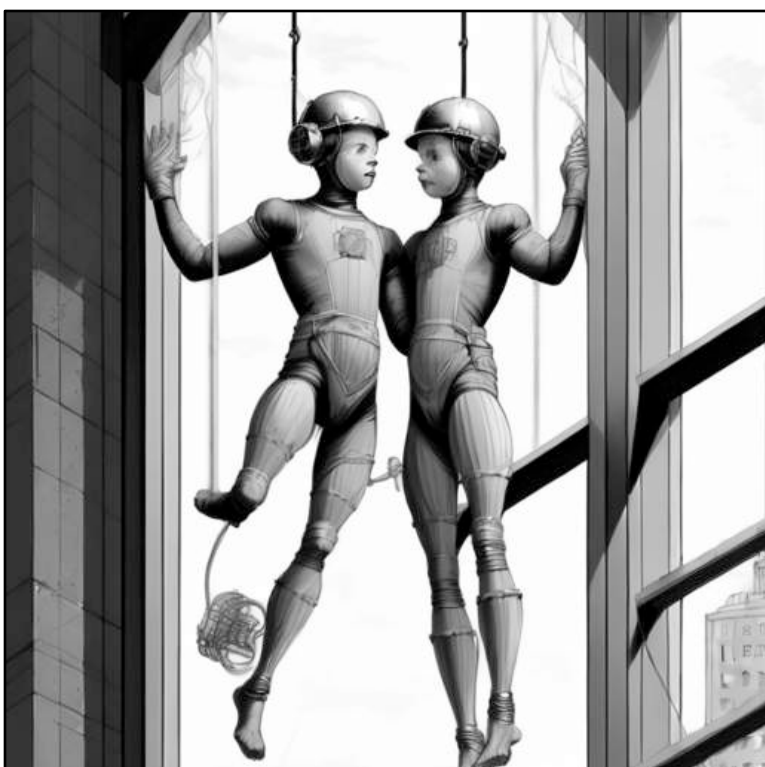
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Teller's *Armageddon* (detail). Sculpture by Steve LaRiccia. Photo by Lise Eskridge



Window Washer. Art by James Otter

Some of the Smartest People Are Dumb

Stephen Swiftfox

Location: Somewhere off the west coast of Spitsbergen

It's been my good fortune to have been on a small Norwegian expedition ship 15 times over the past 10 years. On this ship there's always a small group of passengers, a great crew and a small group of four or five scientists of various disciplines.

One evening the German geologist, Stephan, suggested that the after-dinner topic of discussion would be about the worsening climatic situation. It was a spirited conversation and I did learn quite a lot from both crew and passengers. A passionate issue for me is overpopulation. I got up and stated that all environmental problems have one basic driver and it's the overlooked one. Overpopulation.

I brought up the fact that there are many children in the world who are unwanted, discarded, starving, abused or all of the above and they need homes. In one of my three careers I saw people at their worst time in their lives being on probation or worse, incarcerated. The children were usually foisted off on grandparents living on social security or a vague 'uncle' more than willing to take in a teen. This in turn leads to a generational experience in the penal system. I gave the anecdote of my last date with a British woman (no knock intended). I had brought up the topic of adoption. My soon-to-be ex-date got a bit emphatic and declared that she would never adopt. Startled, I asked her why. She said "Because they're defective." I stated that we have an obligation to the least of us. We are in positions to help.

There were some murmurs. Then a young oceanographer stood up. I expected him to back me up. He was someone whom I greatly admired as he was a former Sirius Dog Patrol volunteer. Well, he was as passionate as I, and I (insert 'quickened heartbeat' here) listened with bated breath as it were...

He loudly proclaimed "No one is going to tell ME how many children I can have!" And he sat down. He didn't stir my heart anymore. ☺☺☺

Blacks Can't Swim: A Memoir

Rene Tihista

The June 29, 2022 issue of The Guardian U.S., contained a review of a new British TV Series titled, "Blacks Can't Swim." There wasn't much commentary about the series itself, other than a hint that the title referred to what was another example of racial exclusion masquerading as a physiological claim that people of African descent have "heavy bones" that cause them to sink when they try to swim. Reading this brought back a memory of the time when I first heard this bizarre rationalization for bigotry.

It was September, 1960. I was twenty-one years old, recently discharged from a three-year hitch in the U.S. Army and was entering my freshman year at Western Michigan University, in Kalamazoo. Registering for classes, I learned that there were certain non-academic requirements mandatory for all incoming students. We had to take either four units of Phys. Ed., or for male students, two years of ROTC. Perhaps the objective was to instill in us habits of physical activity for our own good, in retrospect, a laudable goal. The University gave no explanation. But at the time, I thought such requirements were patronizing at best and coercive at worst. And being a veteran, ROTC was out of the question for me.

So, I chose my four one unit per semester Phys. Ed. requirements: Social Dancing, Basketball, Golf and Swimming. Social Dancing turned out to be a good move, so to speak. I especially enjoyed learning how to Mambo, Cha Cha, Merengue (it's not whipped egg-white topping), Tango as well as Waltz, Polka and Swing. Along with dance skills, I discovered that Latin rhythms were easier than the waltz or polkas, which wore me out and that I could never master. I already knew how to play basketball and swim and though I loathed golf, decided learning to play would be a formative challenge.

It was when I took the swimming "class" that I first heard the Blacks can't swim mythology. I had learned to swim when I was about five or six when my older brother Jerry took me out into the middle of the Milk River, in Northeastern Montana where we grew up, and taught me how to dog paddle. So, it seemed to me that swimming was natural and easy for anyone. Not so, according to our swimming coach, who doubled as the university's baseball coach. I don't recall how the discussion began, but one day he was explaining to us that Black people can't swim because "their bones are too dense and they sink."

The younger guys, teenagers and more impressionable, took in the information without question.

As for me, I guffawed out loud and exclaimed, "Are you trying to bullshit us?" The coach, who also taught our basketball "class" reprimanded me.

"Watch your language, Tihista."

Ignoring him, I exclaimed: "You're telling us that all those millions of Africans who live along the Congo, Zambesi, Niger and Nile rivers can't swim? When they've been living along those rivers for thousands of years?"

The coach muttered something I didn't get, obviously not used to students challenging him.

"Why don't they drown?" I asked. "I mean, if they can't swim with those heavy bones, why don't they drown by the millions?"

The coach, to his credit, didn't try to argue with me. He barked at the other students to get into the pool, and nodded at me. "You too, Tihista."

As I started into the pool, I couldn't resist one more jab: "How do you know my bones aren't too heavy to enter this pool, coach? I could have an African ancestor and I don't see a scale here to measure bone weight."

"Ok, Ok. You made your point. Get in the pool."

It was the last time I was to hear his lecture about why Black people can't swim. Imagine my surprise to discover this stereotype was still kicking around in 2022. I'm not sure what the situation was like in Great Britain, but in the U.S. in 1960, Black people were barred from swimming pools in the Jim Crow South and in most of the rest of the nation as well. And not because of their "heavy bones." Nobody knows how many African Americans who grew up in rural areas learned to swim in rivers, ponds, or creeks like I did. As far as I know, the density of their bones has never been investigated. Probably because the idea is preposterous. Where's the evidence to corroborate this mythological physical handicap that supposedly affects hundreds of millions of people in Africa who live on those aforementioned rivers and somehow avoid drowning because of their "heavy bones?"

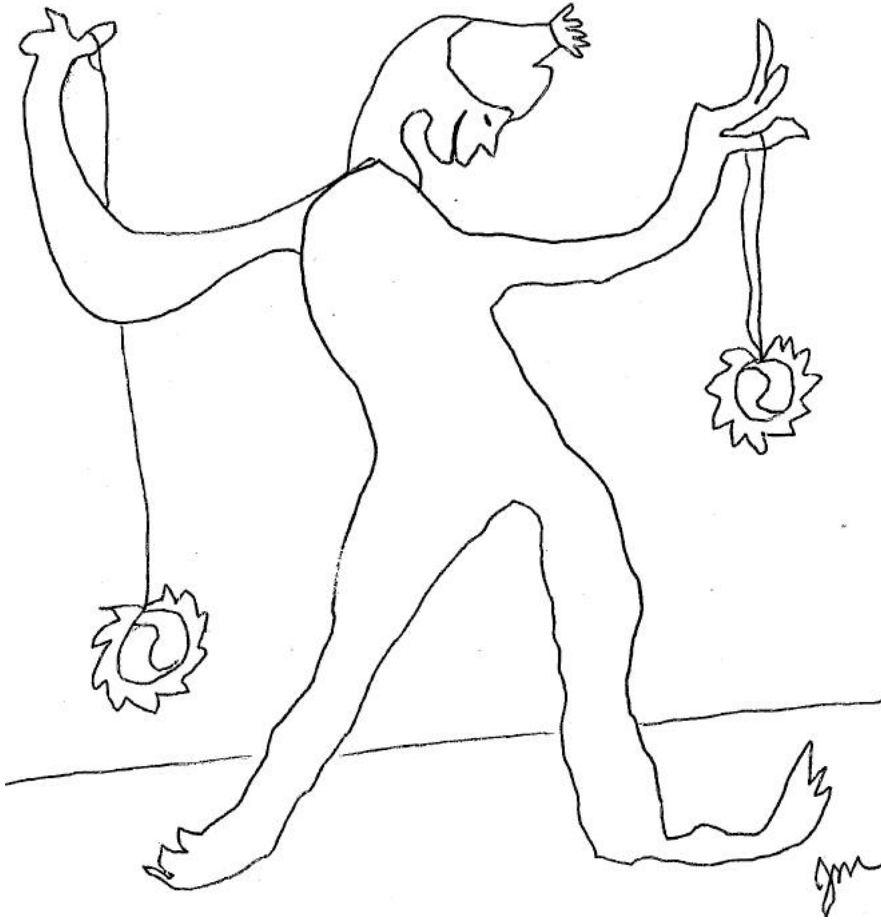
As for the coach who didn't like my profanities, he and I actually got along pretty well. During basketball "class" it was irritatingly obvious to me that most of the other students were not very athletic and didn't know how to play basketball. The indignant coach was always yelling at me to "watch my language" because I impatiently cussed at my erstwhile teammates for their ineptitude on the court. Despite my obnoxious attitude, at the end of the semester he once told me grudgingly, "You're the kind of player I'd want on my team."

I didn't say anything and sort of appreciated his left-handed or off-handed or heavy-boned compliment. I think he gave me an A. Quite an accomplishment for me at the time but not one in later life that I included on my resume. Oh, and I still remember the proper way to grip a golf club, though I never lost my loathing for golf and haven't used the "grip skill" in the more than 60 years since I learned it.

☺☺☺

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Art by Jean Murphy

A Mothers Kiss

A mothers kiss
transports me
Carriage wheels squeal
syncopated steps
in motion
capture the emotion
a primal devotion
captured in a moment.

Mothers, mothers, mothers
they are our hopes
cry for no other

The smile of a child
the mystery they hold
and the path they find

I hold the hope of generations
and see the promise and the
demise

At what point does the past turn
towards
A future of promise or pain?
I pass the darkness
I see the gnashing of lifes
crashing
Against the rocks of destitution
What is the solution?

The beauty of a small childs face
radiates, and is hidden
in the wear worn visage of
dereliction

What is expected of us?
those who travel the various stages of
social acceptance?

Are we remiss?
for a lack of caring
holding to the promise of
thats mothers kiss
do we miss
the ability to see
beyond?

There are secrets and opportunities
that whisper then cry for our attention.
What is the lesson?
the call

Don't we all deserve
a mothers kiss?

Ed English

Poppycock*

after "Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll, 1871.

It was chilling when the courtly trolls
set fire and crumpled Roe v Wade.
All flimsy were their long black robes
as their tome Draft enraged.

"Beware the Poppycock that's spun,
the laws that bite, and claws that catch!
Beware the Judge Absurd and run
from insidious Body-Snatch!"

We took our battle swords in hand;
long time the man's control we fought -
possessed we'll be by Nine Supreme
as chattel for their Anglo plot.

And, with their dufus thoughts they rule -
their Poppycock gives laws to chain.
Controlling all of Motherhood
they'll shackle unrestrained!

Judge you! We do! We now own you!
The battle blades went snicker-snack!
We left it dead and with it shred
we won our bodies back.

"And hast thou slain the Poppycock?
Lay down your arms, the draft's destroyed!
O joyous day! *!#* you, we say!"
Off slithered Good Old Boy...

It was chilling when the courtly trolls
set fire and crumpled Roe v Wade.
All flimsy were their long black robes
as their tome Draft encaged.

*From the Dutch word pappekak, meaning soft dung.

B. Sparks

The Safety is Off

that snarl heard is hatred
standing in the doorway of schools and stores
spitting bullets
that bite with the right to bare arms

of those who once upon a time
safely rocked their loved ones to sleep

B. Sparks

Mouse Prints

Mouse prints on the sands of time
A stolen line from a stolen line
Which haunts not all my hours, but many
With worries of not leaving any.

G. L. Helm

Aldous Huxley Slept Here

I searched for the ghost of Aldous Huxley
Among Mojave Desert ruins
Where lightning of creation made him think of
Brave New worlds.
But I have not found a breath of him among the stones;
He only slept here and did not leave an essence
I can take to mix with desert winds.

I searched for Ernest Hemingway in Spanish Bullrings
And Pyrenees streams
Where trout leapt and shimmered in the sun,
And in Fruilia where he shed blood and said Farewell to Arms.

Among Venetian palaces I sought for Ezra Pound and Lord Byron,
Henry James and Thomas Mann
Finding only echoes of their breath in narrow streets
And drizzling rain
To tease me with a sense of their creations
But not allow me past their garden gates
To tease them with creations of my own.

And finally to Salinas.
Still full of foolish hope that I may there meet Steinbeck's ghost
To tell him that my people were the people he created in Grapes of Wrath
And understand his discontent in hopes that he will understand mine.
Knowing that his ghost, and all the others
Sleep, never to awake,
but live in pages of creation.

G. L. Helm

"Pilot Of The Air Waves"

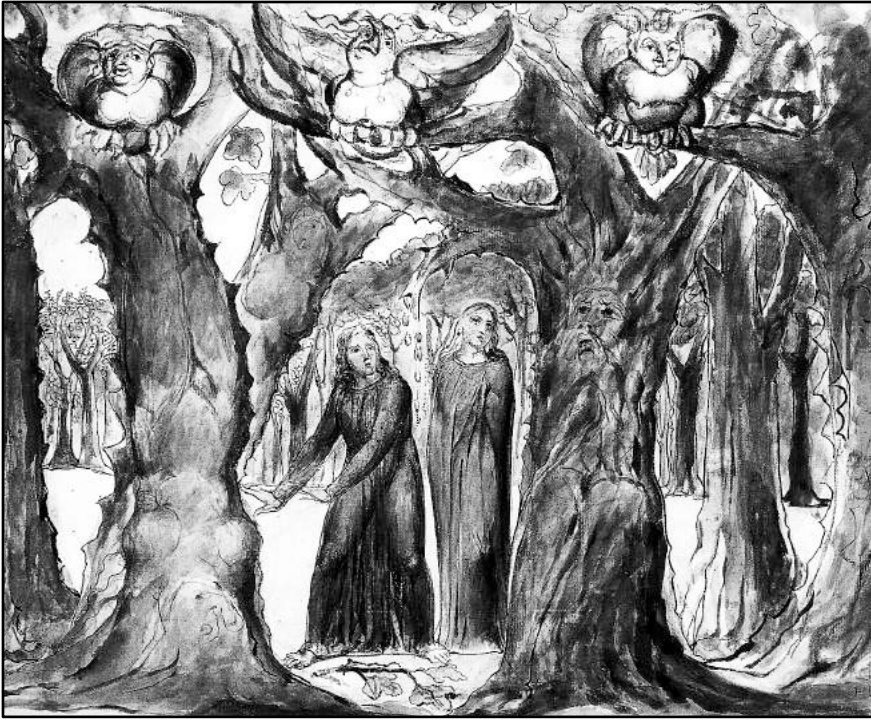
My cousin Bobby died—
Lung cancer—
He smoked for years and years—
Said it gave him a smoky quality to his voice
That made it sound more intimate on the Radio.
He was a DJ on a little station in Missouri.
He did the sports and the news
And the recorded ad spots,
But what he liked best was to be the late night man
The DJ who spins records into the empty blue night—
The one who talks to his listeners as though they are
In the studio with him.
The late night man is the one who makes his lonely listeners
Feel a little less alone.
The station Bobby worked at was small,
But on nights when the inversion layer was right
It could be heard as far away as Kansas City
And mothers with sick children,
Or lovers who had quarreled
Or old folks deserted by sleep
Could listen, and feel like some one cared—
Feel that there was another human being on the planet.
That they weren't alone
In the wee hours
of that all engulfing darkness that can swallow a person,
If they feel deserted enough.
I hope all the people
Alone in the Missouri night who listened to him
Will lift him up to God,
Remembering that smoky voice
That made them less alone.

G. L. Helm

Shameless Groveling

Ha! Fooled you!
You thought this was another poem, didn't you?
Not shameless groveling for money.
Okay, so we're devious, but we need your support!
It costs \$600 to print each issue of this beautiful work of art,
and we can't manage that without donors like you.
So how 'bout a little help?
Isn't a voice for community creativity worth it?
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Thanks!

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William Blake (British, 1757-1827), detail of illustration for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, *Inferno*, Canto XIII, 1-45. "The Wood of Self-Violators: The Harpies and the Suicides"

Heaven & Hell

Leo Rivers

HEAVEN IN DEFENSE OF THE SWEETNESS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

I reach out to all those women of diverse Nations who have suffered the persecution of men who have reduced themselves to beasts of battle and demons who would throw a tarp over their living bodies as if they were already dead! As if the sight of that precious flesh that is all of charm and sustenance was not first unveiled in The Garden! For what is the vision of a woman nursing a child if it is not the altar in the temple of Nature?

HELL OUR NEW TRIBE

Acts without Heart. People, groups becoming able to behave like this are presenting themselves like the blossoms of fast spreading vines or stems all over the World. The ideology or culture is irrelevant. The true spore is airborne and invisible. Those who are infected become cruel and without conscience...

And we know we have become infected when we begin avoiding mirrors.

☪ ☪ ☪

Howling Woods

Braided Hemp
along a path where nothing has grown
and nothing ever will

On bronze placards
a piece of history goes unread
in words as faint as a three days dead
white doves

Entrance is the exit
Souvenir warning
in the heart of a city infested
with drifters

spend your hard earned
fast dragged cattle cash

guide books
with outdated maps
and made up facts

Like any bad place
there are several warnings
along the road

Buildings often get condemned
It takes real poison
toxic waste is released at sea
far from any caring eye

The Howling woods
A challenge with its own rules

Walk into another world
occupied only by lost souls
by entering the park
visitor becomes resident

James Otter

End of the Line

Letters are a gift
I'm always missing letters

Twisted tether
Cable cars jingle

Manifestations
Density, population

There go the simple days
what simple days?

How do you describe
the ghost?
Does it come in flying pictures
flying portraits
frames of light, translucent
crystalline symmetry?

it's as photorealistic
as an old film reel
Transparent, caterwauling
out of rhythm

The spirit is our history
it came from the lines we laid down
the bricks we placed
it came from the high steel beams
where we ate our lunch
the photographer trembled

The ghost is that of our courage
to build high and work low
talk lower

James Otter

*"We're all going to die, all of us, what a circus!
That alone should make us love each other but it
doesn't. We are terrorized and flattened by
trivialities, we are eaten up by nothing."*

— Charles Bukowski

The Ghosts of Suicides Past

Kevin Graves

Three times suicide has barged in my front door, taken a seat at the table, gotten drunk and pissed in the corner. The first was when I very young and if my parents hadn't have told me about it years later, I wouldn't even know it happened. This is the story of my first encounter with someone taking their own life.

My father went to UC Berkeley in the early 60's and he was a Sigma Nu guy. For the uninitiated that's a Fraternity house in the Greek system. He liked to entertain my sisters and I with stories from his college years and stories from his Fraternity house were a major source of inspiration. One Fraternity brother played a lead role in many of the stories. His name was John and to this day, I don't really know much about him. I figure he had a pretty short fuse because one story my dad told was about how he and John were walking home from a football game at the old Cow Palace where the Bears used to play. John was slightly ahead of my dad in a crosswalk where a traffic cop stood, directing traffic and pedestrians so the two did not comingle at 30 mile an hour. The cop put his hand in John's chest to stop him from crossing and possibly getting hit and John screamed at him, "You can't use your Gestapo tactics on ME!" This was less than 20 years after the end of World War Two. The word Gestapo was today would be called a major trigger for a lot of people. It was a massive overaction on John's part, obviously, but there was something I always liked about that story and I longed to meet him.

Another story my dad told was about John collecting beer bottles in his room for several days. He had them turned upside down on top of the books he was supposed to be reading for class. One morning the mystery was revealed as one by one, John opened the bottles under his Brothers' noses as they slept to reveal that he had been farting in the bottles for days and collecting his filth to be shared as a wakeup call in the morning. Wrong time, wrong place, Brothers. This story grossed me out more than anything, but seeing my dad laugh so hard at the memory made me want meet John even more.

One day when I was seven or eight we learned that John was going to visit us for Eugene, and I was excited to meet the legend. When I came down from my room for dinner he was sitting

at the table, and he was not at all what I expected. He was big but slouched over with bad posture, which made him appear frail. His skin was pale, like a vampire. It turns out he was living in Portland and drove a cab, mostly at night, so he slept days. He had one divorce, no kids, no family of any sort in Oregon, and lived the lonely life of a bachelor cab driver in Portland in the scary 80's.

Portland in the 80's was a violent nightmare where being alone in the wrong neighborhood could get your jaw smashed against a curb by a gang of hooligans on a Friday night. Wrong time, wrong place, Brother.

Here was this guy who had graduated from UC Berkeley, one of the premier universities in the United States, if not the world, living in a dump in a sad city, working a dead-end job. What had happened? We later found out.

The rest of this story is what my parents told me around 20 years later. I have no memory of this; I guess I tucked it away in the locked trunk in the attic of my mind like a good Irish boy.

One evening a year or so after John came for dinner, my parents went out to dinner. My sisters were babysitting me when the phone rang. I answered the call, and it was John. He asked to speak with my dad but upon hearing my parents weren't home John confided in me that he was going to kill himself that night. I was eight or nine. No one should ever underestimate the self-centeredness, the complete disregard for every other being on Earth, of someone who is suicidal. I have no idea what I said, and I'm sure it wasn't helpful to him. I don't remember how long we talked. But when my parents got home, I told them about it, and they were pissed. Sometime later, we found out that he had in fact killed himself that night. To this day it makes me sort of numb to think that I was the last person John ever spoke to on this Earth. I'm not mad that he dumped his shit on me as a young kid, nor do I feel guilty that I couldn't "talk him out of it." Please don't judge him, fair reader, I don't. What happened is the result of untreated mental illness, nothing more, nothing less. For me it was the wrong time, wrong place, brother. ☪ ☪ ☪

Misplaced Graves for Broken Hearts

My love for you is indelible, etched upon my arm.
I hoped that it might fade by now, but it remains.
Painful permanence, always within view.

I feel you every day.

Your hand, the first time you reached for mine.
When our fingers met, interlocking. A perfect fit.

Your breath upon my neck releasing butterflies that had been cocooned so long ago.
I can still feel your heart racing against my chest.

The once tandem beats are now out of rhythm. My thoughts scattered.

I am lost without your voice.

I could not anticipate how much it would hurt when you turned away.

Loss of sleep without your stories to guide my dreams.

Alone in my thoughts.

Your picture is always staring back at me, lacking your warmth.



I'll never have my ring of string, tying us together.

Your heart is not mine. You are already tethered.

You will always be my favorite song.

My love, like ink. Forever.


CabbageToast

Art Challenge

Youth & Adult
Submissions due: March 20, 2024

Youth Art Challenge info online!



Adult Juried Exhibition (Ages 18+) FREE!
Call for entries. Artists are invited to submit Pacific Northwest raptor portraits in a variety of media for consideration. The juried exhibition seeks to foster a deeper appreciation and awareness of the role wildlife plays in our shared natural and cultural landscape.
Please read the submission guidelines before applying digitally. Questions? Contact Melissa - melissa@cascadesraptorcenter.org

Guidelines



Through wildlife rehabilitation and public education, Cascades Raptor Center fosters a connection between people and birds of prey

Owls, Eagles, Hawks, Falcons, and more!

COME FOR A VISIT
Open year round
Tuesday- Sunday
10am - 4pm





GET HELP!

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behaviors adults and adolescents use against their intimate partners.

Does your partner:

- Control your behavior?
- Question who you are with?
- Create drama in your life?
- Prevent you from seeing friends?
- Limit access to money?
- Create excessive debt?
- Threaten to harm you, your pets, or themselves?
- Threaten to leave you, out you, or expose you?

If you are experiencing these signs of abuse, we can help.

24-hour Crisis Line – 541-485-6513
Advocacy Center – 1577 Pearl St, 2nd Floor, Eugene.

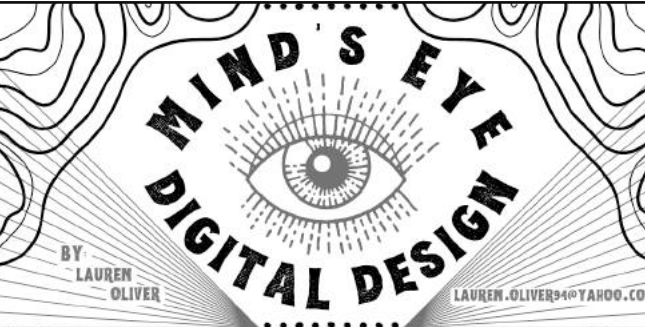
Todos los servicios también se proporcionan en Español. Interpretation services for other languages, including ASL.




AFILIPINAHIPPIE.BLOG/
where-it-falls-apart

THE WHITEAKER

BOOK REVIEWS
THE LOWDOWN GOSSIP
CHEAP FOOD & DRINK



BY LAUREN OLIVER
LAUREN.OLIVER94@YAHOO.COM

BUSINESS CARDS • LOGOS • PHOTOGRAPHY • INVITATIONS
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