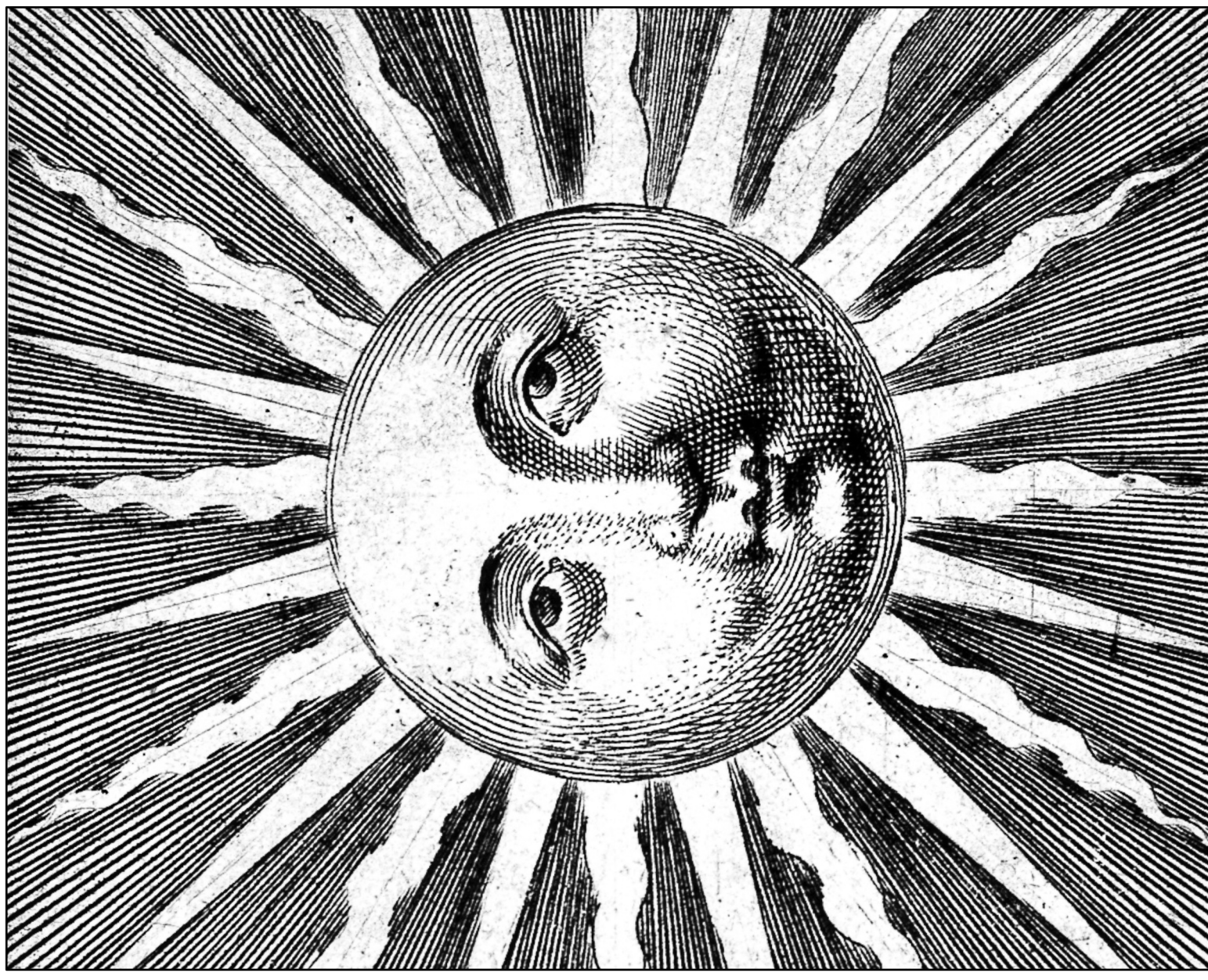


Graffiti

EUGENE'S CREATIVE WRITING & ART ZINE

#14

JUNE 2024



to Love and to Create

1998

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FRONT LINES

Don Root

SUMMER FUN!

We made it! We made it through the months and months of gray and rain. Through the short cold days and the “dark and stormy nights.” Through the eight layers of clothing to put on every morning and take off every night. Through the reading a good book under the covers in our pajamas at eight o'clock at night. We even made it through the spring sneezles and the unpredictable skies that had us dressing for summer in the morning only to get us caught without a raincoat and drenched in the afternoon. Yes, we survived the typical PNW winter we thought would never end, as well as the sadistic teases of our mercurial PNW spring.

But now! Oh yeah, baby! Now it's summer! Time to cut loose with balls-out hedonism! You ready? Come on! Let's get naked and run through a field of flowers or dive into a cold, crystal-clear lake! (Dare ya!) Let's party all night with friends in the moonlight! Let's venture into the wilderness and look for Bigfoot, or go out to the beach and build the most epic sandcastles known to man (almost as epic as those known to woman). Let's hear it for summer! Booyah! We can worry about jobs and duties and responsibilities and obligations the rest of the year, but not now. Now it's summer. Time to play!

June 20th is the summer solstice — the longest day of the year. This seems all wrong to me. I would think the longest day of the year should be in the middle of summer, not right at the start. I mean, we celebrate the first day of summer — “Wheeee!” — then it's all downhill from there. The pagan calendar has it right: May 1 is the first day of summer, and the solstice is “Midsummer.” Unfortunately, pagans lost out to Christians and Muslims in the culture wars of Antiquity, so here we are. In any case, Graffiti *must* do something to mark the pinnacle of High Hedonism! Methinks a solstice party is in order! Am I right? Follow our Instagram or your email for any possible updates.

Ordinarily, I'd write more here. But not today. It's gorgeous out, and I must go soak it up! Hope to see you soon! ☺☺☺

“Summer afternoon — summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language.”

— Henry James



William Blake (English, 1757–1827). Oberon, Titania and Puck at a Graffiti Party, with Fairies Dancing (from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), c. 1786. Tate Britain.

NOTICES

• **ATTENTION WRITERS!** Graffiti has a new ad partner just for you: **WORDCRAFTERS in Eugene** offers writing classes and workshops, critiques, open writing sessions, open mics, and more. They're Graffiti's peeps and a great resource for writers of all levels. Check 'em out!

• Graffiti is sad to announce the departure of longtime contributor **MISHA KAGUTABA** for greener pastures in Portland! Thanks for everything, Misha! We'll miss your comic strips immensely and wish you nothing but the best in your new home. Vaya con Perro, amigo!

• **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to distribute Graffiti!** Do you regularly patronize a coffeehouse, market, or other Graffiti-friendly establishment in town and have time to drop copies there once or twice a month? If so, please email us. We're particularly interested in help for River Rd., West Eugene, and Springfield. But anywhere we aren't is where we need to be!

• **EXTRA \$\$ NEEDED!** (So what's new, right?) Our extras wish list right now is \$600 for our own wire display racks and \$600 for our 501(c)(3) application. **We've started a GoFundMe for these:**

gofund.me/02e7682e

Or just break open that piggy bank of yours and donate its contents to us. Oink, Oink! Thanks!

LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?

It costs more than \$600 to print each issue, and we aren't making that with advertising yet. We rely on donations from people like you to keep us going. Every little bit helps, from \$1 to \$1 million! (Hey, we like to think big!) So get yourself a dose of good karma by chipping in something for the cause today, eh? Thanks!



Graffiti

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more new work online!
by fredX
Wes Hansen
maRco Elliott Shachar Efrati
Thomas Avery
Charles Mattoon

Iron Man: Rod Williams
Wolverine: Morgan Smith
Ant-Man: Don Root
Jessica Jones: Jordan Howell Rose
Luke Cage: Kevin O'Brien
Captain Marvel: Lise Eskridge

Contributors: Orion Ashe, Thomas Avery, Chris Carrera, Fergul Cirpan, Tom DeLigio, Shachar Efrati, maRco Elliott, Isabella Espinoza, fredX, Randy Gudeika, Bill Gunn, Wes Hansen, H. R. Harney, Hillbilly, Misha Kagutaba, William LeGro, Dan Liberthson, Charles Mattoon, Cayla Meyer, Moss, Jean Murphy, James Otter, Elayne Quirin, Erica Rawlings, Leo Rivers, Stephen Slater, Jim Smith, Kristen Smith, Morgan Smith, Erica Snowlake, Jeff Southwick, Stephen Swiftfox, Rene Tihista, Marcel Tulloh, Terah Van Dusen, Bruce Waugh, Lisa Weller, John Zerzan

Special thank\$ to our GoFundMe contributors and "For the Cause" donors: Barbara Ambler-Thomas, Carla De Martino, George Havens, Hillbilly, Rachel Johnson, Jean Murphy, Kevin O'Brien, Leo Rivers, Joel Unger, Terah Van Dusen

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

ON THE COVER: Here comes summer! That big guy in the sky is burnin' for ya, baby! Blowup of sun image on title page of "De thermis Andreae Baccii Elpidiani, civis Romani..." by Andrea Bacci, published posthumously in 1622. NOAA Photo Library. Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.



FAQ

HOW DO I SUBMIT WORK?

- **Email to:** graffitiuegene@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.

WHAT SORT OF WORK DO YOU PUBLISH?

Artwork, poetry, short fiction, and short nonfiction, original to you and preferably based on personal experience. We eschew (cool word!) essays on politics and current affairs. No more rants or excerpts of other people's work, and no libel, copyright infringement, or hate speech.

DO YOU ACCEPT PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED WORK?

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

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.

IS VEUVE CLICQUOT STILL YOUR FAVORITE BUBBLY?

Yes, and we're absolutely parched! Be a dear, won't you, darling?



misha kagutaba

The Botany Blues, or, the Tangled Taxonomy Tango

Taxonomy you evil wench
your fickle ways have left a stench
upon my brain and all it knew
abandoned now because of you.

I learned your Latin and your Greek
the secret language that you speak
to try to find the true and right
I studied late into the night.

On fixes pre and suf I grilled
to be a member of your guild.
With knowledge gained I stood out proud
above the low and madding crowd.

It's true I did abuse your power
impressing females by the hour
with rare polysyllabic words
I came across as king of nerds.

But at the apex of my fame
you turned on me and darkness came.
The pride had come before the fall
and now I knew nothing at all.

You dropped a bomb upon my Scrophs.
When I complained you simply scoffed.
Your splitters split and split again
a cruel process without an end.

You lacerated Lilliaceae,
chopped off a leg and arm,
left Agava and Asparagaceae
with no concern for harm.
Coprinus Coprinellus Coprinopsis!
I can't keep it straight.
Xerocomus Xerocomellus preposterous!
Was that a Bolete I ate?

This ain't daytime TV you know
you ought to feel some shame.
How would you feel if someone else,
split you and changed your name?

As homewrecker you have no par
but don't you think you've gone too far?
You broke up families right and left
and with your PCRs you cleft
a gaping hole inside my brain
where now only confusions reign
and all is flushed down the drain
for worship of a DNA chain.

Biology, morphology, phylogeny
you can't make up your mind
on what a species even is,
much less how it's defined.

But wait all hope has not died yet.
Stand up and fight, I will, you bet!
You're putting nouns on verbs you see (1)
constricting things that should be free.
Hybrids bold fight back as well
and tell your brackets "Go to hell."
Vestigial Aristotelian tidiness (2)
has led you to to this awful mess.
There are no natural boundaries
on evolution's many trees. (3)

- 1 Merlin Sheldrake "Entangled Life"
- 2 Daniel C. Dennett "Darwin's Dangerous Idea"
- 3 Richard Dawkins "The God Delusion"

Bruce Waugh



Summertime Solstice

People dancing in the warm embrace
of Gaia
Holding hands,
around a tree we go.
In the distance,
a rainbow full of promise.

The Day goes on
longer than any other.
The Celebration has lasted
longer than forever.

It is our link with past times,
with people ancient to us.
We fill with the joy of belonging
with untold generations.



poem by Jim Smith / art by Erica Snowlake

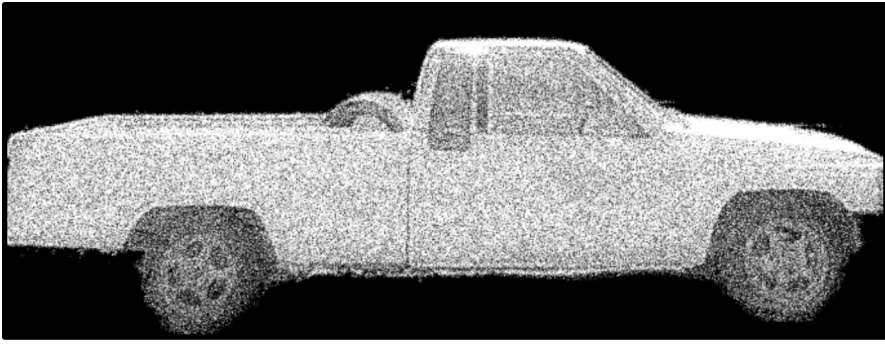
Vignette with Mango

You stride with a runway model's aplomb, leading prospective buyers through your house. It's a fixer-upper, you tell them as you point to me lolling on the couch in my boxers sucking on a mango, juice running down my arms gluing together the hair on my chest, *he's what needs fixing up and you wouldn't believe the estimates I got, if you take him I'll knock fifty grand off the price.*

Gape-mouthed, I look up dumbly at you, my mistress of pin-him-down interrogations, which I've squirmed through by becoming a master of the *is-this-a-trick-question?* response. I know, my head's a Super-Fund site, the squatters there are flagrant mutants. Toxic with guilt, I frantically dredge humor from the seizures – it's mental lice working their way up through my skin, that's why I scratch my head furiously after convulsing – and why I announce, as I gasp for breath, quickly scan for bruises, *Thank you! Thank you! For my next act...*

But you're a tough crowd, skeptical – you've heard my bits. Good-in-bed pales before man-of-no-prospects-who-reacts-badly-to-medication, and I see now that hope has weighed you down with my broken promises, your one sigh fits all as words fail, you've become the spastic edition of a language coach. Our vignettes of despair are fraying your endurance, and through the windows to your soul your sanity is plainly visible, walking a tightrope in a hurricane. I burble with dripping mouth, *But the mango's heavenly!*

William LeGro



MY OLD PICKUP

THOMAS AVERY

I decided to give it up. What could malfunction mechanically next time I did not know and I didn't want to find out. It was better I let it go as soon as I could. If I added up the cost of all the repairs, I would have paid for it probably three times over.

It had served me well for many years and gotten me out of town and across town, whatever my destination happened to be. It took me over to the coast and over the mountains and into the desert. It took me down to Northern California through the Redwoods to Arcata to see old friends. It took me to San Francisco, Santa Cruz and the Big Sur. It took me up to Portland and Seattle several times.

It was my home on wheels when I had a canopy on it and slept in it. It had a functioning tape deck so I could listen to my favorite folk singers, rock stars and jazz musicians when I was on the road. After all that road cruising I got rid of the canopy and converted it into my work truck to haul tree prunings and brush.

But it was getting tired and it was time to retire it from being the workhorse that it was. The clutch was starting to go out and the linkage was loose. I had the head replaced four years prior and it still had some life left in it after 268,000 miles on the odometer.

An old friend who had owned a few Toyota pickups similar to mine told me not to sell it for less than \$2500 even if it needed a clutch. After all, it was a long bed extra cab and they were hard to find. So I followed his advice when posting an ad on Craigslist asking \$2200 OBO. I thought it quite doubtful that I would get \$2500 for it.

The first day I received several calls and texts from interested buyers. They were all Hispanic and either from Portland or Salem. None of them were local. None of their offers were anywhere near close to what I was asking. I was overloaded with so many texts and calls the first and sec-

ond day that I didn't know who to respond to first. There were way too many prospective buyers to try to coordinate times with to come and look at it. It all came down to who was going to call at the right time and who was the most convenient to set up a time with to come and look at it.

The first caller, whose name was Carlos, lived in Salem, and he and his brother were driving down from there. I had to wait a good hour or more for them to arrive. Carlos was a short little guy who appeared to be no older than 16 or 18 or so and he inspected it thoroughly.

I popped the hood so he and his brother could inspect the engine and listen to it run. He revved it up while his brother watched for smoke from the tailpipe.

Then we got in and Carlos got behind the wheel to take it for a test drive. He could hardly see over the steering wheel. He said he needed a pickup for work for his yard business.

We drove out to West 11th and went west to Bailey Hill, took a right and a left onto 18th to Bertelsen and back. His brother waited for us in the parking lot of the apartment complex where I lived. The tires had a good 65 percent tread left on them. But it would need a clutch. The pale yellow finish was oxidized and there were minor dents in the left quarter panel. The paint was scraped off to the bare metal around the cab where the canopy used to be.

He offered me \$1700 for it. Remembering what my friend told me I turned them down after they begged me to sell it to them. I tried to bargain with them saying I would take \$1800 for it. What little did I know it was the best offer I was going to get. They drove away discouraged and disappointed. They made a trip from Salem for nothing. I did not reply back to the other texts that I got making me offers of \$1100-1300.

(continued on p. 12)

The Person on the Other Side of the Wall

I've never seen you. We will never speak.
I hear you, though, every little creak.
We have different schedules. The day calls you, my nights never sleep.
But I hear you make your morning's toast & cafe,
it helps me slumber while you're away.
In the same way I hope it does you to hear my midnight footsteps creep.
We try to be quiet, we're both so polite. We're headphone people,
each trying so hard to muffle every little squeak.
Yet our secrets spill out, don't they? They abound.
I've never seen you (I think you're a girl). We will never speak.
Why would we? Too scare!
And yet then how do I know;
your sister needs you too much, your parents don't understand,
your friends are vapid, you wish you were in a band...
I think in another life we would be friends.
We could leave our doors unlocked and share coats and wine.
You've never seen me. We will never meet.
But I wonder... just what do you know about me?

H. R. Harney

Apparitions

Stephen Swiftfox

Before I go

My dog, Pepper, was pretty well known in town. She loved to attend live music and was quite a good critic. She was my 6th rescue dog and being a Terrier - Shih Tzu mix, she traveled quite easily everywhere with me. In 'forbidden' places she was under my coat, tiny nose sticking out. She was also a late sleeper and burrowed under the covers until the sun was fully out.

We were on one of our rounds about town. While crossing a street on a green light and a 'walk' sign I saw a van barreling towards us making a left turn. The driver's eyes were looking off somewhere; he was totally unaware that we were in front of him. We were going to be hit. I jumped back pulling on Pepper's leash. I missed being hit. Pepper wasn't so fortunate. She was caught by the right rear tire. I saw her scream, looking at me, while she was being crushed. The only way the driver stopped was that someone who saw this tragedy pitched a bottle at the van.

I was screaming while down on the pavement next to her. Cops were right there. We went Code 3 to a local vet as Pepper was dying in my arms. By the time we got there, vets and techs meeting us in the parking lot, Pepper died.

A few months later I had another dog, Mia, another Terrier. A mutual rescue. Late one night as we were sleeping upstairs I heard a jingling of a dog collar and tags coming up the stairs. Thinking it was Mia I rolled over only to feel Mia beside me. I felt something land on the bed and Mia sat up. We were both looking at the foot of the bed. There was nothing there. We weren't spooked. Mia laid down again and I finally fell asleep.

A couple of days later, as Mia and I were sleeping, we were both awakened to the sound of a dog collar and tags coming up the stairs. Mia was firmly against my chest, so I knew it wasn't her. Again, we felt something land on the bed. I propped my head up as Mia stood up. Looking at the foot of the bed I told Pepper that she was loved and that I was so sorry that I wasn't quick enough to save her from a grisly death. My heart thanked her for all the comfort that she gave me.

The visits stopped after that.

Guess you could call it a haunting

The house I currently live in is a Victorian built in 1907 in Cottage Grove. Spent a year and way too much money adding on and restoring it.

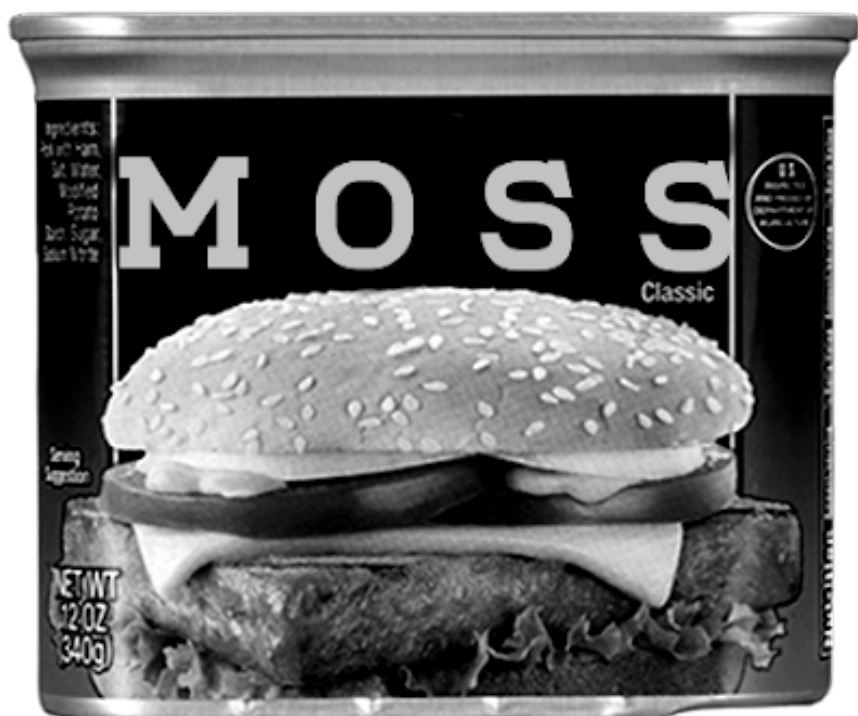
One morning my dog ran to me and whined. I got out of bed and followed her to see what's wrong. In front of the doggie door was a huge pool of laundry detergent. I had what may be the largest container of Arm & Hammer detergent on the floor. It seemed to have landed upside down on its lid which, of course, broke.

After carrying my dog outside and back in, I closed off the laundry room. It took over an hour, and many bath towels later to soak it all up. Then came the rinsing. It was beyond puzzling. The shelf that the bottle sat on was above the washer and it was rock solid. The laundry room was new construction. If the bottle fell straight down it would have landed squarely on the center of the washer.

Exactly one month later I came downstairs to make my morning tea. I happened to glance to the left. In the laundry room the next extra-large bottle of Arm & Hammer laundry detergent lay broken on the floor. This time I got my camera and took photos, at all angles, of the shelf, its position above the washer, and the huge mess.

Back to BiMart to buy yet another container of Arm & Hammer laundry detergent. I placed it in the center of the shelf and had no further problems. Until exactly a month later I found that the exact same thing had happened. Took photos and spent a longer time cleaning up as it seemed to have hit the door on the way down and flooded the doggie door.

Living in a small town quite a few opinions were offered as to why this happened. I didn't care. I switched detergents and the problem never returned despite the fact that I still bought large containers of detergent. Go figure.



Turn it up!

by Don Root



Dictionaries say "melancholy" means "sad." But to me, melancholy is more like bittersweet—equal parts sadness and beauty. I often feel it in songs that express a longing for good times that either were or might have been, coupled with acceptance of the way things turned out. Here are four of my melancholy favorites.

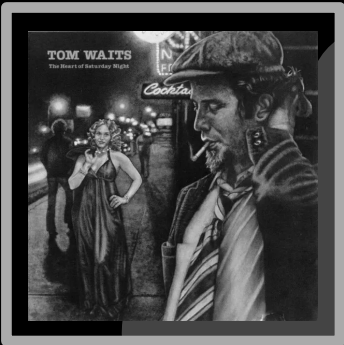


“Hearts and Bones” by Paul Simon



Paul Simon is a master of melancholy. This title track of the under-the-radar 1983 album is a typical subject: the chronology of a love affair with its beginning, middle, end, and aftermath. But the way Simon centers it on a road trip, with a palpable sense of place along with intimate details of the give-and-take between lovers, is pure poetry.

“Please Call Me, Baby” by Tom Waits



When I first heard this song on the car radio, my ears snapped to attention—the poignant lyrics, the unusual phrasing, and the voice... This is early Tom Waits—from *The Heart of Saturday Night* (1974) — when his voice was more like fine sandpaper than the coarse gravel it would later become. It's another

relationship-gone-wrong story, exuding the self-examination that comes from loving someone you can't get along with. USDA Prime melancholy, right here.

“Rocking Chair” by The Band



Besides relationships, aging is another fine source of melancholy. When you reach a certain age, you can't help looking back, just because there's more back than forward. Richard Manuel's voice was always the embodiment of melancholy—no doubt reflecting his own struggles with life—and between his voice and the lyrics

about an aging sailor longing for home, *Rockin' Chair* is a perfect storm of melancholy. It's on the 1969 album, *The Band*.

“Everything Must Go” by Steely Dan



Leave it to Steely Dan to turn melancholy into dark humor. While ostensibly perhaps about a failed business, this title track from the 2003 album is one I could see playing at my wake. As in, "Hell, it was a good ride. Let's go out with a party!" It's about acceptance of one's fate with at least an indifferent shrug, if not a

smile. Fittingly, this was the last track on the last album the band produced.

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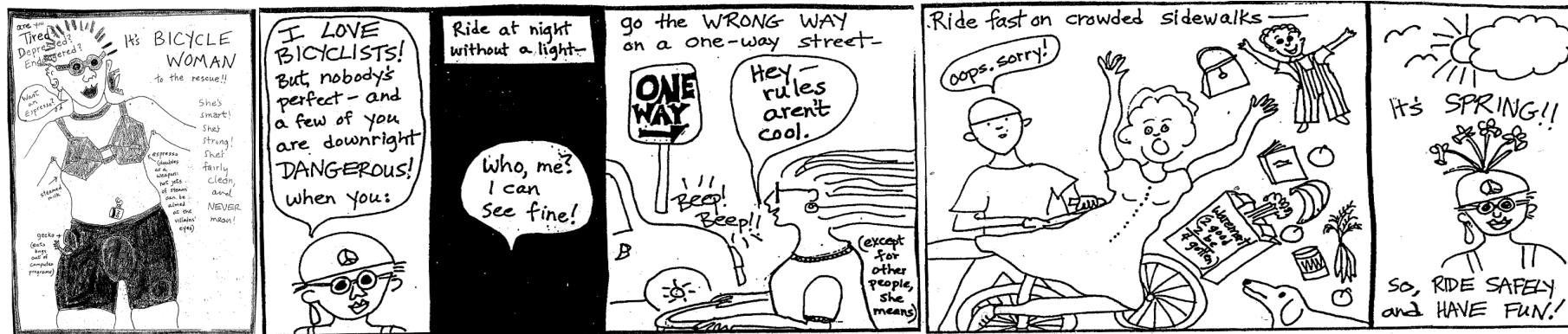
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Bicycle Woman

by Jean Murphy



SHUT UP AND EAT!

KRISTEN SMITH

Everything in moderation, including moderation. —Oscar Wilde

The Zone Diet, The Blood Type Diet, The Grapefruit Diet, The Rice Diet, the silver bullets meant to kill the woes of America's obsession with their bodies and what they put in them. I seem to remember the days when a diet plate was a ground beef patty, cottage cheese and canned peaches.

Only eight short months after burning my white French cuffed shirts and slowly fading black pants, I find myself back in the restaurant business. Again, I am face to face with the eating habits of the public at large. I was spoiled by a decade of living in the food friendly environment of San Francisco, and now I am living with food oppressed Angelenos. There are good places to eat here, even great, but the attitude of too many diners is restrained and limited.

Everyday at least one person winces when I ask, "Would you like to hear about our desserts?" Guilty, pleading eyes look up to me and scream "Yes, oh yes, I want dessert. I want to try every single one, 'til my belly is bloated and I have to do ten consecutive Spinning classes followed by power yoga and a sweltering sauna." But, alas, I am let down and yet another customer shows a ridiculous amount of self denial, which would make a fakir falter on the way to his bed of nails. Yet again my suggestion for the completion of gustatory delight is shot down in the flames of a sugar-free world. How boring. This only drives me towards longer descriptions of the deep dark chocolate ganache, the sugar glazed juicy nectarines lounging on a bed of flaky, buttery rich crust, or how about fluffy mounds of real whipped cream perched atop a dish of hot bread pudding dripping with caramel sauce.

Here's my next complaint: who said carbohydrates are bad? I thought that the culprits used to be bacon, secondhand smoke, DDT and dating your roommate's ex-boyfriend. Now garlic mashed potatoes, crusty French bread and rice pilaf are poked at with forks and comments of "that's much more than the percentage of carbs that I'm allowed today." Gone are the times that Americans didn't think twice about eating gelatin salads in which one of the ingredients was mayonnaise. Or what about cheese that came out of a spray can and butter rich béarnaise on a thick filet mignon. Maybe I have resided in California way too long. And here I am in the belly of the exercise and body obsessed beast, albeit a tight, lipo-sucked, cut-up six pack of a belly.

I will not divide my food groups into 30-40-30 percent or weigh portions on a jeweler's scale. Or spend my time staring out the fish bowls of weight rooms and torture chambers of sweat to work off the martinis and oysters and fish steak with potatoes that I had last night. Eat, drink and don't whine to me when the dessert tray comes around. Shut up and eat. ☺ ☺ ☺

A Good Day

There is a cat in the grass
a warm sun in the sky,

and I, an old man,
find it easy to cry

Leo Rivers

Lost and Found

Just realized
Nothing is good or bad
I just label them as such

This is a short visit
To lose yourself and find your way
Called life

I am the drum and the beat
Having heart-quakes from time to time

I am that I am
Everything and nothing
All at once.

Fergul Cirpan

Dog Refuge, Late Winter

Sorrel newborn goats already hopping
climb the back of a patient billy
lying in a sliver of March sun.
Oliver, mange-pink bulldog,
presses the wet gravel and won't budge.
Wide-eyed, he twitches in my arms,
cannot settle.

Blind Willie bumps the walls of his small kennel
avoiding my touch, while in their pen,
two bloated pigs stay busy in the black mud
where crows alight.

Another cold front sends clouds flying from the west,
a massive jumble moving fast.
The animals feign concern.
Spring waits coiled in kelly green,
in its maze of new birth.

My bones feel stiff as clubs,
a dusty framework of years.
Old torments breathe the calendar's new weather,
its sulfuric marsh.

A frightened chihuahua
squirms around a patch of mud that
would suck boots down.

Stephanie scrubs big Abe's kennel floor
with a long-handled brush, smiling,
as if long winter is almost past, and it is.

Raindrops seek out lilac roots.
First daffodils push up in sets
through last November's rotting leaves.

I visit the new litter before I go.
Seven pit-bulls mass at my shoelaces,
a furious wrestling for something, anything to chew,
their small jaws working needle teeth
until they quickly tire, drop off to sleep in unison.

Back into the human affair I drive
beneath a near cobalt-blue patch of sky.
The road winds down through forest
to chores and business, culture wars,
our own curious refuge.

Tom DeLigio

Night at the Beach

That night I wrestle with my brother.
He has me by the throat
and I bolt up gasping for breath,
heart snapping like a flag in the wind.
In panic, I explode
out of the tent, the sheet
twists around my legs, I crash
into the sand, overmatched lungs
sucking at the thick night air.
*The orange half-moon
sinks into a haze shimmering
behind the island's hulk,
and along the eastern shoreline
cane burns itself into a midnight sunrise
as the plantation, stubborn and relentless,
does what it's done
for one hundred forty years.*

Or he chooses to tell me
a wretched truth – his voice
rings like a bugle before my walls,
stones of words shudder through me,
an avalanche of crucial answers
echoes with a clarity that only
nightmares can bring.
I convulse in remorseful surrender,
retreat into the fetal curl, wall into
the pillow, wake myself –
but that satori cruelly eludes,
as dream-gained comprehension
always does, the insubstantial grasp
of my foggy consciousness,
so I've learned nothing
from the terror.
Loss is the clue,
and it's all I have left.

*The Navy chopper on night patrol
thuds by over the ocean, searchlight
dancing on impassive water.*

It's his blood and bone
on that Idaho motel room wall,
his surprisingly heavy grit
in the converted humidior
on my bookcase, and the old photo,
me and him at five and three,
towhead buddies holding hands,
in innocence smiling for the camera –
and my whole sleeping body
becomes my eyes, from every pore
a hot salty tide floods the mat,
and I wake, drenched.
*The waves thump rhythmically,
liquid timpani, drumming the beach.*

Again in nightmare, I fight back,
swing for the moon,
crack my wrist on the table,
tumble away from sleep;
the Tao Te Ching flops onto the sand,
its vaunted path a parody.
I know the salvation of waking life
is fleeting, and I breathe deeply,
as if I could draw forgiveness
from the cool morning air.
*The sun rises over
the five-million-year-old shield
of the long-dead volcano,
spinner dolphins soar and twist
above a heavy, glassy sea.*

My shadow takes shape
on the sand; it's black,
and without burden.

William LeGro

WANDERING SON

JEFF SOUTHWICK

Just a job - Owen wandered with a squeegee into a dusty wilderness, removing specks from the diminished vision of the high and mighty, left them with a clear view, just doing what they gotta do, reality in their city.

A dude drawn from waters of the Caribbean by a good timing woman, she held him, embalmed in delusions saying it is what it is, on a swaying breeze as she kept him cradled between coconut palm trees.

Just a dude, son of Joseph wasn't looking for a mission, just doing what he gotta do, wandered inland, milking some money, rapping with his buddies, tapping honey without drawing attention of the bees.

Struck by lightning and blown off a ladder, when they found him smoking in a rose of Sharon, so it is what it is, looking like a faded ghost of Moses, licking frogs on the prairie and hanging out in pharaoh's tavern.

Dude's memory is playing games and can't remember what is written on his own heart, with asian letters on his hands, he's bound to what God said, just do what you gotta do, in a phone message across his forehead.

Just a puppy Little One listens to him, bits of shepherd in black and white, she hears him say it is what it is, Owen's plea for mercy that she passes unto God, swept together and piled gray as fur on the floor.

Little birds trapped behind his hollow walls, released from the sheetrock through fist size holes, you do what you gotta do, released into freedom the damage done, patched by the maintenance man with no charge to Owen.

Withered muscles and no fat layer on his frame, metal rods hold his bones together but thin skin can't protect him from winter and freezing rain, this is what it is, weather keeps him tethered to a space heater.

Cops called to slurred complaints, crack thugs kicked his door, latch is broken, Owen is stuck here between heathens and hypocrites, "I thought were my friends" steal my pain meds and the manager, "she don't believe me."

A muddy shoe print of orange clay, marks his apartment door like a bloody stain, a warning sign of vulnerability, do what you do leaves the manager hesitant, with a new door frame Owen might just invite the junkies back.

Cops think he's an addict, judge took away his license, so he lost the title to his pickup truck, why is this what it is, Owen crying out "what is the plan," when the Lord abandons him like a foreigner in this cowboy land.

A colorful yoke upon church friends when the pharmacist won't replace his lost medications, accusations of sale or overdose, gotta be what it is, when junkies laugh at his visions and praise him, gathered around their golden calf.

Little One is overgrown according to the apartment lease, trapped by a door closed by the Lord, is it what it is, and where have his friends living on mammon gone? A bitter herb spit upon Owen's ear.

Pushed out of time, while waiting on the Lord to provide, people, who can part the gulf to Miami's promised sands, you do what you gotta, gotta go my Little One, only us with bags on the bus, our chariot to brother Aaron's house.

A spare bed in a new town, eight hundred miles too far north of home, it's a tight space for Owen and Little One, it is what it is he says, he's become the burden of brother Aaron, with safety concerns, rising tensions, and crazy talking.

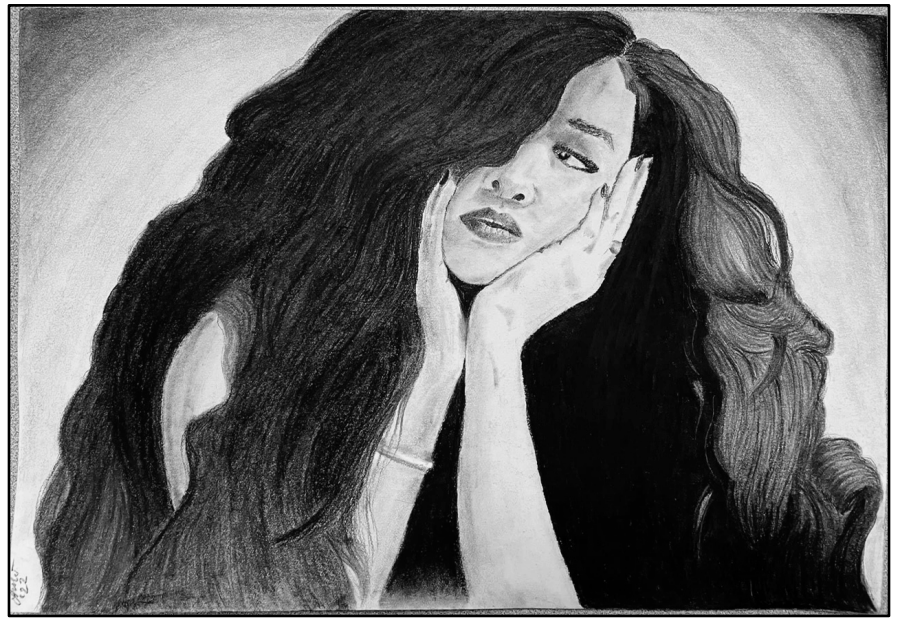
Damn Medicaid and the new physician won't listen, taking old prescriptions, his nightly neuron fires leave Owen's days a slurred empty haze, hell is what it is, only Little One gives him motive to count his pills dosage.

Days pass as negotiations fail, oh Lord please don't leave me in a Greensboro ghetto, do what you gotta spare us from that crack dealer on the corner, staring at me, Little One my loyal dog wouldn't hurt a flea.

Barefoot on warm beach sand, a frisbee tossed to Little One, then a cold mist comes down over Owen, alone in the stinking bed of a nursing home, the aide too busy to lift a cup for his parched lips a drink, peace, it is what is.

Do what you gotta do Lord, I see October coming on a gulf stream breeze, if I don't make it home, just take me up as a cloud of beach sand, and please give Little One a home in Coral Gables, my promised land.

☪ ☪ ☪



lisa weller

EVICTION NOTICE

JAMES OTTER

Any day they're going to take me away. I know how the story goes.

Wash your windows and draw the curtains. Vacuum your floor. Clean your dishes. Wipe down the counter. Check the batteries in smoke detector. Clear debris from the porch. Take out the trash when all the parents come out to pick up their kids. Make sure you have the correct witness.

The next time I see my former neighbors, they're either sleeping on the sidewalk under a grimy blanket or they're on a missing poster.

At any time for any reason, the management could decide to kick you out. A single crumb. A loose nail. Too many tack holes. Dark circles and signs of drug use. Anything not uniform, it's a red notice—three days till you're outside among the elements. Fresh meat for them.

The landlord knows what they're doing. You're a sacrifice. Your stability is a liability. You're a growing list of punishments for them. No matter what you do you're being timed. Six months to six hard years of good behavior. The more inspections passed, the higher their standards. Landlords pray for a missed check. A bad smell. Any excuse to get rid of you.

I can't really explain it. The eviction rates in my complex are massive. People are constantly getting thrown out. The next time I see my former neighbors, they're either sleeping on the sidewalk under a grimy blanket or they're on a missing poster. Even those posters vanish. As if the person never existed to begin with.

I have my theories. The landlords support instability. They might even get off on it. Once I heard someone knocking on the doors. It echoed through the halls. Some answered. For those that didn't, I heard a second sound. A jingling of keys.

To those that weren't home... A bright yellow notice for health hazards. An orange one for damages. Red one for 72-hour eviction.

The landlords make their own rules.

They raise the rent every six months. Recently it's become three.

I haven't been hit yet. I try to stay home. Order my groceries online. Keep a low profile. I know too much for my own safety. I've listened in on the wrong conversation. I want people to know.

My want to educate the world builds inside me. It distracts me from the awful truth I can't tell anybody. They wouldn't believe me if I told them.

I'm next on the chopping block. All it takes is one impulsive video. One rant. One simple thought to grow into a confession. I can only stay silent for so long before I'm silenced forever.

They know when I'm listening, no matter the lock, no matter what I put on my windows or how often I close my eyes. They already know what I could say. Nobody is going to believe me. I'd be isolated from my friends if I was foolish enough to let them in.

The nature of these monsters is not anything I want to understand. I don't want to know of their existence.

I hear whispers in the night. Pacing outside my door. I swear it's not the neighbors. It's not the management. It's a psychological attack, tempting me to look through the peephole so they can know for certain I am home. I can't run away.

One bad inspection. That's all it's going to take. Martin Luther nails his eviction notice to my cathedral of cleanliness.

Three days of mercy to look forward to. When they finally get in, while I'm resting my eyes in my neatly made bed, the last thing I'll see will be an emotionless face with an unmoving expression. The last thing I'll feel will be rough hands holding me down. A taste of plastic and a moment of air. It could happen any day now.

I brush my teeth. I want to look good before I go bad. When the notice arrives, I want this apartment to stink. I want it to be a bad time.

I'm not strong enough to give up. I wish I was. It's dread that keeps me scrubbing the floors and bleaching the toilet.

It's the Valley. The air gets tainted. The cold is always outside. When the heat returns, I won't remember anything. The next day I'll be the one outside the door. With the red paper. With no memory of myself. A simple tool in a machine that needs no other purpose than to keep the lights on.

My burden will go forgotten as well. It's the cost of knowing. The cost is my very persona.

Nobody needs this lesson. I pity all who have to learn it. ☪ ☪ ☪



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The Days of My Life

The days of my life roll on, like the wind over the wild hills.

I live my life in pulses like my heartbeat. Stopping and going, constantly moving, deeply, fast, slow, unsteady

My mind is the universe, I don't know where it goes, it's endless, scary and expansive.

I crash against the salt crusted rocks, harsh and unexpected, then settle down to the sea floor. My heart is in the impact, feeling it first and then everything else comes after.

I stand on the edge of an endless expanse of my life. For it never stops, yet I always seem to be on the edge of it; the fall into the canyon below is a threat always in the back of my mind, a herd of buffalo are charging at me, forcing me to be the first to jump.

I'm guilty, like an honest stare, and angry like the world seems to be. But I'm free like an untied helium balloon, and wholly like existence.

The drum to my life beats on, echoing out into the future. Solely, and alone, while universal life interludes it in mysterious ways.

I give and take, I live and die periodically, and I inhale and exhale the days of my life.

Cayla Meyer

Fire By Friction

What else

Forgetting the Visions and Dreams
Caught up being a personality.

Thinking we're somebody

Thinking we are a Body

Tools running Wild

Or succumbing

Mediocrity . . . Madness

Genius or Dupe

We're creating Virtual Reality

Within a Virtual Reality

Such Fun . . . And Torment

To Play in Matter

Get Dirty . . . Get Clean

Our Soul to Guide Us

Some escape through Death . . . of Body

Some by Death of Personality . . . Does the Trick

Rebuild this social Tool

To build Character . . . To Build a Rainbow Nation

Hillbilly

Ugh

Ugh sometimes I want to just grab the earth, splintered soil between my fingers and squeeze the dripping life out of it

At moments of ease, reality is so visceral that I feel every bit of energy soaking into the shallow walls of my skin

It feels as if something great is going to happen, perhaps a swallow taking flight or a spring pea bursting into daylight

I want to rough up my hands in something dirty and something real, feeling up every powerful fir and grasping fog from stagnant air

In those moments nature is made for and from me, revealing the constant truth that the best things in life are free

Isabella Espinoza

Kaleidoscope

I am keeping it real
I am keeping it simple
I am following my intuition
and my intuition is grounded
in a real sense of direction
I am kindness over coolness

I am not questioning
my own authority
not anymore
I am letting loose into creation
I am taking the dirt of my experiences
spitting and making clay of it
I am shaping of my experiences
a bowl to contain them all
like how our skin
is just a vessel
for our stories

I will shrine it
I will stow it away
I will never forget
certain moments of
certain days
I watch my life
as if on stage
a wall leaning observer
a sometimes orchestrator
a container of both chaos and order:
this body, solid
this mind, wanderlusting
this spirit, pulsing

I observe the play of
night and day
the come and go
of the tides
the movement
of the planets
of the moon

I walk through the
quaking aspen
I sit under the
weeping willow
I settle, at last,
in a redwood grove
I am growing
taller
stronger
and supported

I bring my palms
into prayer
I stop and stare
at a kaleidoscope of
living and breathing
all around me
I fold into myself
and just breathe

I let go
I grow
I breathe

let go
grow
breathe

let go
grow
breathe

let go
grow
breathe

let go
grow
breathe

let go
grow
breathe

Terah Van Dusen

Untitled

I have a body.
Wow.
I wasn't looking
For this much
Responsibility.

Hillbilly

Tech Up, Health Down

John Zerzan

A new book is Zeynep Akbal's *Lived-Body Experiences in Virtual Reality: A Phenomenology of the Virtual Body*. The title itself perfectly expresses the horror of human melding with the machine, where we trade in our actual selves for avatars of ourselves. As if the Virtual is not this evacuation or replacement of real, lived existence.

The lies of politics (e.g. fascist Trump vs. Genocide Joe) are almost inconsequential compared to the all-enveloping, determinative onslaught of technology. What isn't at stake at the deepest level?

Generative—more like degenerative—Artificial Intelligence, “machine learning,” Meta AI, chatbot robotics, etc. The developing high-tech ensemble is turning life into “life.”

Unsurprisingly, there's a lot of tech-anxiety to go along with eco-anxiety over the death of actual life on this planet. A condition of dis-ease exists, not unrelated to the decline of general health and well-being.

Jennifer Lunden's *2023 American Breakdown* delves into “our ailing nation,” but fails to see the connection to technology. Along with chronic physical disabilities, isolation and loneliness are the norm as time spent glued to the screen has increased. Anxiety, depression, suicide rates rise along with ever more technification of daily life. The much noted “mental health crisis of youth” can be tracked with precision to the advent and increased use of smartphones. “The phone-based life produces spiritual degradation, not just in adolescents, but in all of us,” adds social psychologist Jonathan Haight. More and more tech equals more and more immiseration. ☹☹☹

ANARCHY RADIO with John Zerzan. KWVA 88.1 FM
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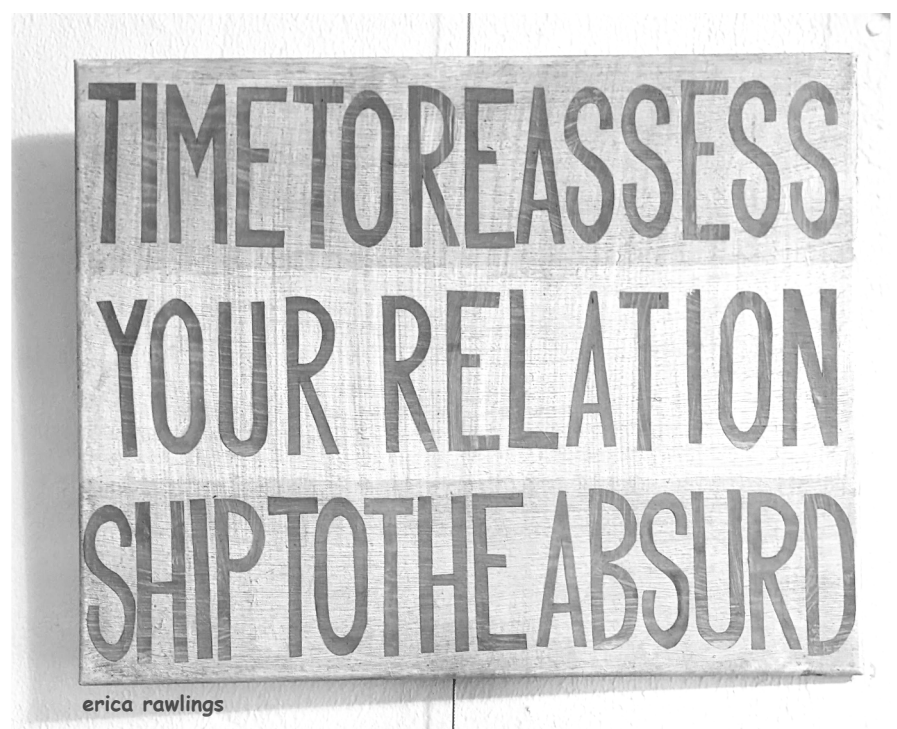
Imitation of Nature

Stephen Slater

In the residential area between downtown and 18th Ave. in Eugene, Oregon, there is a large hunk of concrete leaning against the trunk of a tree in the yard of a single-family house. Several lengths of rebar protruding from the concrete have been twisted into fanciful shapes which draw attention to the fact that the object, apparently discarded as rubbish, no longer performs its original function. A configuration of holes in the concrete suggests the main features of a face or mask. But the bricolage from which a quasi-face has emerged has been almost completely covered by several kinds of moss, giving the whole thing an aura of having been “reclaimed” by nature, like a ruin.

Reclamation by nature on a large scale is in full view at Delta Ponds, just north of Valley River Center. After use as a gravel pit in the 1950s and '60s, the city purchased the site in the late 1970s and restored many of its natural features between 2004 and 2012. It is not even remotely pristine, since almost everything there has been rearranged, yet it is no longer simply an abandoned quarry. Too disturbed to be anything like an undeveloped tract, it is nonetheless a very appealing urban park, but with a less “manicured” character than many of those to its south.

Allowing the forces of nature to at least partially reclaim something may be appreciated in a variety of situations, but apparently not by those who prefer to replace what is living with an imitation of it. Not far from the concrete object described above, there is an apartment building with a lawn of artificial grass. The desolate monotony of the pseudo-grass rectangle is interrupted by numerous weeds that refuse to be suppressed. This has happened at least once before, about a year ago, followed by removal of the offending plants. The real stuff, i.e., life, will no doubt once again be eradicated so as to no longer make the imitation “look bad.” But does a perfectly uniform plastigrass crew cut look good? ☹☹☹





Running through Masonic Cemetery

marcel tulloh

People I Know

keep dying
faster than I can write
poems for them,
remember them alive
so they will live for others
who breathe their breaths.
It's the least I can do—
no, all I can do, and
often not even that.

Dan Liberthson

Tin Foil Windows

Runoff trickles from the town
Visitations make not a sound
Soggy down in a creek bottom
Living lives that don't belong
Sleeping log that rot hollowed
Under soil— home is a burrow
Nests woven with fragments
Cast off shreds to pay the rent
Green lush grass— once a garden
In a casket of white aluminum
A cave of guano stained carpet
Steady drips the leaky faucet
Dark world of glass under tinfoil
Life buried under casket blankets
She stares— but never sees the sun
Light comes in on Bonanza reruns
Ten years gone— his door fast shut
Clothes in cobwebs— books in dust
Snuffed a wound— ashes smoldering
Stagnate air of ammonia nicotine
Missing shingles— her casket leaks
Family photos— rain stained cheeks
Hope lost— snake swallows a mouse
The only life in a decaying house
Puppy then— damn an old dog now
Lost control of bladder and bowel
Her coffin sinks down deeper daily
Sooner should she miss the ashtray
Old westerns— no need for gasoline
Little Joe— the hero in her dreams
He kept his saddle in horse races
No glass covers his smiling face
Never sees old friends anymore
Just leave groceries at the door
Flowers bleach on a gravestone
As a ghost with no will to roam

Jeff Southwick

I Want to Die Like Ray Did

By my own terms
with no institutions involved
Raging to the very end
Whirling dervishes
until I lay down and die.
I want to die like Ray did
willing to play the fool
rather than settle
for a comfortable lie
that no longer fits.
I want to die like Ray did
in a state of grace
so full of wisdom
duality no longer confuses me
when I'm no longer
a man or a woman
old or young
smart or dumb
When I'm like he was
when my past becomes
more important than now.
I hope I have the courage
to will myself dead
without even a flinch
of self pity
like Ray did.

Elayne Quirin

Smile

The void can be a friendly place
That smile says on the Buddha's face
And with my ever thickening waist
That's just the cheer I need to hear.
I've always thought the void was cold,
That when at last my bones are old
And shed their flesh and lightly roll
Into a ditch or there be pitched
My soul, if such a thing I have,
Would find itself without a salve
In endless outer coldness grabbed
By frigid winds for all my sins.
But when I look upon that smile
I half believe that all this while
I've missed the truth by many a mile:
Some warmth may come when I am done.
Will radiance then be my lot
When what I'm made of goes to rot?
I think well, maybe, maybe not.
But come what may, that smile will stay.

Dan Liberthson

At This Point

At this point in life
I wonder when the axe will fall.

I deal with people of all ages.
I can imaginatively put myself
into all ages, both genders.

I wonder when a debilitating disease
will visit me or a loved one
and snap life like a guillotined head
bouncing roughly into a straw basket.

At this point I wonder
if I will have time to read
or reread favorite books.
I wonder which of our contracts
will go first.

At this point I don't
want to change my lifestyle
to accommodate the norm.

At this point I wonder
if cognitive thought processes
will wane like wind,
and blow away.

Bill Gunn

Lines Before Leaving

It's hard to be glib
Facing Mr. D
Whose first initial's
The same as me.

O pregnant letter
Round at the waist,
You carried me in once—
now you'd have me erased.

I could fib and say
You don't scare me
Big, bad Mr. D—
Just let me be.

But you know I won't
And I know you'll not
So why play around.
Must it end in rot?

Then all would be
As if it were not
And who said what
Won't matter a jot.

Take a load off, D
Sit a spell and visit
Be a pal, not a pall—
Not so hard, is it?

I'll tell you a story,
And tell it so well
You'll forget all about
Sending me to Hell.

No skin off your nose
If I get another day,
Another couple years
Or a decade, say?

Oh, you're busy, yes?
On the clock?
I get that man—
We're all in hock.

But you grabbed my friends
And stuffed them in your sack.
Like an anti-Santa
You won't give them back.

Not the dearest, not the best
Not even the worst
Though I'd take in a second
Even those I've cursed.

Help me out here, bro'
I don't mean to rile—
You'll get your reward
When you see me smile.

I'll bet not a soul
Has smiled at you
Since you took the job—
You know it's true.

Be a sport, don't take issue—
That dismissive snort
Won't work for you:
You've no soft tissue.

Give me a pass,
Leave me awake—
Come on Mr. D,
What'll it take?

This silence of yours,
Give it a break!
You've wrecked my nerves
For heaven's sake!

Say something, dammit,
Give me a clue,
Don't let me dangle—
Would I do that to you?

Lose the hollow stare,
No way is this fair
And it never will be. Damn!
You really don't care.

Dan Liberthson

Our History by the walking historian

Randy Gudeika



At Eugene's Riverfront Park, next to the old Steam Plant, is a new street with an old name, old as in time immemorial. "Nak-nak," pronounced knawk knawk, is Kalapuyan for "duck," like Bo Nix and Marcus Mariota. The Kalapuya were the first people to live here. Why didn't the indigenous fight for the land? By the 1840s, when the brave farmers came, 80% of the Kalapuya population had been killed off by white man's diseases like malaria. They left the white settlers a paradisiacal oak savanna, having used prescribed burning to keep down the shady Douglas fir and promote growth of food-providing oaks and other plant life. So, when the sturdy pioneers struggled over the Oregon Trail, they didn't find a wilderness here, they found a virtual park, though their lives were certainly no walk in the park. Maybe the Riverfront Park developers will start a renaming trend around the city, although I think it goes without saying — there was no Kalapuyan word for "park."

- RANDY

More: For further Kalapuyan history, Grand Ronde tribal member and professor David Lewis has a wonderful free website, *The Quartux Journal*, and a new book: *Tribal Histories of the Willamette Valley*.

Something Sweet

My soul now sighs of something sweet

The words
I never used
just lie there.

Teardrop shaped leaves
What we experienced together was
unusual and rare

You are near and dear to my heart
How could you dare?

Fergul Cirpan

Quantum Jumping

A sacred journey
on this Earth

Secrets to happiness
in my own very hands

It is either full moon
with a full heart,
or a new moon
with a new love...

Fergul Cirpan

Untitled

sense of scale, warped by high potency
desire to wrap my feet, my weathered fingers in dirt
to swim, to drift slowly in an ocean with no water,
just mounds and mounds of salt
gripping onto the tendrils of wind that
propel me along as an aerodynamic thing of forged steel
the anthropocene's albatross
cutting through, splitting the deck of shuffling time
autonomous, against my whispering will
to scrape myself against the cards, the grains, the blades
staring, cropped, stationary, fixated
on something that once made me gun-shy,
laying limp in my bound hands

Orion Ashe

Theatre of Cruelty

Yesterday it rained, a nice gentle Spring rain,
and all of the trees along the river are sprouting new leaves.
So, I donned some rain gear and took a walk.
At one point the river weaves through a University campus
and there are these concrete bicycle trails meandering about.
A man pedaled by on a two-seat bicycle, seemingly oblivious
to the fact that the seat behind him was empty.
"Hey . . . Hey," I cried, "You lost your partner somewhere!"
He glanced my way with obvious disdain and just kept pedaling.

Wes Hansen

The Rising of the South

Workers at the Chattanooga, Tennessee, VW plant won a landslide union representation victory, April 19. In doing so, they defied centuries of oppression and class division by the rich and powerful.

Jim Smith

What's more, they violated the South's unwritten rule by uniting Black and white workers. The vote was 2628 for representation by the United Auto Workers, and 985 against. That's a margin of 73 percent.

The Southern "aristocracy," has fought for centuries to maintain their power, by any means necessary. That "peculiar labor," as John C. Calhoun called slavery in 1828 was the beginning of the PR campaign to put a smiley face on the ownership and mistreatment of human beings nearly two hundred years after it began in the U.S. colonies.

In a statement before the election in Chattanooga, six Southern governors urged the workers to reject the union.

After the civil war, the wealthy resorted to outright terrorism against former slaves, and those northern whites who would help them. The Ku Klux Klan was funded by the rich, while much of the dirty work, including murders, was handled by lower-income whites.

During the Ulysses S. Grant administration, union soldiers were sent to the South to suppress the violence against Blacks. The passage of discriminatory legislation against Blacks, known as Jim Crow laws, created nearly slave-like conditions for former slaves. One of the provisions called for the strict segregation of Black and white workers. Jim Crow laws continued until the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Even the Ku Klux Klan was revived in the 1920s, and again in the 1960s. Many right-wing Southerners are equally comfortable with neo-Nazi groups and the KKK.

In spite of "progress" in civil rights during the past half century, wage discrimination continues with Blacks averaging 20 percent, or more, below wages of white workers. Hence the need for a union.

Are the rich and powerful still fighting to keep workers down? Yes, they are. In a statement before the election in Chattanooga, six Southern Governors urged the workers to reject the union. The governors were: Bill Lee (Tennessee), Kay Ivey (Alabama), Brian Kemp (Georgia), Tate Reeves (Mississippi), Henry McMaster (South Carolina), and Greg Abbott (Texas).

The united victory of Black and white workers in the United Auto Workers Union election portends the possibility of a new day in the South. The election win at VW was overwhelming. It may be followed at the Mercedes non-union auto plant near Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where 5,000 workers are eligible to vote from May 13-17.

The campaign for better pay, benefits, retirement, health & safety, and workplace rights regardless of

race or ethnicity is showing signs of becoming a movement. Active organizing campaigns are being waged at Hyundai in Montgomery, Alabama, and Toyota in Troy, Missouri. According to the UAW, workers at over two dozen other plants are in the midst of organizing campaigns.

The desire for unionization has been growing around the U.S. in the past few years, but the UAW's drive represents a huge advance where multiple facilities with thousands of workers are seriously being courted by a major union. The UAW was founded in the 1930s by left-wing, shop-floor workers, like Wyndham Mortimer, Robert Travis and hundreds more in nearly every plant then making automobiles. Long-time president, Walter Reuther came along later.

In recent years, the UAW had been plagued with corruption in high places. In the early 2020s, both the current president, Gary Jones, and the previous president, Dennis Williams were sent to prison for corruption, including embezzlement.

A reform president, Shawn Fein, was elected who cleaned house, and led a powerful strike movement against the Big Three auto makers which won most of the UAW's demands and made them the leading force in the AFL-CIO.

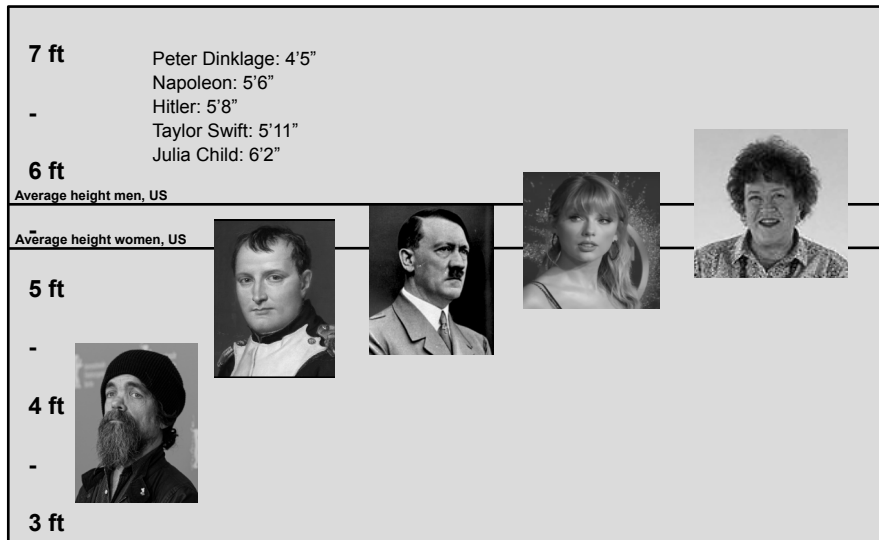
The prospects of organizing thousands of workers, if not millions, may be at hand if the unions follow through on their new-found militancy. But where are the other unions? The current crop of union leaders have to look to their past.

In 1946, the CIO (the militant wing of what became the AFL-CIO) voted that all its unions should join Operation Dixie, which was a campaign to focus on 12 Southern states. The plan was good, but the times were wrong. President Roosevelt had died the previous year and the Democratic Party was backing down from its New Deal program, which had brought us social security, created jobs, provided relief for the poor, and reigned in capitalist booms and busts, among other things.

Republicans won a Congressional majority in 1946 and began dismantling the New Deal. The cold war was beginning with hostility against wartime ally, the Soviet Union, and driving communists out of their jobs, particularly in unions, and in many cases, sending them to prison. This caused division, and in-fighting among unions and ultimately brought about the failure of Operation Dixie.

Something like Operation Dixie could work today. Unions are getting along together, and top union leaders are learning that they have more job security if they stand up for their members, instead of catering to the employers. The support for unions among the general public has never been stronger.

Let's hope that the UAW is successful in its Southern organizing campaigns and that other unions follow their lead. With success, the atmosphere of the entire country could change. ☺☺☺



SIZE matters

Rene Tihista

It's time to question, with prejudice, the tired stereotype a surprising number of writers still refer to as the so-called "Small Man Complex." The theory of this fake neurosis argues that a man of small stature who is ambitious, driven, megalomaniacal, and obsessed with achieving power, is motivated by a need to overcompensate for feelings of inferiority due to his size. Napoleon is often cited as the prototype (the Napoleon Complex) though he was about average height for his time and the Corsican population he was born into. Stalin is also cited, though again, he was about average for a Georgian male born in 1879. His modern successor Vladimir Putin is often scornfully described this way as well.

Hitler was five-eight or five-nine, average height for Austrian males born in 1889. Did he have an average man's complex? Peter the Great, the Russian Czar who conquered most of Central Asia and established the Russian Empire, was six-foot-seven, clearly taller than average. He achieved great power and killed lots of people. Did he have a tall man's complex? Six-foot-four-inch Charles De Gaulle so irritated Churchill, Roosevelt and Eisenhower during WWII, they tried to find a replacement for him. De Gaulle insisted on being considered the personification of the grandeur of France—its beacon of light in the darkness of the Nazi occupation. He often referred to himself as "France." Sounds like a complex to me.

If a tall man acts like Peter the Great or Charles De Gaulle, for some reason he doesn't get saddled with a "complex" like short guys do. I can only assume it's because such behavior is expected of tall men and when a short guy acts that way, he's got a complex. Is that fair? Does it make any sense? Of course not. So it must be based on short-stature envy (SSE).

Writers like Hemingway who described men with this phony neurosis must have been jealous that short guys could be so smart, fierce and successful. Guys like Attila the Hun, reputed to be barely five-feet-two and one bad hombre. Or how about Alexander the Great, only about five-five? T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia) falls into that short guy category too, and funny people who make you laugh, like Mel Brooks who's five-four. Current mega star actor Peter Dinklage is four-foot-five inches.

Now I am a man smallish in stature and I'm not complaining. But it's time to toss this small-man complex idea into the trash heap of history, as Donald Trump might say. And by the way, he's also a tall guy. You could write an entire book on his complexes and pathologies. In fact, someone has.

When it comes to complexes, I think tall guys have them too. They certainly get all the breaks. One famous study of corporate life demonstrated that taller men got promoted faster than shorter ones. And that held true even if the tall guy was dumber. I wonder if it's the same for women? Do short women get tagged with a complex if they're competitive, power-mad and pushy? I've never heard of a short woman's complex. Am I missing something here?

This issue is a serious concern to me because our population is getting taller. What's to become of short people when all those bean poles are running everything? Ironically, I always found that being short presented certain advantages. For instance, in High School and College, short legs allowed for more agility when making out in the back seat of a car. And even more so in the front seat. I pitied those tall dudes having to cramp their long legs trying to maneuver in such a confined space.

The long and the short of it is there's absolutely no empirical evidence to substantiate the "Small Man Complex" myth. In my opinion it's small-minded and short sighted.

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Writing Wrongs

by Graffiti Don

Here's another batch of writing issues to consider in your Graffiti submission.

STYLE

What is style? It might not be what you think. In publishing lingo, as opposed to purely writing lingo, "style" has little to do with your personal voice. Rather, it concerns how certain elements of your writing — mostly punctuation, but sometimes spelling and grammar, too — are presented in your work.

Believe it or not, whole books are devoted to this. The original text on style, still much revered today, is *The Elements of Style*, written by William Strunk Jr. in 1918 and revised and expanded by editor E.B. White in 1959. It's colloquially referred to as "Strunk & White." The original is out of copyright and can be read online at Project Gutenberg, or find a (Graffiti-favored) hardcopy version at the library. It's a general guide to the basics. Since its publication, several varying schools of style have emerged for use in specific types of publications. For example, AP (for Associated Press) style is the predominant style used in newspapers, primarily because it's designed to squeeze the most information into the smallest space. "Chicago" style comes from the University of Chicago Press and is widely used in book publishing. Other common styles include those of the MLA (Modern Language Association) and APA (American Psychological Association), which are frequently used in academic circles.

Each of these styles has its own book of rules (all of which are available at the library and make for fascinating reading). How are they different? Here's one common example: AP style calls for omitting a comma before the final "and" in a list of items, e.g., "*The American flag is red, white and blue.*" By contrast, Chicago style calls for including that final "serial" or "Oxford" comma, hence, "*The American flag is red, white, and blue.*" Language nerds argue endlessly over this comma.

Style guides also may differ in the way they call for numbers to be represented (when to spell them out vs. when to use numerals), what to capitalize or italicize, how to abbreviate words... the list is long. Many publishers develop their own in-house style guides mixing elements of the different schools.

What's the point of all this? "Style" is not so much a question of right or wrong as a framework to ensure consistency within a document or among multiple documents. Does that consistency matter? For the reading experience, absolutely! The brain is an amazing machine. You may not care intellectually one way or another about any given style, but I guarantee you that as a reader, you will notice inconsistency in its use. You may not even be able to pinpoint that inconsistency, but you may find yourself thinking something was wrong — the reading wasn't smooth, the text seemed rough somehow. And that gets in the way of easy communication. You don't want the marks on the paper to get in the way of the reader. You want them to get out of the way so the reader can grasp the concepts you're trying to communicate without stumbling on the ink. So whichever style strategies you use, try to be consistent with them. It does make a difference.

PUNCTUATION

We started with style today because some of the following punctuation tips are style dependent, as you'll see.

Commas

We just talked about use (or not) of the Oxford comma. The trend in written English these days seems to be to minimize punctuation as long as readability is not affected and ambiguity is not introduced. If you don't use the Oxford comma, you risk ambiguity rearing its hilarious head, as in these egregious examples: "*Among those interviewed were Merle Haggard's two ex-wives, Kris Kristofferson and Robert Duvall,*" or, "*This book is dedicated to my parents, Ayn Rand and God,*" or my favorite, "*Highlights of Peter Ustinov's global tour include encounters with Nelson Mandela, an 800-year-old demigod and a dildo collector.*"

I tend to use commas where I would pause while speaking, which may further explain my fondness for the Oxford comma (i.e., I don't say "*Red, whiteandblue*" as if it were two items instead of three).

A traditional no-no with commas is the "comma splice," i.e., using a comma alone without the conjunction "and." For example, "*Graffiti is great, it's goofy, too.*" That's awkward to read, isn't it? Change it to either "*Graffiti is great. It's goofy, too.*" Or "*Graffiti is great, and it's goofy, too.*" Or just "*Graffiti is goofy. Period.*"

I also, see submissions with, random, commas thrown in for, no, apparent reason. Don't do that.

Hyphens and Dashes

A hyphen (-) is the short guy and really common. It's used to connect compound modifiers ("*Graffiti is a reader-written publication*"), numbers ("*twenty-seven*"), and phone numbers (obvs). On the keyboard, it's the key just right of the zero, lowercase. Note: You don't need to hyphenate a compound modifier when the first word ends in "-ly." So, e.g., "*a rapidly approaching train.*"

An en dash (—) is longer than a hyphen. It's the least commonly used dash. AP style doesn't use it at all. Chicago style uses it when one side of a compound modifier consists of two words ("*Graffiti is not a New York-based publication*"); in sports scores ("*the Emeralds won by a score of 7-3*"); in travel ("*a London-Paris flight*"); in spans of years ("*1920-1955*"); and probably a few other places I'm forgetting at the moment. Look it up in your style guide of choice. On a Mac keyboard, it's "option+hyphen."

The em dash (—) is the longest dash and used frequently. A pair of them are often used like parentheses to set off a tangential bit of info from the main text. For example, "*I like to read Graffiti — a most amazing publication! — before breakfast every morning.*" Sometimes a single one works, too, as in "*Every morning before breakfast, I like to read Graffiti — a most amazing publication!*"

The em dash is a little tricky stylistically because various methods for representing it are in use. Some styles use the keyboard em dash with no spaces on either side, while others put the space on either side. Some people use two hyphens (which many word processors automatically convert to an em dash). And some people use space+em dash+space (the common British style). Pick your favorite and stick with it. The em dash on the Mac keyboard is "shift+option+hyphen."

That's all for now, kids! Keep on writing!

"If you have any young friends who aspire to become writers, the second greatest favor you can do for them is to present them with copies of *The Elements of Style*. The first greatest, of course, is to shoot them now, while they're happy."

— Dorothy Parker

My Old Pickup

(continued from p.4)

I decided to try posting on Facebook Market Place, which was much like Craigslist. But I thought perhaps it would attract a different clientele. There had to be somebody out there who was actually looking for a Toyota pickup with the 22R engine extra cab long bed, someone who understood the value of that kind of truck, someone who liked to fix up old vehicles and restore them. But I got no response from any would-be buyers like that.

José was the next interested buyer. He called on a Saturday afternoon that was convenient for me. He was local so it was easier to meet since I had to wait only a half hour or so for him to arrive. He was friendly and easy to communicate with. He took it for a drive and offered me \$1500. I tried to negotiate the price, setting it at \$1600. He agreed and we shook hands on it. He didn't have the cash on him at the time and said he had to go to his bank on Monday. He belonged to the same credit union I did. I told him I would meet him there Monday afternoon after he got off work and bring the title and the keys to do the final transaction. Then Monday morning I got a text from him telling me that he found another vehicle.


At that point I was ready to donate it to St. Vincent's used car lot to simplify things. The whole ordeal was beginning to get quite time-consuming taking calls and reading text messages.

After that I reposted on Craigslist and got a text from Juan who lived in Salem also. He drove down after he got off work on Friday. He told me was a house painter and needed a truck for work. We took it for a short drive around the block and up the hill to 18th and then right onto Oakpatch back to my place.

"It runs good but it needs a lot of work," he said and offered me \$1200, way lower than the two previous offers. But what the hell, I was ready to give it to St. Vincent's anyway. I could just look at it as a partial donation to a hard-working poor struggling Mexican so I said \$1300 and he agreed on it. He counted out thirteen one hundred dollar bills and handed them to me. I signed the title over and handed him the keys and took a deep sigh of relief. He had no one with him so he couldn't drive it back to Salem until he brought someone back with him to pick it up. He said he would be back on the weekend to pick it up.

At long last that old pickup would become history for me and I could move on, having recently purchased a 2000 Tacoma SR-5 extra cab five-speed 4-cylinder with only 85,000 miles on it. It would serve as my work truck and road cruising and pleasure vehicle also.


My old '87 was in bad need of a paint job and had seen its better days, and I always parked it around the corner and out of sight wherever I went on the weekends. There were times when it still had yard debris in the back. Even if my Tacoma has yard debris in the back I don't feel ashamed to park it in front of wherever I happen to be. But seldom does it now since I work less and use it more as my casual vehicle. I try to ride my bike when I'm not working or going out for the evening — less CO₂ emissions and lighter carbon footprint. I'm waiting for the day when the auto manufacturers come out with a hybrid or electric pickup. But by then I probably won't need a pickup and I might be too old to drive anyway. 🚲🚲🚲




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24 and One-Half Addresses

Chris Carrera

I.
Birth,
Antebellum ghost walking down the hallway,
our bodies were replaced.

II.
"H" Street,
I strummed a guitar for the first time,
fell in love with a dark-haired, elusive stranger.

III.
Across the street from city hall,
broken glass fell from the sky,
cut the bridge of my nose.

IV.
Monterey green,
graffiti,
fountain poured over me.

V.
Moved across the country,
tobacco barn smoke prayers,
half-blood wolf picks up my scent.

VI.
El Dorado,
but there was no gold,
only sensual emptiness.

VII.
Train tracks,
red mud,
tried to break away from her.

VIII.
Pregnancy,
lost a child,
shattered.

IX.
Rebirth,
house on a lake,
hope and prospects.

X.
Navy,
medicine, broken bones, pinched nerves,
6 months in purgatory.

XI.
I met you in purgatory,
does that mean you were the darkness that surrounded me,
or the penny in my coffer?

XII.
We became reluctant neighbors,
I saw you making a blanket,
was it to warm or smother me?

XIII.
Three neighbors,
you and I wrestled with each other,
first born son entered stage left.

XIV.
We planted flowers,
our son tried to consume the earth,
then we all moved far away.

XV.
First island home,
ocean and typhoons,
we tried so hard to prevent the gale from tearing us apart.

XVI.
Second island home,
waterfall down the stairs,
geckos, coconut crabs, our children danced in the rain.

XVII.
Back in the mainland,
we finished our indentured servitude,
but go where and do what?

XVIII.
Landing spot just for starters,
accepted labor at white collar sweatshop,
we were so pressed and desperate.

XIX.
Flew like birds to the West,
emerald city atop a hill,
seeds of resentment planted.

XX.
Little white house on acreage,
the summer burned us,
I left you behind while I found our wages.

XXI.
First home that we called our own,
you never liked it, then cancer,
more resentment.

XXII.
We decided to keep it weird,
little swimming pool across the street,
we could hear our neighbors making love.

XXIII.
We got lucky and found a nice place,
the woodwork was lovely and meth heads abounded,
the town felt like a beautiful, sweet cupcake hovering over Hades.

XXIV.
Back at the start of the trail together,
looking for breathing room and freedom from oppressors,
we found that we are our own oppressors.

Half.
We are two halves again and no longer one,
you departed to grasp at that fire-licked cupcake,
I am out of purgatory.

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