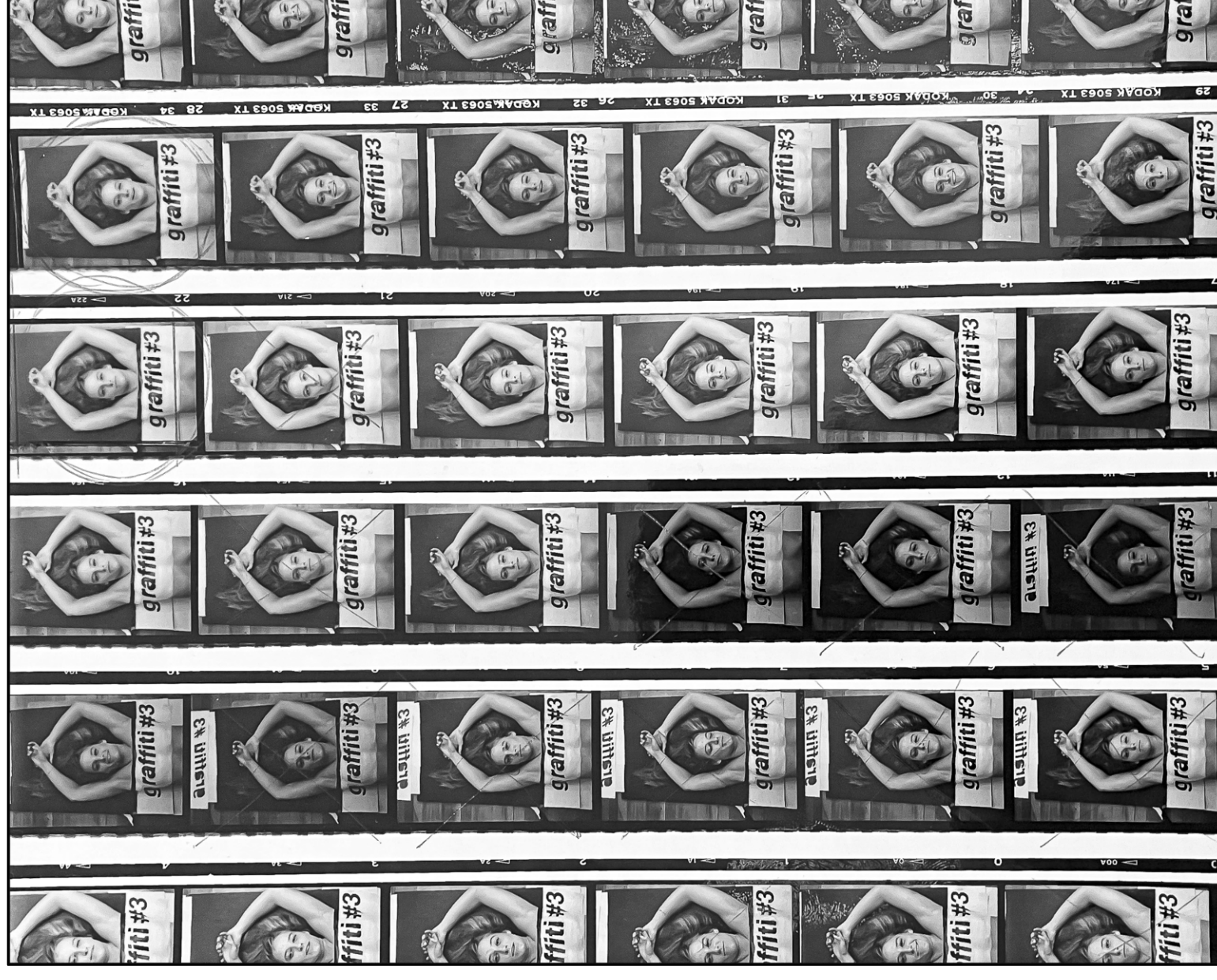


Graffiti

#3



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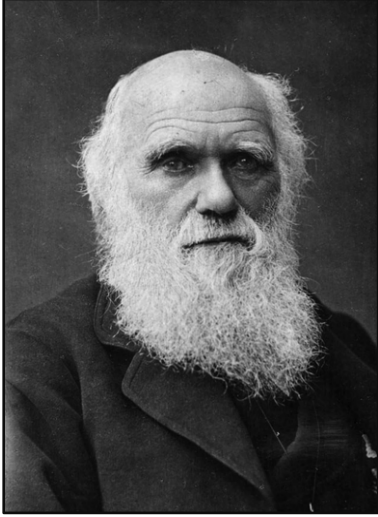


Psst! Hey you! Yes, you! Graffiti depends on you to send us your creative work! Fiction, nonfiction, poetry, line art, photography—whatever you conjure up. Don't be shy! You know you want to. So do it today! More than once if you feel the urge! Be in the next issue, okay? Digital files to graffitieugene@gmail.com Hardcopy text or art: snail-mail or hand-deliver to 1440 Willamette St. #242, Eugene OR 97401

FRONT LINES

Don Root

Graffiti's Theory of Evolution



Charles Darwin, 1881

Like fish crawling from the sea billions of years ago,

Graffiti is now coming ashore on tiny little legs—legs that will one day evolve into the sort of powerhouse pins that even Pre would envy. Though word of our awesomeness is slowly getting out around the world, we're still relying on that no-good deadbeat Darwin to keep sending in his child-support payments so we can spawn the next issue. Nag him, will you? Or please just send in donations yourself to cover his delinquencies. Thanks!

Okay, so yeah, I'm an old fart, and I originally wanted to keep Graffiti old-school analog. Print only. None of that there "e" gibberish. If Ned Ludd were alive today, I'd be smashing knitting frames right there with him. (As long as they weren't producing my favorite Patagucci fleece jackets, right?) But the powers that be, namely several persuasive advertisers and contributors, convinced me that if I wanted to reach that one kid on Tristan da Cunha who loves writing and will one day use it to save the world, I should join the human race and embrace the **interwebbnetterdottercommer** thing, or whatever the hell you call it.

Awright, awright! So yay, hurrah, and strike up the band (cough, wheeze)! Graffiti is now posting all long works and many short works on its blog: graffitieugene.wixsite.com/graffiti

This new strategy will let more writers expose themselves to the public (not near any schools, please!), and they won't even need to lift their eyes from those screens slowly growing out of their foreheads!

Those same persuasive A&C's also made their best case that Graffiti should be on **Instagram**, so as to broaden the zine's reach. Well here's *my* strategy for broadening Graffiti's reach: when you're done reading your copy, pass it along to a friend, and ask her to do the same. Hand-to-hand, face-to-face, and so on around the world. Sometimes going backward is an advancement. Or am I just an idealistic old fossil?

Speaking of fossils, Jim Brady was our milkman when I was a kid. He brought milk in glass bottles to our back door twice a week, picking up our empties for washing and refilling. My mother gave him an extra check at Christmas. Today, of course, we're far more civilized; we just throw our empty milk cartons into the trash. And I'm quite sure Jim is dead.

Okay, kids. Time for ol' Pops here to open that second bottle of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and fade into the woodwork. Blessings to you all!

—Don

Graffiti

1430 Willamette St. #242
Eugene, OR 97401
graffitieugene@gmail.com
(503) 853-5582

Big Cheese: Don Root
Associate Cheese: Jordan Rose
Cheese Sales: Kevin O'Brien
Curds-at-Large: Rod Williams

Contributors:

Lisa Anderson, Anonymous, Alan Baas, Trout Black, Sara Blakey*, Phil Bridler, Howard Falk*, Rich Gilman, Kevin Graves, Bill Gunn, Frank Harper*, Laura Hinerfeld, Misha Kagutaba, Dan Liberthson, Magoo, Charles Mattoon, Myka Mckinney*, Eden Omari*, James Otter, Liv Reimers, Jessica Richards, Leo Rivers*, Kenneth Roe, DeBobby Ross*, Morgan Smith, Jeff Southwick, Charles Stromme, Stephen Swiffoff [*on the blog]

Donors: Anne & David O'Brien, Susan Bloom, Oak Prairie Woodworks, Charles Stromme, Phil Bridler, Kenneth Roe, and that guy Dan. **Thanks!**

ON THE COVER: Jennifer's proof sheet. Photos by Don

Mountain Dew

Jordan Rose

Why is it that happiness is the biggest and scariest guy in the room?

Speaking for myself,
(*who else could I speak for?*)
If I walked into a bar and the three goons crowding the only pool table in the joint each had mean words tattooed on their knuckles and teeth (*just for decoration really*) riddled with meth bullet holes and eyes that undressed me before I had the chance to notice them staring-
And adjacent,
Was a table of people with kind faces and beaming smiles (*like the kind that makes the corners of your mouth stand up*)

I'd take the goons with the fucked up teeth and mean mugs.

Unfortunately,
There's a ghoulish comfort in pain.

Take, for instance, my late aunt,
She had a vicious case of diabetes but she insisted on having a liter of Mountain Dew every other day.

What a strange thing it is to be human,
To have a brain with superior awareness,
And to be so unaware.

Like the women who spend so much time fussing over the way their bodies look and not time

fussing over how their bodies feel.
Or dead-beat fathers neglecting their children of the wealth time affords in the vain hope that wealth will buy back that time.
Or mothers so afraid to let go of the adults they've raised that they must escape in fear of suffocating to death.

I live in a house in the trees
(*a treehouse, yes*)
In Eugene, Oregon
My partner has a cabinet to stash his clothes and a place in the bathroom to put his toothbrush,
I am debt free,
My credit score is decent,
I have no cavities (*first clean bill of health in a while*),
My car is operational,
I have friends,
And people that ask about me if I haven't been around,
I am in good health (*that is when I don't drink an entire bottle of mead and remember to drink water*)
I pay my rent on time,
I am not dirt poor,
I have a savings jar,
I have a cute collection of mugs,
My sense of style kicks ass,
I have good eyelashes,
Good legs,
A good sense of humor,
Great taste in music-

But I still have a drink of Mountain Dew once every so often. ☺☺☺

The Leaf

Charles Stromme

My death began at the branch. My neighbors were all feeling poorly but I thought I was different. My veins are drying now. I'm not pretty any longer. I don't think I'll get better. It keeps invading. What will I do?

Now the branch has let go and I have fallen. I thought our attachment would be forever. I thought it would hold me and love me and it would always be spring. Now it's autumn and my friends are leaving. Even the birds are gone.

A girl has touched me, picked me up, taken me home. I'm not rescued but the time I have left will be warm. ☺☺☺

Ed's Half-Life

Rod Williams

On the concrete workfloor stand mounds of sawdust like white sand. Throughout the factory, you can hear the whine of drills and presses, the laugh of lathes. Then in walks the wrinkled whiteshirt named Ed.

Boys, he sneers, his gray eyes puddled behind thick lenses. It's no trick to read his thoughts. He thinks we are blue-collar boys—not men—who can't do a lick of work in the morning without first downing a cup of coffee.

Hydraulic lifts rise and fall in their oiled silence, compressors hiss. Then Ed's gone. He walks past the rumbling high-density foam machines, through the double-acting doors, and into his air-conditioned office.

We never take his judgment to heart. Story goes that he can't fall asleep at night without first draining a liter of chardonnay. One of his trinity of vices, the other two being cancer sticks and playing the ponies.

He's left two divorces, two sons, and an estranged daughter in his wake. After Yucca Flats, he devoted his whole life to these skunkworks.

He was one of those dogfaces marched out doubletime to bear witness to Operation Buster-Jangle. First he heard a noise like the bottom of the sky tearing loose. Next thing, irradiated dirt was hailing onto his steel pot.

And now? Near retirement, vice-president of production, he hunkers over his beloved blueprints. Some old friends have died of leukemia, and their souls hover wingless over smoky atolls.

When Ed drinks, flames detonate behind his thick lenses, shroom up and swell into fiery orchids which obliterate the tan Nevada skies. ☺☺☺



Street art, East End, London (detail). Photograph by Charles Mattoon

Call 503-853-5582 or email us at graffitieugene@gmail.com with your thoughts, raves, rants, and other spewings. We'll print them here.

Dear Graffiti,

"Some of my favorite parts of #2 are Glossary of Archaic Terms, the photo collage showing friendly smiling locals, and many of the shorter works and poems. Very well put together for a start-up publication. Keep up the good work, Don." — **Paul George**

"Having three K's on the end of 'FFFEEDBACKKK' [Graffiti #1] makes me think of white-hooded bad guys." — **Matt Kramer**

"I received your paper! My piece looks great in it! I am wondering if you could send us stacks of the paper for us to distribute here in Sedona/Cottonwood from our headquarters. I would set them in cafes and all over, they would get available at our weekly open mic nights for free. I am going to send you something nice for your next issue. Let me know your deadline."

— **fin Sorrel**, Mannequin Haus, infii2.weebly.com

A Graffiti Poll

We need feedback! What do you like about Graffiti? What don't you like? Someone suggested a more structured layout. Someone else suggested a less structured layout. Someone liked the fact that we didn't edit. Someone else thought we should edit. I'd like to see more nonfiction. Essays about current events. Film reviews. Food reviews. Event reviews. Review reviews. What do you want to see in Graffiti? Please give us a call or send us an email with your thoughts. Thanks!

Dressed in Our Sunday Best

Dressed in our Sunday best,
we step carefully on stones
set by accident across a stream
that rises in Spring as surely as it settles in
the Fall
and disappears beneath thick ice in the
Winter.

Bending into the winds,
we twist until, in the brightness
we see ourselves in the waters ...
dancing, moving,
as carefully we balance upon smooth
stones.

Above, tall trees press
against the sky,
their green pushing into depth
of blue and power of white cloud:

the seasons they do change,
the faces they do fade,
the moments they do become
the lives we live, the lives
we love, the lives we find
twisting and dancing
in reflections
upon moving water.

Alan Baas

The Meteor

For a billion years, the seven spheres
have made their mindless run;
But one no more,
as done before,
Shall go around the Sun.
For time has traced,
The laws have placed
A Planet to its hour.
The single end that all things tend,
by universal power.
See, gravity begins to pry
And matter starts to quake;
Energy gains, and matter strains,
the sphere begins to break.
Then all at once, a terrible blast...

Rich Gilman
Seabrook, New Hampshire

INSTRUCTION MANUAL FOR BEGINNERS

How do I submit work?

You email it to graffitieugene@gmail.com, or you snail-mail or hand-deliver hardcopy to 1430 Willamette St. #242, Eugene OR 97401.

Do I win anything if I'm selected?

Yes, you get published. No, you don't get paid. This isn't a contest. You write it. You send it in. We print it and drop it off at various places around the county (see the list on p. 12). If there isn't enough room for everything we receive, we print what we like. Hint: we like writing without spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors. If you don't see your submission here, look for it in a blog post at graffitieugene.wixsite.com/graffiti.

Does Graffiti accept previously published work?

Generally not. Graffiti exists to encourage creation, and since previously published work (self-published or otherwise) was not newly created, its publication is contrary to our mission. That said, if we think something is cool enough, we'll take a look at it.

Does Graffiti accept submissions from outside Lane County?

Yes.

What length works are acceptable?

Shorter is better. Anything under 800 words makes us happy. Anything over 1,000 words makes us sad. Think of Graffiti as a tapas bar—tasty small bites, not stuff-yourself-silly meals. We will no longer be accepting works longer than 1,200 words for this paper zine, but we will post those submissions and others on our blog. Check it out at: graffitieugene.wixsite.com/graffiti.

What length skirts are acceptable?


Oh, please!

"Please, sir, I want some more."

The master was a fat, healthy man; but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupidified astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralysed with wonder; the boys with fear.



"It cost \$585 just to print this issue of Graffiti, leaving no gruel for our efforts," the boy pleaded. "Can't you please spare a sou or two to support free community expression?"

PayPal to graffitieugene@gmail.com, or ladle out a check to: Graffiti, 1430 Willamette St. #242, Eugene OR 97401.
Bless you, kind sirs and madams!



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 April 29, 30, May 2: *Fellini's Casanova*
 May 6, 7, 8: *Amarcord*
 May 13, 14, 16: *City of Women*
 May 20, 21, 25: *And the Ship Sails On*
 May 27, 28, 30: *8½*

Visit www.eugeneartthouse.com for more schedule and ticket info.

Advertisers Wanted!



This rag has yet to cover the print bill with ads. If not for generous donors, we'd be screwed. To keep the publisher out of the poorhouse,

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Please consider placing an ad in the next Graffiti.

Thank you!

A Mustard Yellow Pickup

Jeff Southwick

A younger fellow, brown curls under a feed hat,
 leaves a gas station at the wheel of a pickup, a
 Chevy from the seventies, a color you don't see any
 more they called mustard yellow.

At his back a headache rack, avoids the shifting load
 dope slap, homemade from an old bed frame, cobbled
 junk found in a barn, a school project he built in
 shop class, years ago.

Across the top he's welded four horseshoes, toes up,
 not superstitious I guess, or he'd know where
 luck goes, safe and practical, land on a heel you'd rip a
 new gut hole, maybe he just didn't know.

That truck sits under an old cedar tree, home to
 unmated males, mourning doves in dense foliage, from
 them comes haunting wail, an opaque bridal veil, in
 long white streaks upon his windshield.

Young men, run around friends, lean out the window,
 slap a door panel, hooting for hot women in daisy
 shorts, pants tucked in boots, shooting pool,
 aluminum cans, a mouth runs off, too oblivious.

He always had good intentions, a good deal on a used
 mobile lifestyle, moored in a sea of tan and grey,
 half way painted turquoise - her favorite color
 before things started falling apart, inside.

Her minivan with the car seat sits, still in the lot
 of a repair shop, months passed after their wedding
 night, tucked under a blanket of dust, just married
 in white shoe polish, across the back window

In bed with a headache, what did she expect, slapped
 together, bailin wire, wingin it on a babes breath
 cobbled genes, rhinestone dazzled jeans, goose a
 gander, fairy princess stuff.

Turkey buzzard? No, it's a white tail bald eagle
 never expected more than mediocre scavengers, among
 single and double carcasses, neglected people by a
 stagnant creek, where doves remain optimistic.

Feathers blow across a sandbur lawn, I can't say
 where they come from, but I have seen what happens
 when one scatters seed out in the street, as folks
 might do when they don't know.

Rawlson's Bungalow

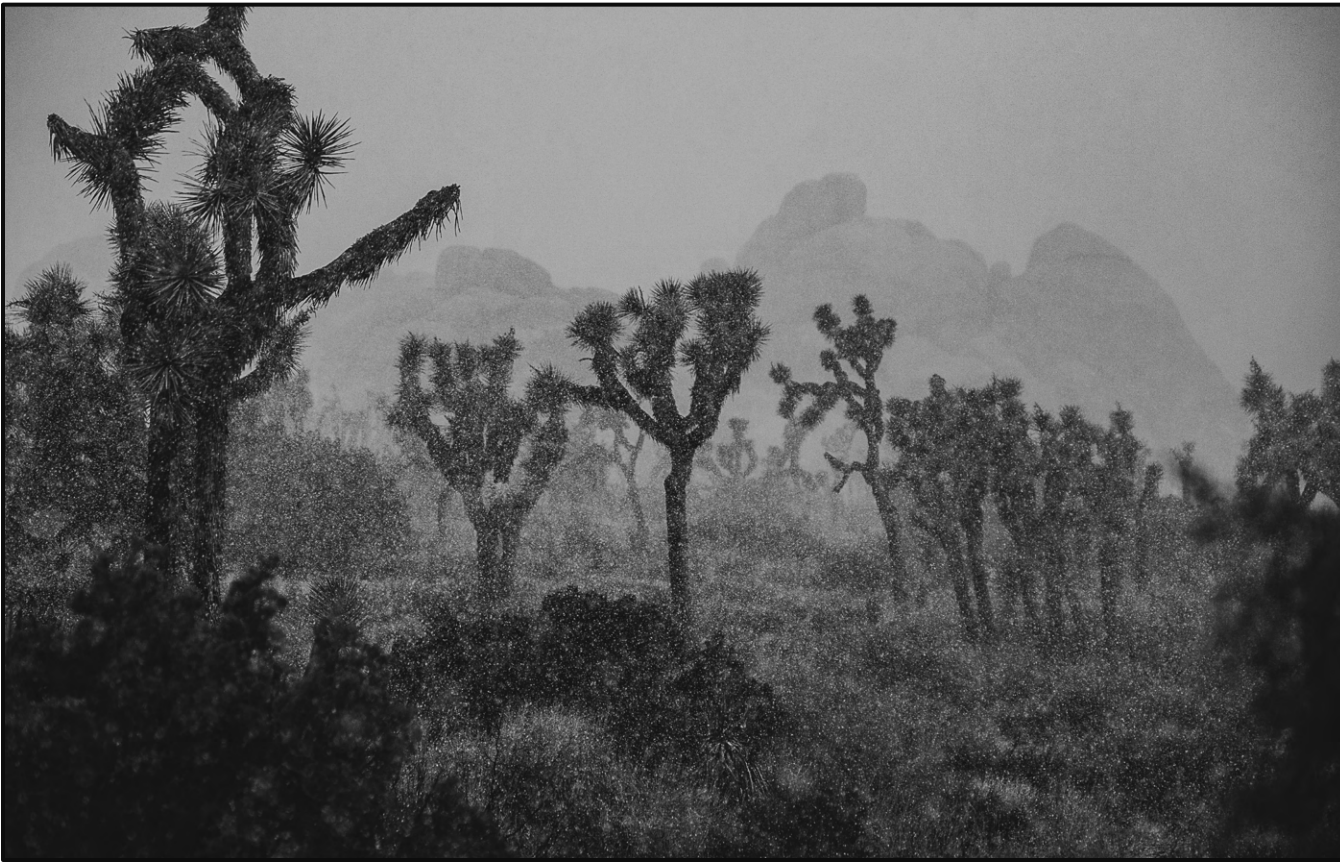
Jeff Southwick

Elvis stares...
 spaced out in paint on black velvet,
 the matador cape and a raging bull,
 both nailed to their living room wall,
 of this, a pink duplex in a cul-de-sac,
 where dry air and summer beckon.

The front yard Elvis,
 sipping from can of Schlitz,
 leans against the slick fender,
 of his '62 cherry red Ford Falcon,
 both freshly waxed and settled,
 while a Camel plods his lips.

The toddler in a tutu swimsuit,
 giggles as precious desert water,
 runs through a lawn sprinkler,
 a young woman, a mother in pedal pushers,
 watches from the green tiled porch steps,
 her auburn beehive is not Irene of West Covina,
 for she is... humming a new tune, "Beatles."

Snowy peaks... seem distant,
 their melt and stream, and her dreams
 and her mother, and the Hut Sut Rawlson,
 lies, tangled... under rock, pine logs, alluvium,
 all storm flushed down narrow canyon walls,
 a banana tree flowers and she's gone, she's done,
 with dirt, yard trenches, damn... that old man.



Snowstorm in Joshua Tree Nat'l Park
Photograph by Morgan Smith

STRUGGLES

At one time or another, every one of us faces a struggle—dealing with ex-spouses, lovers, and relatives; dealing with our own mortality; dealing with addictions, bad jobs, and never enough money—this column is about those struggles, in hopes that sharing the burden will ease the burden. We're all in this crazy, leaking life raft together, right? So, want to tell your story? Send it in, and label it "Struggles."

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 was very young, and if my parents hadn't told me about it years later, I wouldn't even have known it had happened.

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 me 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 come together at 30 miles 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 what today would be called a major trigger for a lot of people. It was a massive overreaction 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 frat 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 to meet John even more.

One day when I was seven or eight we learned that John was going to visit us in 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.

—Kevin Graves

Bird of Prey

He is there
waiting
Following the many speckled track
The droplets, the blood, ovals, crowned;
leaning in the direction of her flight
The red crowns
(on steel, on wood) of dark, coursing,
pumping reality
He has been there for a long time
But for a time his gaze
was averted; her darkness
unperceived
And her movements towards hollow coronation
unknown
He is there, still
And now her wounds attract
his porcelain gaze
A wing here a flutter there
a talon flexed
on the dead branch of his fears
Now, again, a movement below
spatter
And he takes wing
hovering, for a time, on the currents of sorrow
Descending then
with outstretched talons
Princess, lover, victim he descends
Searching out her wounds
unerringly
With the terrible finality of his grip
the wounds cease to flow
And in her last measureless instant
she thinks she has been saved

Stephen Swiftfox
—to my late wife Donna

Here Today

I search for something lost,
gone missing since forever
not knowing what it was
or even why I miss it.
Always have missed it.

Buzz of a fluorescent light
flickering in fright—
all that's left of
the sound stars make.

Dan Liberthson

Lost

Friendship's end's a gash,
bleeding and unhealed,
sacrilege on holy ground.
Blood and tears mix and drip
and love's cathedral's dark,
its candles all snuffed out.

Dan Liberthson

Kitty Love

My fat cat's in love with feet—
she thinks they are so very sweet,
with a pair on a rug her life's complete.
Purring drumrolls, wriggling wild,
she rubs and tumbles like a child.

Dan Liberthson

Our Human Mistakes ... and Trees

So many poems

So many words

So much talk

About Death, and Trees.

Crazed hands on nuclear triggers.
Trying to imagine the unimaginable:
"All of this gone?"
What does this actually mean?
Family? Friends? Birds? Trees? Dogs?
Gone?

Our weather.

"Our" because we changed it.
"Our" because it's changing us.
Indefensible shorelines,
heat,
floods,
hurricanes and tornados,
drought.
Everywhere.

And here in our Un-United States,
horrific deaths by guns.
The unimaginable become commonplace:
Oh, look, another mass shooting of children.

Our death of democracy.
Media distortions,
petroleum profits.
"Let's do this together" gone.
Truth more and more unavailable,
as we forget how to listen.

Yet in the midst of all of these deaths
we speak and hear
more
every day
about trees.

Trees speak slowly,
quietly.

Trees
have been here
a whole lot longer
than we have.

Never pointing at themselves.
Just standing there,
growing slowly.

Roots pull gifts from soil
up strong, quiet trunks.

Limbs offer footrests
and nest homes
for birds.

Buds open,
leaves
stretch
their incredible beauty.

All summer
they gather sunlight.

Autumn leaves
fall
into our palms.

Is it because trees are so quiet
that we poem talk write of them,
in the midst of all these painful deaths?

Is it because they never
point towards themselves?

Is it because their roots,
about whom we continue to learn so much,
silently hidden underground,
reach for other roots,
and quietly take care of each other?

Is it because these roots
have so much to teach us?

This poem sings herself
captured by trees' gifts
by their beauty

by their hidden wonders
by their slow silence

by what
when we truly listen
they have to teach us.

Trout Black
San Rafael, California



Photograph by James Otter

Man-made Mountains

Man-made mountains
The shingles slid into dust
oil based, with a crust of pebbles
appearances matter
Shifting my weight towards my knees

The man-made mountains
came from quarries
quartz and silica
the golden age of dirty hands

The street lights are like aliens
war of the worlds every single night
warmth brings pollution
steam and smoke
my core essence

I'm a living ghost
a watcher
going where I don't belong

On the side of a man-made mountain
fifteen floors
the eyes of a centipede
wheeling itself to the top floor

Beneath the road
geothermal vents stir
it doesn't matter what I taste anymore

Living on the grid of urban development
historic libraries empty of books
occupied by mice

I can see it all
Light-emitting diodes
conquer highways
bass blasts
laughter echoes with screams

It's not my job to fix the world
I should be doing more anyway
the view from an emptied swimming pool

Into the clouds
where the motion never ends
and nobody has to stand still
If I jump I might fly
I'm afraid of heights

James Otter

**"I write only
because there is a
voice within me that
will not be stilled."**

— Sylvia Plath

Camping

I've seen what the heat does to people
the mind melts like ice cubes in a lemonade soda
vaporized ideas in the sun

With all that is happening to me
my head is full of heavy liquid
ear drums pulsing, fingers tremble

I was in the woods not long ago
in the rain of rains under a tarp
the dark was all around, light was nowhere to be
found
the stars were swallowed up, the forest rattled in
the wind

I lay awake a baby in a belly of plastic
this baby boy is all grown up
focused on fitting in with the outcasts
cast in to a world of endless movement
rarely sitting still even in bed
twisting and turning, silence is elusive
the ideas are never around when they need to be
when proof is all that is left to be desired

The enemy is near and dead
inside of me, rotting away
the baby stood on its own
and in the tree the stories passed down from
family to family
crackled, the stories landed on bare skin on cold
night

Of course I never know what to say
when I'm expected to say it
how can I?
When everything I believe is always wrong
if that is the case than how do I even know?

Confusion, the rain had no heart, it had no poetry
in itself
I had to make it art, I had to tell myself, it was
what I wanted
At that moment, I was the leader
it was my knife in the table, my compass
my map, my delirious dream of self betterment

The right to be in charge
to be large, to grow up
to take off my pajamas and become an animal
I was not a baby any longer, I am a man as they
call me
a strange and lonely man, with more company
than I could ask for
with bigger dreams and greater fish to swallow

In the woods I am no king
death is all around, on all sides and it's asking for
my consent
sometimes it's the wrong moment
the accidental slip
the sudden fall
the roots failing and the rules collapsing all the
bridges
between families and between friends

James Otter

Memories

Anonymous

Espresso Roma was a beautiful place. I remember it used to be that you could get a small coffee for a dollar, and in my opinion they have the best coffee I have ever had anywhere. The best part of Espresso Roma, though, in my opinion, was the large covered back porch. All the old wooden benches had plenty of character, and most of the people who hung out there did too. You could always bum a cigarette from someone if you were out, and there was a general air of camaraderie. There was almost always at least one open conversation going, where whoever was around would chime in with what they felt about the topic of discussion, whether or not they were familiar. Topics ranged from the philosophical to the obscene. Often you would see a group of as many as ten people huddled together having coffee. I could go there at any time of day, and if there were not already people there I knew all I had to do was wait half an hour.

It was also a waypost for travelers who happened to be on campus. Large packs and dogs were tolerated, in a neighborhood otherwise intolerant of travelers. One did not need to buy anything in order to hang out on the porch, and I never saw anyone asked to leave.

It would seem that little has changed at Espresso Roma since the days when I hung out there, but their enforcement of a smoking ban on the porch has all but killed it's status as a hangout. It seems odd, but for some reason the removal of the luxury of smoking on the porch has repelled the vast majority of the crowd that used to hang out there, and although the coffee is still good, in my mind it is very much not the same place it used to be.

Café Paradiso was another such place in Eugene, a veritable institution of downtown rather than campus. There were only maybe three coffeeshops downtown, and I remember Café Paradiso as being the most welcoming and social. It was right in the middle of downtown, and they used to host music events, open mic nights, and art openings, as well as other various community functions. Their clientele were largely younger, many of them high school or even middle school students. Café Paradiso also had a smoking porch, although it was much smaller and not nearly as charming as the one at Espresso Roma. The smoking area was inside a black wrought iron fence on a main street that used to be pedestrian only, so that there was a natural tendency to run into people on the street even though you were more or less inside the café. There were plenty of large comfortable couches inside, and I often found myself waiting out the rain there. Even after it stopped raining I often stayed just because it was so pleasant there, and besides, they had really good coffee.

The street that had been pedestrian-only was eventually opened up to car traffic, and Café Paradiso closed around the same time. It was certainly the only coffeeshop downtown that I would classify as a true hangout, and I was very sad to see it go. It seems that a "revitalized" downtown could not support a true center of community,

which goes to show you what that is really about.

Theo's was another coffeeshop downtown that is now closed, and which I would on some level qualify as a pseudo-hangout although certainly not on the level that Café Paradiso was. It had a very magical atmosphere though; it was one of those places that you simply do not notice until you pass by it at least five times. They sold books, and had a rather lively chess scene. Theo's was a gentleman's coffeeshop, although it somehow avoided being pretentious. Hanging out there felt like being in a movie, or a play about a time past. Things just seemed to move slower. Their coffee was also top notch, although the thing I liked most about it was the sense of being completely removed from your surroundings the moment you walked in the door. It was like another dimension.

Theo's sadly also closed around the same time, and I fear for much the same reason. Probably some speculator with a lot of money came in and bought them out just so they could sit on the property for a few years and sell it to the highest bidder.

It is highly ironic to me that the places I most want to hang out seem to be the ones that are invariably doomed. One thing or another inevitably changes the conditions that allowed the space to exist; often it is that a hangout does not typically generate much revenue. You need to have a steady flow of customers, not a slow trickle of degenerates. It seems to be almost a symptom of the times, that a business that caters to the common man goes out of business because the common man just wants a cup of coffee, not a chocolate soy latte. Lattes pay bills.

Often times I see a place close for a spell and then reopen with everything about it that was dear to me gone. I remember Rocco's Pizza, on burnside in Portland, as one of those places that just seemed to be an integral part of the city itself, rather than a passing occupant. A constant, a fixture. Something that would never change. They had a beautiful checker tile floor, everything was beautifully grubby, and remarkably normal and unpretentious, especially for a non-franchise restaurant on a main street in portland. It was the type of place where you were liable to run into someone, and if you didn't, you were likely to chat with a stranger a bit. The employees were kind of foul-tempered, but hey, it's portland.

Then one day, I saw their windows covered with brown paper and painter's tape. I figured it was closed for good. But no, one day, I saw that there was indeed still pizza, but now it was called Sizzle Pie. They had these obnoxious faux-retro signs with gaudy lights, and the windows were now half-tinted. I have hardly seen a soul in there since, and I think this is partly due to the tinted windows and partly due to the fact that it is no longer Rocco's; now it is just another clean, efficient, semi-expensive hyped-up pretentious Portland eatery that people like me studiously avoid simply because eating at these places gives one the feeling of paying extra to get less.

On the same block, there is now a place called Courier Coffee. ☺☺☺

Prayer
Flags

Wind, basalt, ice
'Gop of the
world ma'
As fragile as our
wishes
just fabric
flapping, fading

Inscribed with
hope here, a
prayer there
(Diving sight
unseen, forever
on currents
unknown

People longing
for the Buddha
send their
hopes through
time

For when their
colors are
sighted,
wonder and
happiness
touch the
traveler.

Stephen
Swiftfox

Winemaking

By midnight, his fury
has petered out and he rests
in the wide vineyard of his dreams.

Just an hour before
his sullen lips spat how
he hates this house, hates this town
hates school, nearly says (but
stops short), "I hate you."

Now I stand over him
in this dark room where
the white walls shimmer into woods
the ceiling fills with stars
the window clouds to a world
of beating wings and animal cries.

All I can think to do is lower myself
like a winepress onto his
sleeping body, and mash
the fruit from his skin
the juice from his fruit. Then
store the extract in an oaken cask
until it matures into the strange wine
we all become. My own father

was a good provider but
an indifferent winemaker. He distrusted
the green fire of his own vines
the sweet flesh of his own grapes.
What he bottled best was rage which,
when uncorked, emits its unique
smoky male tang.

That's what scares me so. In these
dreamy fields of horse chestnuts and
olive trees lies an angry harvest
a boy may tend for years. This land
is seeded with the endless tale of
fathers and sons. I press my hand
to his hair. As if my fingers
could guide his ferment through
the long process of aging well.

Rod Williams

Wolf

Lone wolf, pack wolf, alpha wolf, attack wolf
packing myth wolf, under attack wolf
misunderstood wolf
older sibling of domestic woof woof
call of the wild & potent wolf
tagged & collared needy wolf
big bad scary wolf, symbol of mean
lean hungry wolf, Sierra Club calendar serene
moon serenader, ruthless saloon seducer
cooperative predators that have each other's back
what we fear and desire, reject and lack,
wild nature powerful and free
wolfman in the mirror on a killing spree
what is wild, what are we?
which inner wolves will we feed—
the true one with heart & soul,
or the false one of fear & greed?

If only we could see
getting closer to wolves, instead of killing them
might teach us how to wiser be.

Charles Mattoon

For the First Time in Weeks

For the first time in weeks,
I lift my blinds since the smoke has finally
cleared
I'm shocked!
by a frenzy of birds on yellow and gold leaves
on the tree outside my window
Stupefied into awe, I stop.
Hypnotized.
Stunned.
Hurriedly, they peck the purple berried fruit
I stand frozen, in a dream.

I'm reminded of two winters ago, when,
in the apartment down the courtyard,
I didn't want to go outside,
but reluctantly pulled apart the curtains.
The rosebush outside the window was overrun
with tiny finches, darting daintily about.
Feeding on winter fruit.
Then, as now, I stopped. Shocked into being.
How did I not know?
In my melancholy, I could have missed this.
At breakfast, I delicately tried to describe it to
him,
the magical significance of this moment.
He shrugged and nodded politely.

This time, I want to share it. With you! The
beauty!
Don't miss it - again!

Excited. I rush to get you. To relish it.

I'm not sure if you're the type of person
who's delighted by tiny birds swarming branches,
but I try anyway.
You come.
Right away.

I'm glad.
But when we look out the window, they're gone.

The air is blank.

Were they there?

Where did they go?

I say, "Sorry."
Disappointed.
You assure me -
you'd have enjoyed them.

You go back to your room.
I stare at the tree.
Empty.
Now still.

I can't help but wonder -
Were they just my gift?
A brief, wondrous moment
To show -
it's not all burning.
Today, it's wet.
And birds magically appear,
in trees,
in this land.

Jessica Richards



Eclipse, by Indy Stetter-Johnson

Long Live McNeill's

Laura Hinerfeld
Portland, Maine

In the early 1990s, during and after my tenure at Marlboro College, I spent countless hours at McNeill's Brewery in Brattleboro. Some months I spent more on beer than rent, probably—neither of them were very expensive. The Extra Special Bitter, Oatmeal Stout, and legendary Dead Horse IPA (you can't beat a Dead Horse) were my favorites.

I think every one of us who loved McNeill's could write a memoir. The darts, the sound of Jenga crashing, Holliday's chicken chili, watching election returns, flirting with Amy or Rob or Chris behind the bar. Knowing that you would run into someone you knew. Maybe Nora would draw your portrait on a coaster while you drank unawares. Miles Keefe's smile and bird laugh at a good story or indefensible opinion. Someone sitting in Fenwick's giant chair, holding court on top of a pile of coats.

Maybe Richard Coutant or Richard Gottlieb would be at the bar, and things would get philosophical, but not serious. Maybe Giles would come in, and you would build a dome of stir sticks and gum on the bar while he rambled about Buckminster Fuller. Maybe Ruby would come from the Common Ground with a tray of her flan (it happened!).

The more I think of this, the more I remember: Taylor and Eve running around; laughing at (sometimes with) out of towners; and some memories I can't write here, but man . . . there were some nights. It was the perfect bar.

At the center of it was Ray McNeill. Tie-dyed, moody, by all accounts brilliant. You always knew where you stood with Ray. He once declared me a "hop head" when I told him a particular batch was not bitter enough for me. He once asked me when I

would start brewing. I was honored. When I came back with my family after ten years away, he said he was glad to see me. I was stunned that he remembered me.

The bar had closed during Covid and did not reopen, but Ray continued to brew.

There was a fire tonight at that old firehouse bar. Ray was living in the apartment upstairs and didn't make it out.

I am heartsick for all of Brattleboro, and for all of us who loved the place. Mostly for Ray's family; for his daughters whom he was so, so proud of. Amidst all the sadness, what gratitude for the place and time. I think those of us who have the Marlboro-McNeill's love combo are experiencing an especially poignant sadness and loss.

Rest easy Ray. Long live McNeill's.

☺☺☺

lelelelelelele

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." — John Donne, from *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1623)



Photograph by James Otter

THERE GOES THAT THEORY

Stephen Swiftfox

I'm in a small wooden boat at sea under a gray, featureless sky at dusk. It's cold, the sea not smooth but not rough. I'm far from shore, alone. Suddenly, something large rises beneath me. The sea, along with this large thing, will swallow me up, and I'll be gone forever.

This nightmare plagued me on a regular basis from my teens until my late twenties. Once, I attempted to fight it head-on, to overcome my antipathy toward the ocean and my instinctive refusal to go on a boat for any reason. My neighbor had a daring (to me) hobby of skin diving. I asked him if I could tag along sometime. We motored out to the Channel Islands off the Southern California coast in a boat that was much too small for my comfort. I donned a wetsuit, weight belt, mask, and snorkel . . . and spent most of my underwater time peeing in my suit out of fright.

No result. The nightmares continued.

A year later I was working for IBM and took a service call at Warner Brothers studio in Burbank. As I was waiting for computer-room access, I sat with a chatty older employee who claimed to be a psychic. I rolled my eyes, but he insisted and asked for my watch. I handed it over. He proceeded to tell me I was unusual in that I had never been a woman in my countless incarnations, and that this was my first go around as a Caucasian. I had always been Asian, he said. In one life I was a Chinese monk, he explained, and had drowned on a small boat in the Sea of Japan. My stomach clenched. Blood drained from every part of my body. It felt like I'd left this reality.

After I recovered myself and my watch, I completed the service call, went home, and smoothed the night over with some Wild Turkey. The nightmares never returned.

True story. ☺☺☺

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES?

Stephen Swiftfox

A "20% off" Goodwill coupon had been languishing on my dashboard for ages. Reason being is that I never go there. Ever. Coming home from work one day I looked at it. "Expires 9-3-22." It was 9-2. Thinking "What the hell," I drove over there.

I meandered around, not expecting much. But at the rear of the store, against the wall, at the bottom of an industrial-sized shelving unit, I spied a familiar-looking case. I pulled it out, placed it on a table, and opened it.

What looked me in the face was a memory from 1968, of being homeless after my senior year of high school. I knew back then that college was important, so I enrolled at L.A. Junior College, started classes, and scrambled for every meal and shelter I could find. After one English comp class, my teacher, Dorothy Stapleton, asked me to stay behind. She was an old Southern lady and was curious about my unusual writing style. I told her it was because English was my second language. Though I grew up in Hollywood, Russian was my first language. We tell stories differently in Russian. Somehow in her inquiries she learned I was without shelter. She told me her home was open to me.

Over time, she and her husband taught me a work ethic, study habits, and responsibility. One Christmas they gave me a gift that changed my life: an Olympia portable manual typewriter, the "Mercedes" of typewriters. I went nuts, typing everything from compositions to shopping lists.

After graduating I found a job, transferred to Cal State, and moved away. Dorothy and Doug, my benefactors, died soon after.

And now here I was, on September 2, 2022, in a Cottage Grove Goodwill, staring dumbfounded at a 1967 Olympia portable manual typewriter in mint condition. Priced at \$29.95. As the cashier was ringing up my purchase I babbled away, telling him my story. He just wanted to move me along and charged me \$12—my 20% discount and then another half off the rest.

So now I am back to writing real letters and stories on a gift that magically returned after half a century. How's that for Goodwill? ☺☺☺

BIGFOOT

Don Root

I saw Bigfoot once—actually several times—high in the mountains of Idaho. I was writing a guide to that state for Moon Travel Handbooks, which was then based in Chico, California, and I prided myself on covering every corner of Idaho, including the most remote. So one afternoon I found myself driving up a lonely dirt fire road to the top of Trinity Mountain (elev. 9,451 feet), east of Boise and north of Mountain Home and the Snake River.

Idaho takes a lot of flack for its abundance of asinine right-wing politicians and MAGA zealots, many of them carpetbaggers from ultraconservative out-of-state enclaves like Orange County, California. But Boise is a little pocket of wonderful, inhabited by some of the finest friends I've ever been blessed to meet. And the state's topography makes Idaho one of the most beautiful places on Earth—mountains, lakes, and rivers everywhere, and not too many people to ruin them. The state is a wilderness lover's dream.

I once went for a morning walk from a remote Forest Service cabin outside Stanley and came upon a grizzly bear foraging along the forest floor not forty yards from me. I just stood there in awe, watching. He or she was oblivious to my presence—I guess I was downwind. Another time I was sleeping in my car on a lakeshore in northern Idaho and awoke to a strange sound of heavy sloshing. I looked up to see a beautiful moose foraging the lake's shallows, no doubt enjoying the perfect dawn serenity, as I was. You don't get that in Eugene.

But you wanted to hear about Bigfoot, not Yogi and Bullwinkle.

Okay, so it was late spring or early summer, and patches of snow were scattered here and there along the road up to Trinity Peak. When I reached the top, I parked and got out to take a look around. A fire lookout tower stood at the summit, so I wandered up to check it out. Being so early in the season, I assumed the tower would be empty. I was wrong. And I was being watched.

I strode to the tower's base, looked up, and was taken aback when an ogre emerged onto the building's upper deck and yelled fearsomely down at me.

"What do you want?!"

Apparently fire season had officially begun, and the US Forest Service had assigned the scariest, most antisocial spotter they could find to Trinity Peak.

"Uhhh, nothing," I ventured bravely. "I'm writing a travel guide and I just came up to, you know, check out the view. Don't suppose you'd like to give me a tour?"

He had to think about that one. My immediate impression was that this hardy perennial loved being on top of the world with not a soul around, and I had grievously invaded his space, daring to show up during his prime early-season solitude time. But he surprised me.

"All right, come on up," he said, reluctantly.

"What am I getting myself into?" I thought, as I entered the tower building and climbed the stairs.

He ushered me out to the top deck, offered me a seat, and sat down himself.

"So, travel guide, eh? Who do you work for?" His gruff grump did not make me feel welcome, and I started pondering how best to end the conversation quickly and leave him to his hermitage.

"Moon Travel Handbooks," I replied.

"Don't know 'em," he growled. "Where are they from?"

"Chico, California," I said, with some trepidation, since "California" rates right up there with "fuck" and "liberal" as a dirty word in Idaho.

But no sooner had those words escaped my lips than his theretofore dour expression morphed into a crazed, shit-eating grin.

"Chico?!" he cried, and it suddenly seemed he couldn't contain himself. I nodded, a little worried that his drastic change of temperament might be evidence of psychopathic tendencies.

"Wait here!" he commanded, which I did, because he was headed posthaste down the stairs into the bowels of the tower himself, and my only other way out was to dive over the railing and hope for a soft landing 30 feet below.

I imagined the headlines: "Travel writer missing in Idaho. Deranged fire-spotter is 'person of interest.'" I was trying to remember if I'd signed my will when suddenly my imagined villain came bursting back onto the deck carrying a six-pack of beer in each hand.

"Chico! Yeah! Sierra Nevada!"

And with that he proceeded to hand me a bottle of Bigfoot Ale—the scrumptious barleywine-style beer produced by Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. of, you guessed it, Chico, California.

From that moment on, we were best buds. Afternoon turned to dusk turned to night as we sat out on the fire tower deck, draining two sixers of Bigfoot, talking about anything and everything, and watching lightning light up the Snake River Plain far below. Big John Thornton, amigo, wherever you are, thanks for a day I will never forget.

As for that other Bigfoot? Well, no, I haven't seen him. Not yeti, anyway. ☺☺☺



Joy, Lake Tahoe. Photograph by Magoo

The Unveiling

An excerpt from *Morphology*

Liv Reimers

—Continued from *Graffiti 2*—

"That's murder, Pearl," Ruby interrupted. "How is that not murder?"

Pearl really hated it when Ruby talked like that, but now, as she lay alone and isolated from the others in her Niche, she wished Ruby were with her. Until a month ago, before they had both fully matured, she would have been. The night before they would have shoved their two beds together and then, after talking for a while in low murmurs, they would have gone to sleep, wrapped around each other like two puppies from the same litter.

Last night Pearl had to sleep alone, just as she had done for the twenty-nine nights before. Not that she had slept that much.

It hadn't helped, of course, when Pearl learned from her Caretakers who her Patron was going to be.

"What an honor," Mama said. "What a tremendous honor... for all of us. Who would have thought that they would pair you with The Mother of Morfphs?" "No," Pearl said. "Not her. Anyone but her. Please. Not her."

Surprised, her Caretaker shook her head. "Pearl, sweetie, it's happening."

"No," she said again. She cried—a mewling, defeated sound. It embarrassed her, but she couldn't stop.

Ruby would never act like this.

"It will be good. Just wait and see. You'll be fine. Better than fine," Mama had said. She'd put her arms around Pearl and kissed her on the forehead. But even her Caretaker hadn't looked convinced.

Now, sitting rigidly on her bed, dressed and ready, Pearl rubbed absentmindedly at the small, mostly healed incision on the soft underside of her forearm. A red line marked where Geneti-Search had implanted the identification and tracking chip soon after they chose her Patron. A Morfph's identity was incomplete until that point.

She changed into the clothes she'd found folded neatly on her bed the evening before. They were all a loose, flowing, white silk, as was her veil. She'd worn the veil and gloves, unless she was alone, for a month now—ever since she had come into her full empathic and shape-shifting Morfph capabilities and was ready for Pairing. The veil prevented eye contact with anyone besides her Patron. Eye contact and touch were important parts of the chemistry of the Pairing, and she must make no mistakes.

There was a light knock on the frame of the door; the signal. It was time. She

stood up, slipped on her white silk gloves, adjusted her veil, and walked to the door to slide it open. The section of the veil that was over her eyes was a mesh she could peer through, but it obscured her vision enough that all she could see of her two Caretakers were their outlines, standing outside her door.

She couldn't see their faces, but she imagined them wreathed in the strained smiles she'd seen before whenever the topic of the Pairing came up. They stepped forward. Each took one of her arms to guide her to the Pairing room where her Patron waited.

Before they left, they fitted Bluetooth buds into her ears. These would deliver a low-powered electrical pulse into her ear canals at a crucial time during the bonding process. The pulse would stimulate her vagal nerve and boost the powerful bonding effect already encoded into the Morfph's brain upon meeting her Patron. The surge of dopamine, oxytocin, and vasopressin flooding into her body and brain would increase and intensify.

Most of what happened next was a blur, a confusion. Her nerves and the drugs they had given her to aid in the Pairing were taking effect. Body vibrating, her legs loose and wobbly, she walked and walked—for what seemed a very long time. Dead woman walking, she thought fuzzily. Then an elevator ride and more walking. Finally, a new room.

Low, flickering light and the faint smell of vanilla. Soft music. Plush, thick carpet underfoot. And someone else in the room—waiting as she had waited.

"Step forward, Alpha One," Papa said.

Mama and Papa stood behind her, close, but no longer touching her. Through her veil, Pearl could just make out a dark figure a few feet away. But she knew who it was.

The Mother of Morfphs. My Patron.

Pearl's entire body quaked again.

Papa started giving instructions in a formal tone Pearl hadn't heard before.

"Okay, Alpha One, please take off your veil and gloves now. We're ready to start."

She peeled off her gloves and unhooked her veil.

"Drop them on the floor, Alpha One. And now, Patron, please stand right there."

As the veil and gloves slithered to the carpet, her Patron walked closer and stood directly in front of her. Now in crisp focus, she looked just as Pearl remembered—cold, brittle, and white.

"Alpha One, one more step forward, please. Take your Patron's hand and look into her eyes."

She did as she was told and then felt a tickle in her ears and a low buzz, like a small electric shock. The Bluetooth, she thought.

As she stared into her Patron's eyes, Pearl's vision narrowed and tunneled until a dazzling light blinded her. A loud swooshing sound, like she'd heard in audios of the ocean, filled her ears.

Was she melting? She felt like she was melting... no, dissolving—her very molecules flying apart, dissociating and swirling away in all directions. Then, suddenly, a coming back together—a re-forming.

But re-forming into whom? Into what?

With the clearing of her vision, she realized she was still gazing into her Patron's ice-blue eyes. Pearl's terror transformed. Where there had been fear was now bliss... and a pure, ecstatic joy.

It was no longer necessary that her previous Caretakers guide her, for she now knew exactly what she needed to do. She put her other hand out and her Patron took it, as she had taken the first. She looked as dazed, blinded, and confused as Pearl had been only moments before. Pearl leaned in, buried her nose in her Patron's neck and deeply breathed in her smell. With an exhilarating surge of strength and energy, Pearl knew then that her Morfphing was complete, and that everything had indeed changed.

She looked down at their four clasped hands. Two of them, her Patron's hands, were white with long, elegant fingers. The other two must have been hers... no, his. For these hands were now men's hands. Where before she would have seen her small brown hands, he saw two large men's hands—hands with dark hair furring the backs and the spaces between the knuckles. For the she she had been, had become a he—just as his Patron desired of him.

He flexed the muscles in his legs and arms. They rippled like the sinews of a powerful animal, a leopard maybe. He knew when he walked, he would swagger. And then he smiled an arrogant smile. What had he been so afraid of? This was marvelous.

He looked back into his Patron's face and gazed with fresh eyes. Here was the great Dr. Alix Edison, PhD, genetic engineer, Head of Research at GenetiSearch Technologies and Laboratories, and creator of Morfphs. Genius.

How had he not seen before how amazing she was? Magnificent. A goddess. She was now his very reason for being, and he must keep her happy. Nothing but that mattered now. ♪ ♪ ♪

This column spotlights examples of great writing from notable authors. Got a favorite short passage from an author you like? Send it to us for consideration. (No song lyrics or poetry, please.)

The Golden Pen:

Hunter S. Thompson

“San Francisco in the middle sixties was a very special time and place to be a part of. Maybe it meant something. Maybe not, in the long run ... but no explanation, no mix of words or music or memories can touch that sense of knowing that you were there and alive in that corner of time and the world. Whatever it meant ...

There was madness in any direction, at any hour. If not across the Bay, then up the Golden Gate or down 101 to Los Altos or La Honda. ... You could strike sparks anywhere. There was a fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was right, that we were winning ...

And that, I think, was the handle—that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil. Not in any mean or military sense; we didn't need that. Our energy would simply prevail. There was no point in fighting—on our side or theirs. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave ...

So now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost see the high-water mark—that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back.”

— from *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1972)



misha kaguraba

Editor's Note: This column is open to anyone who just read a good book and wants to tell others about it. Have you read something wonderful lately? Write down your thoughts and send them to us. Just be aware of one thing. This is....

NOT

The New York Review of Books

Blindness

by José Saramago

Review by Rod Williams

Hey! Anyone up for reading a depressing book about a city where most of its citizens are all at once unexplainably afflicted with a case of "white blindness"? And where one of its main characters mysteriously retains her sight, because without her, um, there probably would be no novel? And where the worst aspects of human nature are exhibited in excruciatingly grim detail as the epidemic wears on and the norms of civilized society rapidly break down? If this sounds like your cup of tea, pick up José Saramago's novel *Blindness*.

Let's start with this: Saramago was awarded the 1998 Nobel Prize in Literature, and *Blindness* has been praised by many critics as one of his best books. So when I say it was a slog for me to get through and that I thought it was a meh story, well, what the hell do I know?

Maybe I'm just burned out on the plethora of "dystopian future" stories published over the past several decades. Zombie apocalypses, meteors crashing into the Earth, viral pandemics (oh wait, that last one was for real) . . . it's just hard to impress me with a good doom-and-gloom end-of-the-world tale any more. For context, I'll add that I felt the same way about Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, which critics salivated over.

But about *Blindness*: part of what made it a frustrating read for me is its kinda-sorta stream-of-consciousness narrative. For me, a little of that style goes a long way. Here, though, the entire book is written in that manner, which I found more distracting than interesting. It didn't seem to add anything more to the story than, say, a standard third-person POV.

As for the storyline, it's about what you might expect: without eyesight, people revert to their basest animal behaviors. Fear begets mass confusion, violence, and rape, food and drinking water become scarce, basic sanitation and shelter become huge issues, and so on. Even the main characters feel sketched in rather than fully realized, so it was difficult for me to feel much empathy with their hellish plights.

Again, though, who am I to throw shade at an internationally acclaimed author? This is just one opinion, and perhaps it's more a matter of taste than a legitimate literary review. And with all that said, I understand there is a sequel of sorts to *Blindness* entitled *Seeing*. It'll probably come as no surprise to you, gentle reader, that I'll be skipping that one. ☺☺☺

"The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you can see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'awww!'"

—Jack Kerouac

Colombia Es Más Que Guerrilla y Narcotráfico

Lisa Anderson

Colombia esta ubicada en la zona tórrida cerca de la línea del Ecuador. Está bañada por dos océanos—el Atlántico y el Pacífico, con lindas playas e islas de agua templada en todas las épocas del año. Pues no tenemos estaciones, solo climas que van desde el frío en las altas montañas 0 grados centígrados hasta el caliente 37 o 38 grados centígrados en las costas, llanos y riveras de los ríos que se encuentran a nivel del mar. Existen hermosos paisajes, picos elevados y baños termales, bosques nativos y selva amazónica—pulmón del mundo. El río más ancho del mundo (Amazonas) baña parte del territorio.

Colombia es conocida mundialmente por producir el café más suave del mundo, las esmeraldas más lindas y gente amable, emprendedora y muy trabajadora.

En cuanto a la guerra contra los narco-guerrilleros por la erradicación de los cultivos ilícitos (coca, amapola, marihuana), si no empieza por la eliminación del consumo de los grandes países consumidores, USA y Europa, será una guerra inútil. Mientras exista la demanda la oferta se mantendrá.

La guerra de la narco-guerrilla ya no es por el poder y el cambio hacia sociedad más equitativa y justa, es por mantener el control mundial del mercado de las drogas. Si en Colombia se eliminara la guerra sería un país lo más próximo al paraíso. Por la calidad de sus gentes, la variedad de climas, la diversidad de productos, por sus hermosos paisajes, por su trabajo en la aceptación de la diversidad.

Si desde 1492 que fue el inicio de la guerra más cruenta y exterminio de los nativos, no han logrado sumir en la más absoluta pobreza a este país . . . es porque sus recursos y riquezas son enormes. ☺☺☺

Bill Gunn

At the Garden Center

From my narrow little world
I see all types of people--
Rich, poor, smart, dumb,
educated, uneducated,
infants and old.

I see the fresh-faced child
just starting the climb--
and the pimply-faced kid
who doesn't want to be there.
I see how normal skin
has become wrinkled
and covered with age spots.

The young are the most fun.
They have not become jaded.
They have not become crass
or judgmental.
They, in their simple little world
either like you or they don't.
If left alone, they either come to you
for approval, or wander off
without thinking you might be
crazy or menacing.

The saddest are the old.
They want to buy a fast-growing tree.
I explained to one that a Tulip Tree
takes seventeen years to bloom.
"Too long, too long."
I don't have seventeen years."

I don't comfort them with the usual:
"Oh yes you do--"
I just think that in seventeen years
the guarantee will no longer be valid.

Bellis perennis

When I was four,
one of my mother's greatest delights
was when I picked a bouquet
of lawn daisies
with stems so short
they could only be held
in a small hand
and had to be floated
in a bowl of water.

Ever since,
I have always loved the contrast
of white, yellow and green
in the spring.

Now, when my job requires,
I must smash *Bellis perennis*.
I sometimes have to
roll over them repeatedly
while seated on my tractor.

I guess I'll have to grow up sometime.

Kentucky Falls

I called it an inverse hike.
Six of us with five dogs
went downhill to see Kentucky Falls.
I was first in line
and at a brisk pace with a 20-pound pack,
I held my own.

It's always nice in the spring,
lots of water--
and the waterfall makes you feel
that life isn't passing too fast.

On the way back,
I was in the lead,
and one by one,
they passed me,
as if gray hair should only be seen
in a rear view mirror.
Puffing and sweating,
I finally made it out
to beer and fatty foods.

Sweaty too and standing in the rain,
they were all proud to have
beaten the leader.
I should have dawdled
a little longer
and made them wait
and shiver while they realized
that I had the keys.

Dan Liberthson

Great Expectations

The day stretches before me like a cat lazily rising, arching, then elongating, as if food is a certainty, comfort a given. My desk happily expects thoughts to leap from my fingers, parts to shape into a joyous whole.

Surely my bed will be ready tonight as on every night to soothe whatever aches. Surely my wife will be here to put dinner on the table, a warm hand on my arm, lips on my cheek.

Yet many who live dying in lands blown to pieces whisper in the corners, stare across the oceans, signal with severed hands I can't manage to ignore that nothing is sure.

Truth

I knew an old man who said there is no Truth. He was sure because he'd spent eight decades searching for it.

Just because you haven't found it, I replied, doesn't mean it's not there. Sorry you wasted your life, friend— You should have been partying. He raised his hands to his face and wept.

Tell me what the truth is and I'll swear you're a liar. Tell me I lie and I'll swear it's the truth. Go ahead, you can trust me— I won't say a thing.

A Swiss Army knife, that's Truth— it bends, it cuts, it screws, an all-in-one tool that serves different purposes depending on who wields it. And we all wield it.

Phnom Penh

Buried in a backpack on a folded sales slip scrawled with a skipping pen my half-legible words lament Asia's dead: so many gone so many gone

How can the survivors beam at me as if all is right the past nothing but words on the flip side of a frayed receipt

Secret

Canada geese streak upriver oblique to the ripples, pulled by blind need, pushed by impending weather, charged by cooling waters to vector at targets they alone know.

Year in and out they go at the appointed season, launched by hidden signals, driven by their genome's wild will to live, a mystery beyond bird and man.

Tabletop History

Some people like laminate tabletops, impervious to stain. No fuss, no muss. IKEA!

Others prefer the organic beauty of natural wood, which they strive to protect at all cost. "STOP! You'll leave a ring! Use a coaster!"

Me, I love an old wooden tabletop covered in rings.

A ring for the morning coffee I shared with Julie, after a fun night of lovemaking at her parents' house in Sunnyvale when they were away. It was good to be young.

A ring for the Cognac I shared with best friend John, as we solved the problems of the Universe while sitting on cushy couches by the fire in the dimly lit Velvet Turtle on Sepulveda Blvd. John would soon be dead.

A ring for the bottle of BV Rutherford Cab I polished off alone one night in Sonoma, thoroughly content with my place in space and time. Loving where I was and what I was doing.

A ring for the strong drink I shared with my brother, sitting across the kitchen table from him at my mother's house in San Diego as she lay dying in the next room and we argued over how to handle her final days.

Rings for joy, rings for sorrow Rings for life, for love, for death. Intimate human history, written on a tabletop.

Don Root

Poetry Night in Kyiv

When winter's moon last beamed full upon snowy streets and fields vodka dribbled down our chins as we laughed until we cried The writers wrote and the poets spoke and our fingers plucked pickled beets from bowls, turning schooners of sour cream pink. The worst man in the world has surrounded us with his armies threatening war, saying our home is his. Our despair says he should not, our hope says he would not, and our defiance says he'd better not. Does the world weep in the warmth of their living rooms? Does the West cry for our children, our grandparents, our cats and dogs? Our rivers run red to the Black Sea as we crouch in cities razed to rubble, yet pesky are we who smash the toes of the Russian boot. Elegant poems of blood and bravery are read by candlelight and dismal elegies sung clear become odes of hope. Our spirit survives unshakable with tanks next door and shells overhead, the worst man in the world does not know he is already dead.

Kenneth Roe

Elusive

There must be a reason why God seems so distant There must be a reason why man's so insistent Whatever the reason we don't understand, the elusive division between God and man. There must be a reason for such a desperate search, I'm looking for something that I don't find in church. There must be a reason which I cannot see, The reason I wonder, what could it be? Finally it rings through as clear as a bell Don't worry about heaven, don't worry about hell. A long forgotten something hidden on memory's shelf The reason is clear now, know my spiritual self. I've finally got it, I know what to do. The reason is simple. To thine ownself be true.

Phil Bridler

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The Picnic, 1847

Inspired by a Magnolia Tree

Eden Omari

PART THREE

Hey wait! Where's Part Three? You promised me Part Three! I'm hooked on this story. You can't just abandon me after Part Two! (Can you?)

— Fret not, dear reader. We like this story, too. A lot! But it's long, and it just doesn't do it justice to offer a small bite at a time over the course of a year. You wouldn't eat your favorite sandwich a bite at a time over the course of a year, would you? I thought not. The flow gets interrupted, the momentum is lost, and seeds and bits of lettuce get stuck in your teeth. For a year. That's not good. So we have a better idea. Now that *The Picnic, 1847* has captured our interest, we can read it in its entirety, all at once, on our blog:

graffitiegene.wixsite.com/graffiti.

Thanks, Eden!

Where Do I Find Graffiti?

Look for this esteemed rag at the coolest establishments in Eugene, among them:

Art House Cinema
 Bhumi Refillery / Café Yumm
 Community Cup Coffee
 The Copy Shop
 Dark Pine Coffee
 Doc's Pad Taphouse
 Equiano Coffee
 Espresso Roma
 Eugene Mailbox Center
 House of Records
 J Michaels Books
 Max's Tavern
 New Zone Gallery
 Red Barn Natural Grocery
 Slice Pizza (the Whit location)
 Smith Family Bookstore
 Tea Chai Té

and in Cottage Grove:

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Plastic, plastic everywhere! Single-use everything! It's hard to avoid. You want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. You want to make a difference for the good of the planet. But how? Where do you start?

Easy. You start at Bhumi Refillery, where proprietor Mollie DeCost is dedicated to helping our community live a waste-free life. Her shop is filled with refillables—laundry detergents, body soaps and shampoos, household cleaners, you

name it. You bring your own container (or buy one from Mollie), fill it up, and pay by weight. All her excellent products come from ecofriendly sources. In addition, Bhumi serves as a free recycling center for hard-to-recycle products, such as bottle caps, plastic straws, disposable razors, spent coffee capsules—all your day-to-day detritus that typically gets tossed into the trash and goes to the landfill.

"It can sometimes feel overwhelming trying to go zero-waste," says Mollie. "Our society doesn't make it easy. But you can start small and help make a big impact."

She recommends starting with one zero-waste practice at a time and making it a habit, then continuing to add things as you feel comfortable.

Bhumi is a joy to walk into. In addition to the refill products, the shop sells candles, plants (there's even a plant-potting bar), kitchen and bath needs—a whole potpourri of items that support a healthy, sustainable existence on our planet.

Bhumi is in the Meridian Building at 1801 Willamette St. in Eugene. Drop by today and take that first step toward your own zero-waste life!

For more information, call Bhumi at (541) 505-8331 or find them on the web at bhumi1801.com.

Pacific Moon Tree Tarot

There are witches, and then there are witches. Some are generational, and we happen to have (at least) one of those right here in Eugene. She, as the song goes, was born this way.

Julie Hanavan Olsen moved to Lane County at the age of nine. Her heart was with her maternal grandmother in Hawaii, even though her new residence was now the Willamette Valley. In order to stay in touch with her most beloved and influential person, Julie traveled back and forth until, at the ages of 18 and 65, death came between them.

Over the years, they had gone to Catholic churches and missions up and down the California coast, as well as Shinto temples and Polynesian sacred grounds on the island of Oahu, all the while learning and growing and meeting like-minded souls. The ancestral knowledge and guidance, brought through her great-grandfather in the form of her grandmother, Julie is now passing along to her own granddaughter. And to the world.

Her website Pacific Moon Tree Tarot has answers to everyday questions as well as opportunities to learn more. You can stop by to meet with her Wednesday through Saturday at Bhumi Refill Shop in the Meridian Building, where she has set up a table in the corner.

We asked Julie what she most wants people to know about Tarot and about witches. She was gracious enough to share her thoughts.

"The origin of the word 'witch' is Wise One. We are the healers and the story tellers, the seers and the ones who listen. We have a connection to our Earth and our Moon which is deep within our spirit. We connect heart to heart, soul to soul, in order to help, to teach, to enlighten.

"One of the many options for oracle work is the Tarot. There's something similar in every culture, from every group of First People—Runes, I Ching, scrying bowls, crystal balls, tea leaves, osteomancy (throwing bones), and many more. Whichever one resonates, is the one for you. They are tools, and we are their interpreters."

As a supporter of books, writing, and all the arts, Julie has contributed to Graffiti since the beginning. Stop by and say hello next time you're in the neighborhood.

