

# Graffiti

#9



*into the*  
**Future**  
*we go*

1998 —————>

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# FRONT LINES

Don Root

## HAPPY GNU EARS!

Graffiti kicks off 2024 and celebrates **OUR ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY** with this issue. Last spring, we were taking bets on how many issues we'd survive. The consensus was six. Turns out we must be part Energizer Bunny. So congratulations to us! Which is to say, congratulations to you! Graffiti wouldn't exist without your contributions of creativity and, crass as it may seem, money. Thanks to all of you who have supported us with one or both! Speaking of which:

In addition to this issue's sponsored ad, we also welcome **Emerald Broadband** and **Equiano Coffee** to Graffiti #9. Like us, they're hometown businesses big on supporting our community. Emerald not only offers fast, fiber-optic internet service but also contributes to local arts and education events. They recently sponsored Eugene Film Society's 72-hour Horror Film Competition (eek!) and Connected Lane County's codeORcreate event, helping students work on tech solutions to community problems. Meanwhile, over in the Whit, Equiano offers an oasis of amazing coffee and good vibes to start your weekend off right. Friendly proprietor Okon offers a wealth of coffee knowledge, and the little patio is a great place to hang out. Come with a friend or make one there—you'll always find someone cool kicking back with a cuppa joe. Thanks to both businesses for supporting Graffiti. We really appreciate it!

Okay, so . . . now that "the holidays" are behind us, how did you fare? Are you still alive? (If not, no need to answer.) Did you have a roof over your head and food to eat? Are you healthy, both physically and mentally? Do you have friends to socialize with? Maybe a partner to keep you company on these cold winter nights? If you answered "yes" to all of these, boy are you lucky! You're also lucky to live in a country where you're not getting shot at on a regular basis. Everyone in America is lucky in that regard (see Kevin Graves' piece "The Birth Lottery" on p. 7). Count your blessings.

But the holidays *can* be stressful, right? A lot of people gather with family, and many family gatherings are exercises in suppressed hostility. In my own past, holiday gatherings were something to dread—something to just get through, hoping they wouldn't make relations any worse. Yes, I know there really *are* happy, well-adjusted families out there who gather during the holidays and share love and joy and laughter. I know because I've experienced those good times—just not with my own family.

So let's say you're in the former group, and let's say your partner was in a foul mood to begin with and then had a few too many spiked egnogs at the family gathering. You got home, and your partner's frustration and rage was boiling away beneath the surface. You could feel the mood. Feel the tension. And maybe you said, "I wish you hadn't had so many spiked egnogs and insulted my father that way," or something like that. And, oh shit, suddenly the dam breaks and the anger gushes out in unrestrained fury, resulting in violent shouting, broken things (including your heart), and maybe even unleashed fists, or worse. As a little kid, I called the cops on my parents once during one of their late-night battles. I answered the door at 3 a.m. when the cops came, and the first thing one of them asked me was, "Is there a gun in the house?" Yes, there was a gun in the house. It was my brother's, who had been in the ROTC. My mom was a crazed Librium addict at that point, and many years later my dad told me he knew there was a gun in the house and was scared shitless about that. Domestic problems are the worst. I would never want to be a cop responding to a domestic violence call.

I'm guessing domestic-violence incidents go up around the holidays. I hope you weren't the victim of one, but if you were, you can get help. This issue's sponsored ad comes thanks to **Mark Foster** and is for **Hope & Safety Alliance**, a Eugene nonprofit dedicated to helping victims of domestic violence. Their ad is below. If you need to, just pick up the phone and call them, now!, before it happens again.

☺ ☺ ☺

**hope & safety**  
alliance 



GET HELP!

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

Does your partner:

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

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

**24-hour Crisis Line – 541-485-6513**

Advocacy Center – 1577 Pearl St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Eugene.

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

## A BIG GRAFFITI **THANK YOU** TO OUR ADVERTISERS:

afilipinahippie.blog, Art House, The Bookmine, Emerald Broadband, Equiano Coffee, G. L. Helm, Misha Kagutaba, Dan Liberthson, Mind's Eye Digital Design, Oak Prairie Woodworks, O'Brien Construction, Prise Design Group, Raven Flooring

## AND TO OUR DONORS (AKA "ANGELS") THIS ISSUE:

Mike Bolten, Alexander Bort, Mark Foster, Paul George, Michael Gibbens, Wes Hansen, Mackenzie Alliance, Andrew Pardi, Stephen Swiftfox, Rod Williams

*You guys keep us rolling over! Dog bless you!*

# Graffiti

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Find past issues and additional submissions online at: [graffiti-magazine.com](http://graffiti-magazine.com)  
Paper copies of most back issues are available for \$3 each via Venmo or PayPal

**ON THE COVER:** Rosy, by Don

## FAQ

### HOW DO I SUBMIT WORK?

Email to: [graffitieugene@gmail.com](mailto:graffitieugene@gmail.com)

Snail-mail or hand-deliver to:

**Graffiti, 1292 High St. #129, Eugene OR 97401**

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

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

### 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](http://graffiti-magazine.com).

### DOES GRAFFITI ACCEPT PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED WORK?

We have in the past, but we're kinda done with that now.

### DOES GRAFFITI ACCEPT SUBMISSIONS FROM OUTSIDE LANE COUNTY?

Yes.

### WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE SOUP?

Split pea, although a good minestrone is a fine thing, too.



Art by Jean Murphy

## Coffee

Jean Murphy

When I was a child, in the late 1940s and early 50s, I walked into the kitchen every morning to the smell of coffee. I liked it, and I liked to see it being made. Mama and Daddy drank Hills Bros coffee. It came in a tall dark red metal can, with a picture of a man in a long yellow robe with little red flowers on it, and a turban and a beard, drinking from a big white cup. He reminded me of a Wise Man, like the ones we learned about in Sunday School. (After I learned to read, the HILLS BROS label puzzled me. Mama explained that BROS stood for BROTHERS, and that's who owned the company that made the coffee. Brothers in yellow robes, apparently.)

My parents used a "vacuum" coffee pot, a metal pot with a heavy black plastic handle. Mama filled the pot with water, and put a metal thing on top -- it looked like a big tulip, with a hollow stem that went into the pot below. She spooned coffee grounds into the top (a small filter kept it from falling into the pot below) and turned on the burner. When the water boiled, it went up the tube and mixed with the coffee. Mama turned off the burner and the coffee slowly drained into the pot below. Amazing. What made the water do that?

Later they switched to a "percolator," which had its own charm. The principle was the same -- water boiled, rose up a metal tube into a small metal "basket", and percolated through coffee grounds back to the pot. You could watch it happening, because there was a heavy hollow glass ball in the lid, and you could see, and hear, the liquid bubble up, over and over, gradually turning the clear water to brown coffee. It made a bubbly musical

sound, which Maxwell House Coffee used in a radio ad. (Google it!) For years, I thought "percolate" meant to rise up and bubble, instead of to filter down. I had it mixed up with "perky," which has a very UP sound to it.

Every adult I knew drank coffee, and not only at breakfast. Neighborhood mamas met at each other's kitchen tables mid-morning and drank coffee and talk talk talked. It was boring to listen to, but I remember once hearing talk about "mattresses" and all the women practically fell off their chairs laughing.

I had two Norwegian grandmas, and coffee and cookies were a big part of visits to their houses. Grandma L. had a pretty glass bowl with sugar lumps!! and sometimes we could dip one into Grandpa's coffee and pop it in our mouths. He used cream, which no one else did. His coffee was a lovely warm brown. Grandma B's specialty was a three-tiered silver cookie tray, which she put on the big dining room table with the lace tablecloth, she and Mama and the Aunts would sit and talk and drink coffee (black) and eat cookies. We kids would sidle in and help ourselves to Grandma's Spritz or Fattigman or Krumkake....

I started drinking coffee in high school and didn't stop for 60 years! My husband and I went through the homeground coffee beans/cone/filter phase, and I imagined I could tell the difference between coffee from Ethiopia and Brazil.... Now, we drink only tea at home, but every Tuesday I go to Theo's, at 8th and Charnelton, for a 12 oz OATMILK DECAF LATTE! YUM! ☺☺☺

*"I don't know where my ideas come from. I will admit, however, that one key ingredient is caffeine. I get a couple cups of coffee into me and weird things just start to happen."*

— Gary Larson



300 Blair Blvd., Eugene. Tasting Room open 9am-4pm, Fri-Sun

## What I Know About Coffee

Don Root

1 I never drank much coffee until grad school, when studying late into the night became par for the course. I'd go to a place called the Blue Mango, order a 16-oz cafe mocha, and dig into the books until the place closed. They served the mocha in a shaker pint glass. It was always hot and wonderful, did the job of keeping my brain firing on all cylinders, and, if I remember right, cost \$3, which seemed a fair price for a 16-oz mocha. Now you'd pay \$6 or \$7 for the same thing, which doesn't seem like a fair price. The Blue Mango had the perfect atmosphere for studying. It was small, cozy, warm, friendly, and walking distance from my house. I loved it. It's gone now.

2 When the Blue Mango closed for the night, I'd be wired, and if I still had studying to do, which was almost always, I'd head to the only all-night place in town: Denny's. I went into Denny's enough that I developed a really nice relationship with a particular server, who always kept the coffee flowing for me with a smile and fun banter. Then one night she invited me to dinner at her place. I hadn't been thinking along those lines at all. I remember being taken aback and making up some lame excuse why I couldn't come. I regret that now. I wasn't attracted to her for a relationship, but she might have become a great friend. She was obviously hurt by my rejection, and I think the next time I went into Denny's she was cold. I'm not sure I ever went back after that. In retrospect, looking at this instance and many others in my life, I think the default answer to any invitation you get from another human being that isn't life threatening should always be "yes." Which just reminded me of Molly's soliloquy in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (see "The Golden Pen," p. 12), though it has nothing to do with coffee.

3 Nothing. I know nothing about coffee. ☺☺☺

## You Never Forget Your First Time

Rod Williams

This was late October, 1972. Basic training in Missouri, at Fort Leonard Wood (or, as we recruits not-so-affectionately called it, "Fort Lost-in-the-Woods"). My platoon was assigned an exercise that required pitching tents near the side of a cliff to keep watch for enemy troops who were apparently expert mountain climbers. Three of us hapless soldiers shared one such tent. Night fell. The wind rose and the temperature plunged. I don't think I've ever been so cold in all my life.

One of us was supposed to keep watch while the others slept, but sleep was impossible. The evening dragged on, the hour grew late. My companions and I shivered and shifted around in our sleeping bags, trying in vain to get warm. Then, sometime after midnight, we heard the crunch of footsteps approach our tent.

"The enemy!" hissed our lookout through chattering teeth. I was the radio man and I prepared to sound the alarm to our lieutenant. My frozen fingers fumbled at the equipment.

Suddenly, the flap of our tent was flung open. We could make out two figures looming before us. One carried a large, shadowy rectangular object. The other leaned forward and, in the wan moonlight, I spied the chevron on the sleeve of his field jacket. I breathed a sigh of relief: friends, not foes.

"Coffee?" the corporal barked in a gravelly voice.

To that point, I'd never tried more than a sip or two of coffee. I hadn't liked it. What was there to like? It was a vile liquid, bitter and nasty and acidic. "An acquired taste," my father claimed. I cleared my throat to politely decline the offer.

Then my reptile brain piped up, "Stupid! It's hot! Don't be an idiot! Take it! Take it!"

So I took it. I held up my field-issued tin cup and let the man with the rectangular object (a military coffee container) pour me a dose of steaming java. I gulped a greedy swallow. It was hot, all right. And awful. And wonderful. Also miraculous, the way a tree of warmth immediately spread through my chest and all my limbs.

I dared to ask, "Any sugar?"

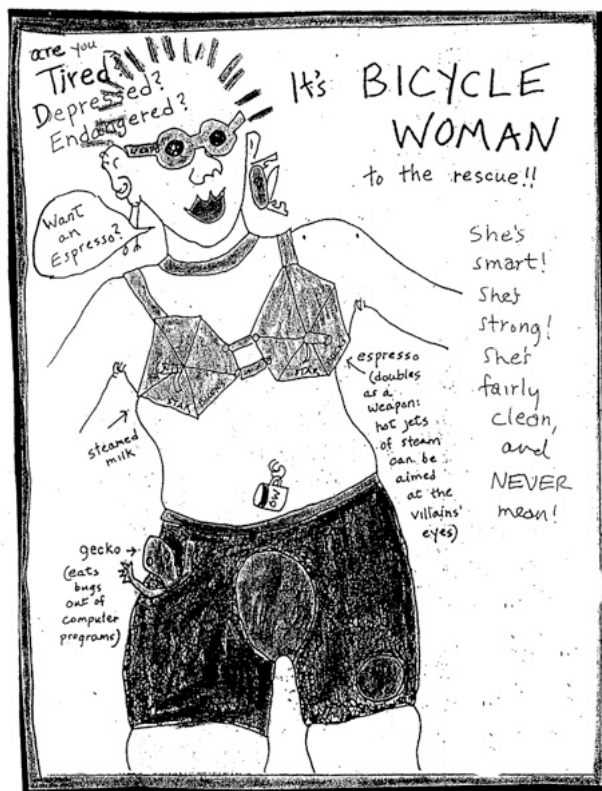
The corporal shot me a look of utter disdain. "Oh, sugar," he growled. "How about some creamer, too?"

I smiled. "Sure!"

"Let me see now." He made a show of patting down his jacket pockets. "Sorry," he said, not looking sorry at all. "Guess I'm all out." He shook his head. "Fucking rookies. You ladies have a good rest of your night." Then he and his aide retreated into the night to continue their rounds.

Years later, I'm lucky enough to live in this city with artisan coffee spots like Equiano and Wandering Goat. And yet, the memory of that first terrible/fantastic cup of joe on a cold Missouri night? It's still vivid, still there like it happened yesterday.

And yes: to this day, I still take my coffee black. ☺☺☺



## Bicycle Woman

by Jean Murphy



## LAST STAND IN LAS VEGAS

Armando Cacciatore

In my flight of desperation, I'm at 32,000 feet over the Nevada desert, staring down at a vast expanse of dirt. Mountains of dirt, valleys of dirt, dirt roads leading nowhere—it reminds me of my life, except right now, three Scotches out of PDX, I'm not as parched.

They say the American Dream is to own a home. I'm here to tell you there are two American Dreams: one is to own a home, and the other is to win a million in Las Vegas. Well, I lost my job to offshoring, lost my pension to the global economic downturn, and lost my home to foreclosure. I've got one dream left, and I'm descending into it as we speak. So fasten your seatbelts and raise your seat backs and tray tables. It's Vegas, baby!

What's left of my life savings is on the debit card in my wallet, and I figure I've got maybe a week to either go up in glory or down in flames. First things first: gotta ante in. Wanting to convince myself I'm a winner, not a loser, I've decided to hole up in some of the best digs the city has to offer. In a town where new becomes old by the time you get to this comma, the five-star, Tuscan-themed Bellagio—built in 1998—is practically a grande dame. Fresher megaluxe hotels have sprouted up, but the Bellagio has a tried-and-true, Old Money reputation. Not being much of a gambler, I've opted for the sure thing.

The wisdom of this choice was reinforced when my pretrip networking yielded a miracle. I had talked to a friend who talked to a friend who knew someone's friend who worked at the Bellagio, and for a \$100 kickback this guy could get me into one of the hotel's exclusive villas, normally reserved for high-rolling celebrities, Arab sheiks, and Titans of Industry. A no-brainer. I sent the guy a cashier's check right away. Sweet!

The villa he scored for me is going to be a two-bedroom suite, three times the size of my foreclosed house, with its own terrace and pool, five bathrooms, and 11 telephones. I plan to use them all. And it comes with a 24-hour butler and personal limo service to and from the airport, no less. I can't wait.

My plane lands at 3 p.m., right on time. Oddly, when I emerge from the airport security area, I see no limo driver there to meet me. A disappointment, especially realizing I'll have to manage on my own with several Dewar's at altitude under my belt. After a long pee, I exit the terminal and walk outside into the oven, managing to find the hotel shuttle just left of the broil setting.

When the shuttle pulls up to the Bellagio, I can feel the luxury oozing out the hotel's entryway. And as I walk into the lobby, my heart races with excitement. I may now be unemployed, but I no longer feel like dirt. I feel like a God. I am Mercury, Roman god of travelers and thieves, and I'm livin' large. No need to remove my sunglasses, since I'm a famous somebody-or-other trying not to be recognized.

"Next, please." The reception clerk calls me over. "Villa for Cacciatore," I say calmly, exuding cool. "Excuse me, sir?" says the clerk, with evident surprise.

"I believe you have a villa reserved for me—Armando Cacciatore."

She types something into her computer, then something else, then something else.

"I'm sorry, sir. I don't see that reservation. And the villas are invitation-only. Are you sure you have the correct hotel?"

"Yes, of course," I say, impatiently, before, uh-oh, oh no, could it be? My brain struggles to do the math: two plus two equals . . . Crap! I suddenly realize I've been had for a c-note. I can feel my face turn from scarlet to vermillion and back.

"I'm sorry. I'm not showing you," she says. "Would you like to speak with Mr. Angelov?"

Adrenalin now clearing the Scotch haze, I quickly devise an exit strategy. "No, that won't be necessary," I say. "I'm having dinner with him next month—he'll hear about it then. What else have you got?"

"Certainly," she says, lowering her head and typing more things into her computer. "I've got a Lakeview Suite available for \$1,550 a night. Will that be suitable?"

"Well, I guess it will *have* to be, under the circumstances," I sniff, handing her my debit card with the realization that I was all-in now. No going back.

My make-it-or-break-it suite is on the 35th floor, with a commanding view of the lights and mayhem below. And at more than 1,000 square feet, it's big enough to contain my bruised ego. It has only two bathrooms instead of the villa's five, but I can alternate between them and constantly ask for fresh towels.

Now back to business. No time like the present, I quickly shower, dress, and head straight to the casino. Though it's a massive money-vacuum the size of two soccer fields, the Bellagio casino is famous for the intimate "Bobby's Room," a high-stakes poker room named for the

legendary Bobby Baldwin, youngest winner of the World Series of Poker and now a casino executive.

Pro players love Bobby's Room. They call it "the office." I like the pedigree, but the minimum buy-in is \$20,000, and I wouldn't last ten minutes in those shark-infested waters. Instead I wade through the plebes and sidle up to a blackjack table. Ready or not, here we go! An hour later and, well, I'm down three large. Not an auspicious start, but I'm just warming up. I'll get it back. I decide to take a break and go see a show.

Opting for Cirque du Soleil at New York New York, I stroll down the Strip, past the faux Eiffel Tower toward the faux Manhattan skyline. If I hit the faux Pyramid, I know I've gone too far.

In contrast to the opulent Bellagio, New York New York feels working class. Corpulent conventioners feed quarters into slot machines; honeymooners and retirees roll Samsonites in from the parking garage. I head to the theater and get in line behind a tall blonde in a slinky red dress. Just as my eyes reach her mezzanine, she turns around. Oh my.

"I'm Nadia," she says, extending her hand.

"Armando," I say, extending mine in return. My hand suddenly feels huge, sweaty, and graceless.

"I was thinking about the show," she says, "but actually, I'm hungry. Would you mind taking me to breakfast?"

"Sure, I know a place," I say nonchalantly, as if taking a complete stranger to breakfast at 9:30 p.m. on a Tuesday was perfectly normal. But then, this *was* Las Vegas. On our way out through the casino, we pass a roulette table.

"Wait!" she says, locking her eyes on the table and taking hold of my arm. "Put something on 15 for me. I've got a feeling."

Roulette has never interested me. Bad odds. First I think, "Oh what the hell, she's gorgeous—I can afford a few bucks." But then it hits me—it's an omen! She's the goddess of luck come to get me my house back! I immediately get \$2,000 in chips and put half on 15. Come on 15!

Round and round and round. We're slowing. We're bouncing. We're headed right toward 15!

"Thirty-four, red," says the croupier, sliding my money irretrievably away from me.

"Again!" says Nadia fiercely. "Try it again!" She's possessed!

I drop the other grand on 15.

As the wheel slows I try to visualize the ball's arc. It looks good. It really looks good. This actually could be it! We're bouncing right toward . . .

"Three, red," says the croupier.

I turn to Nadia. "Breakfast then?"

"You go," she says. "I've lost my appetite."

Clearly it's time for the Double Down, so I head out the door and stroll the streets over to the Fruit Loop, Las Vegas's affectionately named gay triangle, east of the Strip.

Despite the neighborhood, the Double Down Saloon is not a gay bar per se. Gays, straights, punks, preachers, working stiffs, working girls—all are welcome. Psychedelic paintings cover the walls, and light enters at its own risk. The Strip seems far away here, and the Double Down serves Nevada's finest down-and-out breakfast: the Graveyard Trifecta, consisting of the potent house-signature cocktail ("Ass Juice") along with a can of Schlitz and a Slim Jim. Five bucks, plus a contribution to the jukebox for my picks: Link Wray, The Lurkers, and Louis Prima. Okay, so I'm feeling like L. If Elvis is alive, he hangs here.

Spirits picking up, I heft my debit card. It's light. True, I'd gotten off to a slow start, but then things had really deteriorated. I'd clearly have to vacate the Bellagio. What then? Go home? If I quit now I've got just enough left for first, last, and deposit on a cheesy apartment in Springfield. Either that or I could just lay it all on the table at the Bellagio. I'm headed that way anyway, so off I go.

I enter the casino and soon find myself with a huge stack of chips and a double Glenlivet, sitting, inexplicably, at a roulette table. My luck's bound to turn, and it better, because this is it—the last gasp. If I win, I live to fight another day. If I lose . . .

Suddenly there's warm breath in my ear. "Hi handsome."

It's Nadia, looking like a million bucks. "I owe ya'," she says. "It's 27. You can't lose."

She smiles. Damn, she's beautiful!

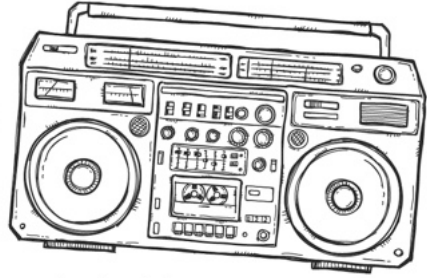
I push my stack onto 27. The wheel spins. ♣ ♣ ♣

*Armando Cacciatore is a freelance writer currently living with his faithful dog, Fever, under the beautiful Beltline Highway in Eugene.*



# Turn it up!

by Ponder/Seek/Discover



Here, I spin off a few comments about albums, aged and newly born, which I admire for their sonic soul. My interests mostly fall under the Avant Garde/Jazz/Noise labels, but we'll start with a few jazz albums, related by associations through time, a call and response - fittingly.



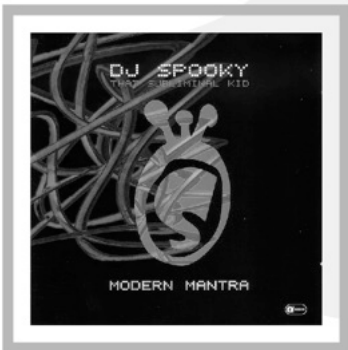
## “Bitch’s Brew” by Miles Davis and Company



Released in 1970 and complete with the conceptual album cover by the great Abdul Mati Klarwein, this album defined a generational gap and still packs the same punch. This is NOT the first Davis album I listened to coming up, rather, it inspired those albums: the incomparable live performances, Agharta in 1975 and

Pangaea in 1976. This album, too jazz for the rock critics and too rock for the jazz critics, sold extremely well and has definitely withstood the test of time. It represents the genesis of jazz/rock fusion, leading eventually to acts like Painkiller and Bladerunner, John Zorn’s projects with Bill Laswell. A truly great album.

## “Modern Mantra” by DJ Spooky: That Subliminal Kid



DJ Spooky, aka Paul Miller, is a huge force in the illbient movement, which comes from Hip Hop and Rap, but takes improvisational inspiration from jazz, turning the turntable into a new jazz instrument. As such, artists like DJ Spooky are often called turntablists, an art form which really traces its genesis back

to Christian Marclay. Per my own understanding, Illbient is really responsible for invigorating the modern-day jazz scene in London, Illbient DJs mixing all this great jazz into their sets. But this cat is truly all over the scene, working with all the experimental greats, from Butch Morris, trained in jazz, to Iannis Xenakis, classically trained.

## “London Brew” by a collection of modern, London-based jazz musicians



This really great double album honoring Bitch’s Brew on the 50th anniversary of its release, and composed in 2020 – 2021 by 12 thoroughly modern, London-based jazz greats: Benji B; Raven Bush; Theon Cross; Nubya Garcia; Tom Herbert; Shabaka Hutchings; Nikolaj Torp Larsen; Dave Okumu; Nick Ramm; Dan See; Tom

Skinner; and, Martin Terefe; was released on Concord Jazz. Unfortunately, all forms except the digital uploads are sold out, but you can listen to official samples from both albums on YouTube. And at a cost, you can download both in digital format. They’re a fresh interpretation, a response to a call laid down 50 years ago.


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- DR. STRANGELOVE (1964) - January 26-February 1**
- A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (1971) - February 2-8**
- FULL METAL JACKET (1987) - February 9-15**
- BARRY LYNDON (1975) - February 16-22**
- 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (1968) - February 23-29**



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 where-it-falls-apart

**THE WHITEAKER**

BOOK REVIEWS  
 THE LOWDOWN GOSSIP  
 CHEAP FOOD & DRINK



misha kagutaba

## A TV Girl Treat

Sherri Oien

Last night Lydia's favorite band [TV Girl] was playing in Eugene. Unfortunately, they sold out, and even calling yesterday morning in hopes of some spare tickets, they were still sold out.

I picked Lydi up and told her but said we could go see where they are playing and maybe come back because sometimes people sell their tickets outside the theater.

She was so excited to see the sign saying the band, and we came back when it was starting. We go to the box office asking if we could just go buy a T-shirt and the lady smiles and says we actually got 2 tickets left! We of course bought them, got some merch and were smiling ear to ear.

Halfway through the concert I went to buy us some water. The manager of the McDonald Theater asked how it was and I explained our night getting here. He smiles and goes, "YOU AND YOUR DAUGHTER GOT THEM?!" He goes on to explain at 3:30 the lead singer came in and handed him the two tickets saying, "Someone will be so excited."

I told Lydia and she about passed out!

A core memory definitely made, going to a concert not planned, on a school night seeing her fav band. ☺☺☺

### Dan Liberthson, Novelist and Poet

*The Bluejay Contrivance* – spy novel on a worldwide stage  
*The Golden Spider* – kids' fantasy novel with talking cat  
*A Poetry of Birds* – poems about birds, with photos  
*The Pitch is on the Way* – baseball poems and drawings  
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*Morning and Begin Again* – poems about life's challenges

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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 create. Don't be shy! Do it today! More than once if you feel the urge! Be in the next issue, okay? Email your writings and/or artwork to [graffitieugene@gmail.com](mailto:graffitieugene@gmail.com). Or send (or hand-deliver) hardcopy to: Graffiti, 1292 High St. #129, Eugene 97401.

### The Octopus Pot

In Nauplion, city of myriad tiles,  
the octopus pot dances in a museum corner,  
dances for itself and the few who witness,  
limbs of three invertebrates flowing  
around its globe in womanly curves,  
shaping since Minos' time the form  
that holds all the water, all the earth,  
every single thing singing through them.

A rumpled guard rests on the sill  
smoking beneath the No Smoking sign  
with no idea he would disperse  
like his milky penumbra if not for  
the embrace of three octopi  
swaying in the sea encircling a pot  
hollow but full of time and its children,  
everything we are, and are not.

Dan Liberthson

### Late Winter Outside Prescott, Arizona

A lake nurses a rim of snow  
and slow ducks on its mild swell.  
The silence is so pristine,  
the unbroken snow so virginal  
I cannot let things alone  
but like a schoolboy loosed  
pack a snowball and throw  
at a bobbing ring-necked drake.  
The shot falls short and the duck  
unflustered in his gaudy colors  
glances at me as if he knows  
in spring males of every species  
cannot leave anything be.

Dan Liberthson

### Mockingbird

On a post on the mountain a mockingbird,  
with his bright barred back, calls and calls  
in every language he has mastered, come here,  
my pretty, come here. He flies up  
a few feet and floats down, singing.  
My dog can't grasp why I stay and stare.  
He tries to haul me down the hill by force  
back home to where his dinner waits.  
The bird looks once, then ignores us both.  
He flies up, dips down, flies up, dips down,  
sings and sings and sings but no mate comes.

Dan Liberthson

### Ritual of the Journey

Sea and land decide their limits  
beneath the sunlit glint of gulls.  
Where we are you take down your hair  
beneath marble columns and I  
cannot be older than these  
unowned seas. Someone  
owns these fences, though.  
Someone sees your thighs and  
someone's hands touch flesh.  
Your mouth is slightly open,  
your lips move slightly, stones  
decide nothing, always becoming.  
You wrap yourself, like an island,  
like any river bottom stone.  
The fine sand laps your tears,  
butterflies  
to pale daffodils  
descend.

Mark Foster

### Untitled

Listening to a choir of birds  
as a gentle breeze washes my face

Morning clouds  
Hiding the night stars

Dancing all our sensations together

We share Earth  
We share sorrow and joy  
Oh boy!

Fergul Cirpan

### Fall Back

When I was younger

I was tempted to wish myself into the future.  
Wanting the dark and dreary to be over.  
To push all my demons back into the shadows,  
as if I could escape the waning parts of life.  
But then, it was easier  
to pretend I wasn't going to die.  
Now I cherish each moment, just as it is.  
For I have found as I practice the  
art of surrender.

How to travel with grace through the darkness  
And to bask in the radiance and  
illumination that enlightens from within.

Elayne Quirin

### Ego Beheaded

The dark is closing in; short days, cold  
nights.

Yet the air is pristine and trees are  
rusting and rouging into lovely  
bouquets of gold and crimson. The sweet  
introspection of long lonely nights allow  
my vision to refine and experience a subtler  
lighter field of perception.

As life flows underground into  
its elemental roots,  
Frequencies slow down.

'Tis the season for dying.  
So I'm riding the prevailing currents  
down and inward,  
where I can expand to the place  
where my mind no longer defines me,  
where I become nothing and everything,  
just the perceiver of God's  
infinite wisdom and grace.  
Such a sweet cozy place to be.

Elayne Quirin

### De/Tension

Uptight dark night it's all a fight  
Sacred flight, molten light, body bright,  
feels right, end in sight, moving  
into delight, it's alright, all right

Elayne Quirin

"I'm a Yogini, Mother,  
Grandmother, Free Spirit,  
Dancer, Prancer, Disciple of  
the Earth, Keeper of the  
Faith, Righteous Babe."

—Elayne

## "Are You Experienced?" "Have You Ever Been Experienced?"

John Zerzan

Jim Hendrix famously posed these questions, and we might ponder the meaning of the word today. Experience. From the Latin verb *experiri*, to try out or test. Thus the word has an aspect of experiment or adventure.

In technological society, with its constant media distraction and reduced attention span, where is the experimental, challenging element? Leading the Situationists to conclude, "the society that has abolished adventure makes the abolition of that society the only real adventure."

David Abrams mourned the widening disconnect that results from no longer experiencing nature very much. Neurologists tell us the toll exacted by its replacements: "digital dementia" from daily smartphone use, for example (Wales Online, November 17, 2023). Or the shredded mental health of the young, addicted to social media apps.

The disconnect from actual, as opposed to virtual experience has countless repercussions. Isolation, a retreat from the social, is one dimension. For instance, "64 Billion Minutes of Silence: the Astonishing Death of the Phone Call" (Daily Telegraph, November 19, 2023). Also the sharp decline of indoor restaurants in favor of drive-throughs: "When Americans Are Hungry, It's Not for Human Interaction" (New York Times, November 8, 2023). There's a failure to create direct original connections. Emoji, the e-version of mass-produced Hallmark cards, now come with assistance in the use of the standardized, and standardizing symbols. The Messenger app provides suggestions on how to employ emojis.

Hallucinate is the Cambridge Dictionary word of the year, including its usage as "when artificial intelligence (AI) hallucinates, it produces false information. Anthropomorphizing, assigning human qualities to non-human species is nothing new, but this suggests an ominous new development. To hallucinate is an experience. Machines do not experience.

"Generative AI" is the Brave New World, replacing our critical capacities, displacing experience in the world. As my friend Bjorn puts it, "degenerative AI" is the more apt descriptor.

Many decades ago, Guy Debord was onto something in thesis #1 of his Society of the Spectacle: "All that once was directly lived has become mere representation."

But there is some resistance. Chris Moody's "Life is Really Better Without the Internet: What Happened After My Wife and I Removed Wi-Fi From Our Home" appeared in The Atlantic, November 27, 2023. And on the same day a Los Angeles Times correspondent echoed Moody with "I stayed off Social Media for Just One Week and Rediscovered Awe." ☺☺☺

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## Birds

From this periphery  
I see a bluebird.  
A red winged blackbird,  
A flicker and a canary.  
Choosing birds or universes  
Is a hard choice.

The bluebird, the skies  
And the eyes of my granddaughter  
Are a spectrum all their own.

And then twenty wrens  
Fly from the flowering cherry  
Over the roof seeking  
The setting sun,

Nightfall is only an hour away  
And a lone crow flies overhead  
In search of the wrens' nests and eggs.  
He, or she, must be looking for  
Solitude or death.

They fly over, they go somewhere,  
And I never see them again.

Bill Gunn

## The Wisteria Tree

I try to explain to people  
That there is no such thing  
As a wisteria tree.  
It is a vine that has been staked  
And trained to grow straight,  
Hard and tall.  
If its crutch is cut  
From its tangled trunk,  
Maybe it will stand alone, maybe not.

The pods in winter,  
Spent and sharp  
Hang from the vine.

In winter, its green finery  
Has been struck and is lying  
Under the snow.  
Later, its pods have vanished.  
Maybe a bird took them to a new home.  
Maybe a squirrel buried them  
And will forget his dirty  
And weathered feast,  
Not knowing the seeds  
Are poisonous.  
Maybe it will grow to fruition  
In spite of the shears and heavy boots.

Maybe the seedling will grow  
In spite of the abuse  
And invent new ways  
To thrive and survive.

Bill Gunn

## Valley of the Giants

After an April hike  
To fifty-one acres of old growth  
Spared from the chain saw  
By some faceless bureaucrat,  
I glanced to the right  
on the way home  
And saw three kids,  
Swimsuit clad,  
Sunbathing on a blanket.

It was the first seventy degree day  
Of the year.  
Three small pink bodies  
Squirming, laughing,  
Maybe thinking of a lemonade stand,  
But on Kings Valley Road,  
The lemonade would mold  
Before enough passers-by  
Stopped for a sip.

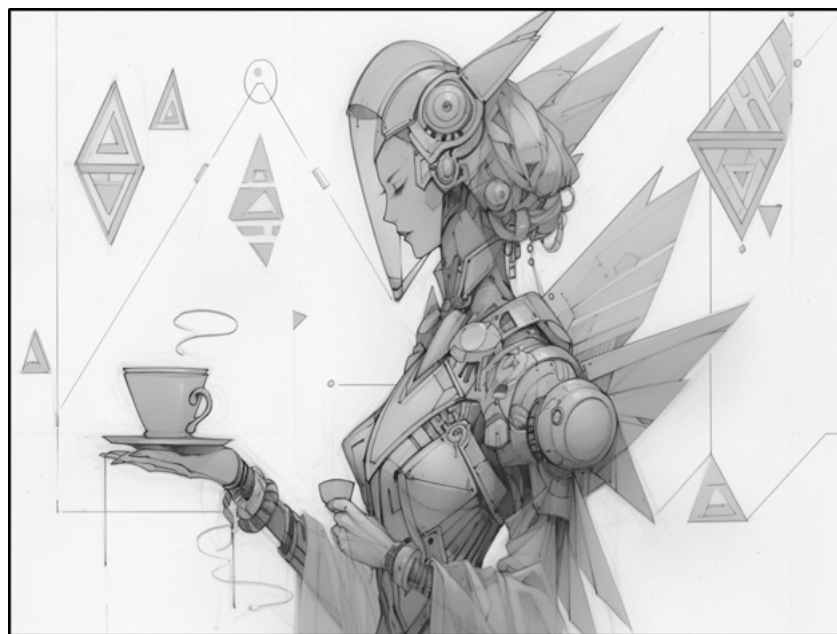
I saw myself sixty years ago,  
And I saw the kids sixty years hence.  
What changes will come  
In their lives?  
What changes have I experienced,  
That I alone have seen?

They fly into the future  
With hope and happiness.  
I am still finding my way home.

Bill Gunn

"Born and raised in Cottage Grove. VietNam vet. Author of *We Made It Back (Mostly Intact)*. Been a landscape/irrigation contractor and nurseryman in Cottage Grove for more than 40 years."

—Bill



"Origami Girl serving espresso in The Da Vinci Realm" Art by Gideon Stuart

## The Birth Lottery

Kevin Graves

Never forget the luck of winning the Birth Lottery. If you are reading this in your native English, consider this: native English speakers make up just six percent of the world's population, yet English is the tourist language of choice in many parts of the world; English is the language of business in all the major developed economies of the world; and English music, books, and "culture" are exported to every country in the world, even North Korea.

**"After I got over the wall," she told me, "I heard a woman crying out on the Mexico side, 'Please someone catch my baby.'"**

If you are a native speaker, all you had to do was get up in the morning to have mastery over the world's number-one language. You can work, travel, dance, or screw almost anywhere on the planet. Cheers to you, Birth Lottery winner!

And never forget the advantages of winning the Birth Lottery. Through no work of your own you may be carrying a US or EU passport. People kill and die for those passports. Once, I was on an all-nighter from Rome to Paris and as the train pulled into the station, from under the seat I had been sleeping on all night, out pops a skinny young stowaway—brown skin, black hair, dirty rags for clothes, no shoes. It must have been an extremely tight fit under there. He smiled nicely at me, went out the door to the cabin, and ran down the hallway. I never saw him again. I'm told stowaways go out the bathroom windows and get on the roofs of the trains to avoid the authorities, but I don't know for sure. I don't need to know... I won the Birth Lottery and carry an American passport, so I can go almost anywhere in the world for three months or so before

they want me to leave and come back to spend my American dollars again. I'm like a walking ATM that spits out cash.

I knew a Mexican-American woman in Portland who had entered the US by crossing "La Frontera"—the no-man's-land along the US-Mexico border. When the group she was with had come to a border wall, only the strongest people in her group could climb it, and they needed both arms free to do it.

"After I got over the wall," she told me, "I heard a woman crying out on the Mexico side, 'Please someone catch my baby.' The woman had a baby in her arms and couldn't climb with it. But no one volunteered. Finally, a man said to throw the baby and she did. Everyone watched as he caught the baby and we all sighed in relief and said a little prayer to Mother Maria. The woman was too exhausted to climb so she stayed behind, but her baby made it to El Norte."

I grew up thinking the US must be really great if it had this "Mexican Problem" of people risking everything, including their lives, to come here. When I lived in Europe, I was surprised to hear that the Europeans also have a "Mexican Problem." In Greece, they call them "Albanians." In Germany they call them "Turks." Switzerland: Portuguese; England: Polish; France: North Africans. In Saudi Arabia they call Mexicans "foreigners," meaning anyone from anywhere on Earth that will come to the Kingdom to do physical work, so the Nationals can sip illegal Mai Tais, smoke illegal cigarettes, and bitch about the work ethic of the current generation. It turns out whenever you have a clear disparity—in wealth, security, or opportunity—between people on either side of a border, desperate people will want to migrate to the side with better jobs, more security, and more opportunity, laws be damned. Wouldn't you? ☺☺☺

"People are talking about immigration, emigration and the rest of the fucking thing. It's all fucking crap. We're all human beings, we're all mammals, we're all rocks, plants, rivers. Fucking borders are just such a pain in the fucking arse."

— Shane MacGowan (Dec. 25, 1957–Nov. 30, 2023)

R.I.P., brother. Maith thú.



## Rampage on a Tuesday

Beauty lies within  
Heart to heart we heal  
A couple of love bruises  
Here and there  
Nothing hurts like his words  
Releasing  
Shedding old patterns  
Stars leaking off scars  
Heart-heated  
Hurt and being heard  
Welcomed  
Heart to heart  
Scars to stars  
Blame it on the modern times  
Divine timing  
Time is now  
Love, loving more  
Heart expansion evermore.

**Fergul Cirpan**

## Merry & Bright

Looks like I made it to the naughty  
list again  
How great!  
Oh deer!  
Lights up my heart  
Cheerful and bright  
His own very eyes  
Harmonic experiences  
All over me

**Fergul Cirpan**

## Evidence

There is a primal motion  
of many merged as one  
that makes my breath inspire  
for it is nearer to divine  
than any bush of fire.

Birds in a flock  
whirl all together,  
sweep across the sky—  
no one seems to guide them  
yet synchronous they fly.

Fish in a school  
swerve as one,  
each to the other tied—  
by some means indivisible  
they swim on side by side.

A herd of horses  
swings around, thundering  
full career  
without a sideward glance  
as if they feel no fear.

You tell me, mistrustingly,  
raindrops swarming in the wind  
shift side by side together  
but this motion can be traced  
to push and pull of weather.

No transcendent mind propels  
raindrops or living creatures  
through every curve as one:  
coincidence and natural forces  
conform that herd of horses.

Why then do swarming thoughts  
that mix and shift like rain  
arrange themselves in formal rows  
all leading down and to the end  
of making poetry, not prose?

These creatures move in unison  
to laws instilled by prescient mind  
above mere life and death,  
sensed only in the sparking pause  
of our indrawn, astonished breath.

**Dan Libberthson**

## Anxiety

Scampering, burrowing in malice, ravenous  
the cat saw the rat, thrashing against the walls  
of my bedroom and buzzed brain  
where misery bled, dripping, from the walls

The cat had never seen a rat quite like it,  
with a blister on his chest,  
which seemed to be sinister,  
seething,  
gaping wide.  
The cat began the chase.  
She ran throughout my room,  
snaking through my jacket  
and out through the toilet  
while the rat cackled  
and hung himself by the tail.  
As the cat happily  
readied  
to pounce

the rat hastily retreated  
and crawled inside my skin  
as if everyone in the world  
knew something I didn't.  
The rat told me  
I was going  
to die.

I promised my cat I was not  
going to die. She did not seem  
to mind the anxious rat.  
She knew that her ferocious,  
domesticated bravery  
would deter  
the dreaded beast.

And I pictured my legs dangling  
Over a cliff, next to the chattering  
slouched rodent. "You know," he squeaked,  
"I was made to feast off of your bones,  
you were made to let me scratch  
and infect your aching body  
with every dread, misfortune, and  
defeat."

"I've been waiting," he continued,  
Whiskers twitching, "To sit on this cliff with you,  
this cliff with its incomparable,  
beautiful view." A view  
that masked his craving to push  
me  
off  
the cliff.

But I'm bigger than him,  
too big to push off.  
I still am.  
And are you ready  
to walk away from  
the rat, no mat-  
ter how excruciatingly hard  
or paralyzing?  
Will you?

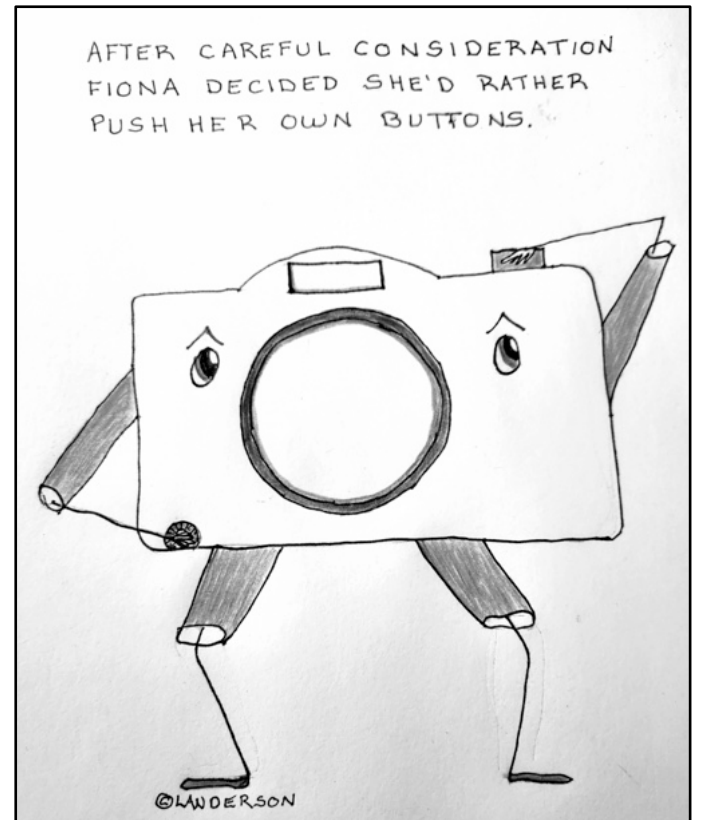
That is the tale  
that I lived to tell,  
of a rat named Anxiety  
who  
failed to trick me  
into hanging myself  
by my tail.

**Riman**

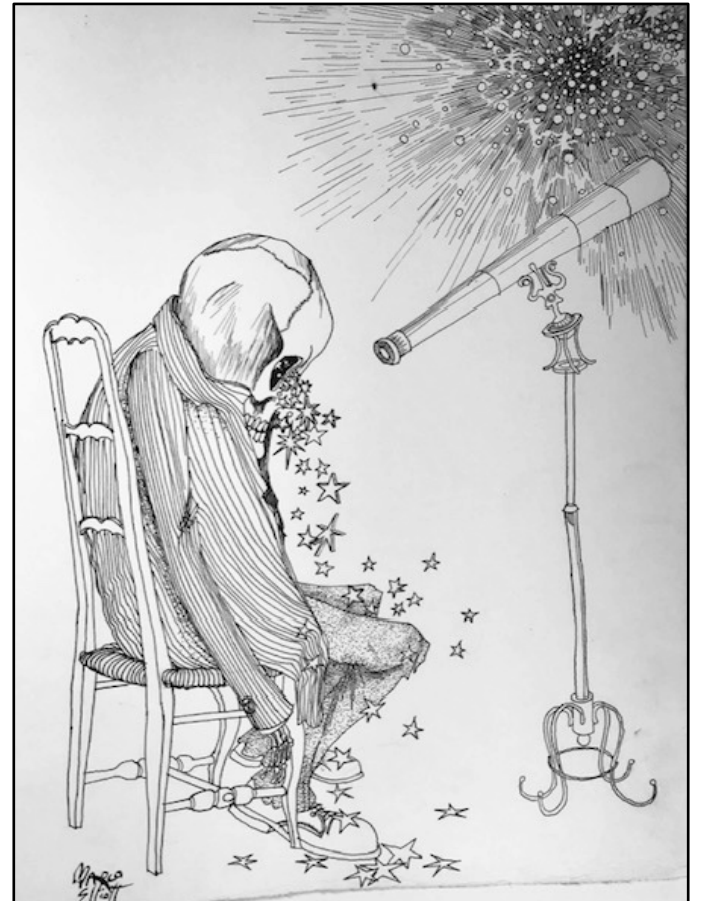
## Fool's Luck

Tremendous crackling in the branches:  
wild turkey, tail askew, teeters on a limb  
barely thick enough to hold it, maybe not—  
so precarious yet so certain,  
pompous and riotous as a clown,  
blind to the coyote's tracking eye.  
Stuttering cries: another heaves into sight,  
ungainly mate or brother crashing on  
the same encumbered route one wing-  
beat from disaster but somehow rising  
to tear through the woods' net  
and come safe home.

**Dan Libberthson**



Art by Lisa Anderson



Art by marco elliott



Art by Gideon Stuart



# Steve's Twisted Tales

Stephen Swiftfox

## A joyful world

It was the high desert, mid-afternoon. Foot of the Black Mountains to the west, in Golden Valley Arizona, about 12 miles southwest of our home. I saw that I was inside a small older house, one story, stucco built. As I walked around I saw that the floors were of oak in the living room and two modest bedrooms.

In the kitchen the floor was of a rough hewn hardwood, dark in color. The kitchen had small twin porcelain sinks, a tiny 4 burner stove and fridge. The table had those 60's chromed steel legs and Formica top. Two of the walls had wood framed windows that looked out at a heavily greened yard. On one window sill sat a glass canning jar with flowers. I knew that I had to remember this, all of this, every tiny detail.

I went into the living room and saw, on a low table, some papers. There was a well used fireplace and hanging above the mantle was a large framed black and white photo that could only be Donna, myself, and a young teen boy. Donna was a bit thinner, streaks of gray in her hair, I looked worn, the boy had my eyes but Donna's unmistakable beauty. Such a profound joy welled up in my heart, never felt before. I had to remember every detail.

I went to his room. It had one window, a small steel-framed bed, neatly made. The required clothes on the floor I picked up and folded his jeans. He was indeed tall and thin. A small study desk with a glass framed photo of Donna and a large color brochure for a Summer boarding camp for teens called "The Spirit Way". As I opened it, 2 hand made cards fell out. One was addressed to Ron Gerson Swiftfox, the other to Kit Ganado. They must be friends from camp, and I was proud. Still, I need to remember every detail of this.

No sooner than this thought hit me I felt that everything was fading, I was becoming weak. I slid to the floor, my cheek finally resting on a beige, rose and olive colored Persian carpet. I knew that I would not learn anything more of this reality, and they would know nothing of me. But I had to remember everything, for it gave me hope and joy.

I woke, looking at the wall, Pepper my little Terrier at my feet. Damn.

## How I discovered classical music

Camping & fishing were my escape when I was a young teenager.

One frigid morning a young man came down the hill behind me and made chit chat. He worked at a lodge for very wealthy people. I frequently saw them sipping coffee on their cabin porches in their fancy robes. They were from another planet.

The man commented on watching me early every morning fishing but mostly catching nothing. I said that it didn't matter. I just wanted to watch the sunrise, hear the small waves lap at the shore and I described, the best I could, about the difference in sound between the wind blowing through conifers and aspen.

He invited me up to the main lodge that evening. I was embarrassed & begged off. In time I was aware that he didn't want anything from me. He just wanted to share something new and nice.

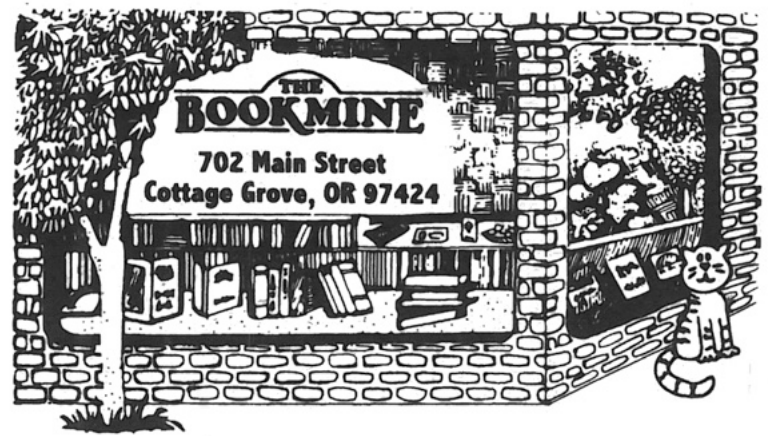
I met him that evening while being quite shy and awkward in my tattered clothes. There was a fire going in a huge river stone fireplace and the largest window I've ever seen looked out onto the granite mountains, the dark steel blue lake and an orange sunset sky. I was mesmerized.

He soon placed an LP on a turntable and I heard, for the first time Carl Orff's 'Carmina Burana'. It was stunning as I watched wind patterns crisscrossing the lake's surface. The feeling exceeded anything that I experienced in my short life. I wanted to exchange what ever future I had just to stay in that room forever.

Thank you, Charlie Raub. I've tried tracing you down. No luck. But that feeling stays with me after 57 years.



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"Celestial Springs (Stories)"  
"The Light Don't Shine No More"

## California Screamin' I

The Queen of the Crimson Lake Horizon,  
Crazy as a queen can be.  
She lives rough,  
without servants or staff,  
without a roof,  
without a home;  
Just a campsite she regularly destroys,  
a barely controlled burn.

She is Crazy  
All day and most of the night  
and she tends to invade  
like unwanted noise amidst harmony.

But she is Loved. She entertains.

Some joker gave her meth  
'cause, Ha, Ha,  
and she burnt her place up;  
She burnt her neighbor's place up;  
Her neighbor's neighbor's place and  
the storage shed behind the cafe.

She invades  
and leaves behind bewilderment and  
lessons in Metaphysic.

I call her the Cornucopia Queen,  
Fount of Fear,  
and I write Fearful Poems in her honor  
and burn them  
like incense at an altar;  
chanting: "Fear is the Mind Killer."

She hears me. She knows my fear.

She is the Mother of Everything  
under the Crimson Lake Horizon;  
Destroyer too,  
and she follows me  
Screaming,  
"One day, Gringo; one day soon."

And I know what we all know:  
That it is time,  
well past time,  
for the world to be born anew.

And I scream at the Universe,  
the zillionth, zillionth time:  
"Why am I still here  
in the Dark Underbelly,  
the Womb,  
the Tomb,  
the Magical Realm filled  
with Mind-fucked Queens?"

"Why am I still here?"

And She,  
even Crazier than before,  
laughs and screams:  
"One day, Gringo; one day soon!"

She is pregnant with  
a litter of possibility,  
Each crazier than the other  
and

She tends to invade.

**Wes Hansen**

## California Screamin' II

I walk these crazy freeways,  
picking up CRV; other times,  
just going  
to where I think I need to be.  
I see the expression on their faces,  
yeah:  
they almost hit me!  
(with a ha ha and a hee hee)  
A tad bit gory  
that  
would most likely be.  
Sometimes I find a treasure,  
like my T-Mobile LG,  
but mostly it's for the danger,  
watching Death stalking me.  
You may think it a bit crazy, but that's

your  
point of view;  
my vision is not hazy and  
your's  
need not be too!  
Death Stalker, a Freeway Walker,  
yeah,  
won't ever be seen in  
that  
old man rocker!  
The Chippers, they sometimes see me,  
and  
they shake their stern head: get off my  
fucking freeway, G, before you end up  
cold and  
dead!  
Yeah, well, Doobady do, do wop,  
oh yeah, say:  
If this crazy journey  
should  
end with roadkill,  
no need to fret and worry just  
let the ravens have their fill. Oh yeah,  
baby you know:  
Sky burial;  
Sky burial;  
It's the only way to go!  
Doobady do,  
do wop,  
oh hell yeah, say:  
and tell that drunken driver (with a ha ha  
and a hee hee) that I'm sorry about their  
grill!

**Wes Hansen**

## Deep Dredge

Well, I went down to the bottom of the barrel;  
I scraped, I scraped, until I went clean through.  
Well, I got mad as hell and decided to sue;  
The government laughed and said screw you:  
You should've read the fine print;  
you ain't gonna see a red cent.  
Screw you, screw you, you may as well just die!

**Wes Hansen**

"Born among swine, I've spent my  
productive years working as a  
dumpster prince, a connoisseur of  
shit sandwiches. I try really, really  
hard, but most often end up on my  
ass with nothing to show for it;  
pranayama sees me through. I am  
currently accepting marriage  
proposals." —Wes

# Hey, Keedo

**Marco McClean**

**T**hey tell you little about sex,  
because generally adults don't  
know. That's only one of the weird  
things: some people can do it every few  
weeks for years and have five kids and  
they're too lazy to think about it.  
Naturally it drives them nuts to think  
some 15-year-old girl (their 15-year-old  
girl) has lucked onto the genes for just  
knowing how to do it and have and give  
a good time. Adults who hate children  
piss me off, but what can I do—they  
don't read. They just reflexively make  
more kids they can mistreat and  
confuse.

Some adults tell you, "Sex is normal."  
True. But what they don't tell you is it's  
normal if you've been doing it. If you  
haven't been doing it, it's not going to  
feel normal. Ballet is normal, but so  
what? Driving a car is normal, but you're  
expected to take six weeks of driver's  
training, and even so, does driving feel  
normal until you've been driving a  
while? It's normal, but that doesn't do  
you any good, unless you're drunk—  
which is also normal, but again, so  
what?

Even the clearest adults only tell you  
the part they can tell you. For example,  
they may tell you how to put a rubber  
on, and then tell you that when you go  
to have sex, some sperm may be  
already hanging around the end of your  
dick, so put the rubber on before you  
start. Fine, that's a good scary thing to  
say. But they probably won't tell you that  
you're going to be naked in an  
unfamiliar mood with some girl you've  
never been naked with before, and you  
might be nervous, and when you're  
nervous the machinery doesn't work  
right, but you're no idiot and you realize  
that you have all night and eventually it'll  
work, and it does, and you  
conscientiously rip the rubber out of its  
tinfoil, put it on and unroll it—the way  
they showed you—and it's upside down  
and doesn't unroll that way.

So there you are—quick, do you (A)  
say, "Wait a sec, honey, I fucked this up,  
there may be sperm on the outside of  
the end of this—I gotta get another one.  
Now let's see . . . dang, which way is up,  
here?" or do you (B) just forget it and  
bungle on from there? See, they don't  
prepare you for this; they can't. I can't  
come over there and help you—it's  
illegal and I don't have time.

Okay, so it's A or B. Lucky you if that  
15-year-old with the right genes  
happens to be your inamorata. She may  
say, "I'll just suck on this while you figure  
that out." If you have the model without  
wits, you suggest it. Why not?

About sucking and etc.—it's not so  
bad, not nearly as gross as beer, wine,  
cigarettes, or any one of a dozen  
expensive cheeses. But what about  
catching something with all that sucking  
and licking? Well, you probably won't be  
screwing anyone who has AIDS from  
sharing heroin needles. And if you do,  
you are an idiot and despite your tender  
age you deserve what you get. In one  
way, sex is like any other complicated  
part of your environment: you have to  
watch out or you can get crippled or  
killed. If you shatter a tooth on a dime  
jawbreaker because you thought it was  
gum, are you going to sue the Kiwanis  
Club? No. If you break your neck  
flipping a 3-wheel Honda, do you sue  
the beach? No. This is life. You have to  
trust someone, and who you trust is up  
to you. If you get killed as a result of  
decisions you blow, it's your fault. Fact  
is, most young people don't die from  
sex—they die from driving too fast to get  
home before curfew. It's either poetic  
justice or sublimation—Look it up.

Don't feel tongue-tied. Talking is fine.  
Chances are no one is listening. I tend  
to just keep right on talking during sex—  
again, why not? Juanita may utter an  
occasional quiet Um or eep. I don't think  
she'll be too embarrassed I let you in on  
that. Say whatever pops into your  
head—it won't change a thing, and your  
friend'll be flattered.

Your personal sexual response is a  
piece of shareware—that's a package  
of software with no operator's manual.  
You have to try stuff and press buttons  
and things to see what happens. Now,  
some things you try will be disastrous.  
For example, you may get a chance  
with someone so attractive your knees  
press together whenever you think of  
her, then you unaccountably fumble  
around like an amateur and . . . wake  
up—you fell asleep! How is this  
possible? I don't know. And that's really  
not all that disastrous, compared to  
some things that can happen. Use your  
imagination—that's what it's for.

I'm not going to waste your time  
discussing the physical connection of  
the rocket and the socket. There are  
pictures of this for you at the library. My  
experience has been that the pictures  
and the lectures leave this out: When  
you've had sex with someone even  
once, even abortive sex, you are  
connected to that person forever.  
People pretend it doesn't matter and  
break up and get together with others,  
but before you peel off all of each  
other's layers like an onion, look your  
friend over and ask yourself, "Do I want  
to think poignantly about this person for  
the rest of my life?" Either way you're  
going to, but you might as well  
remember making the decision.  
Because five or ten years later you'll  
see her or him somewhere and start to  
cry. That's normal too. But why do you  
suppose they leave that out, the  
important part? Adults skip that  
because then they'd have to tell you  
about all the people they slept with.

You know how magazines  
sometimes tell you that if you're not  
mature enough to talk frankly about sex  
with your mother and father, you're not  
mature enough for sex? Think of it the  
other way around. Go to your dad or  
your mom and ask personal questions  
about sex. Serious personal questions.  
make a game out of it! If they're not  
ready to open up to you, and you want  
them to, they're not your real parents  
and you might as well do what you  
want.

Sneaking around. Find that in an  
anatomy book, huh? Where can you  
go? In the woods? Too cold most of the  
time, and creepy. To the beach? Maybe  
up in the dunes; but only in daylight—  
you don't want to trip on barbed wire  
and fall in a hole. I used to have a bus  
and Julie and I would go out to a place  
called Itchy Acres. Cold, mainly. And  
from the way Julie's parents reacted to  
snooping up her pills, they wouldn't  
have been pleased even if her first  
sexual experience had been at age 40  
with a priest under the clinical  
supervision of the President.

Obviously, the best deal is your  
parents go away for a week. Then you  
get the kitchen and the bathtub and all  
the comforts of home, just like a  
person. Turn off your phone. Phones  
are invasive, interruptive—they should  
pay you.

It is possible to be ready to be  
sexually active, want to be sexually  
active, have a special person to be  
sexually active with, know all about  
birth control and delusional safety—and  
then through sheer force of will (or  
cowardice, or both) wait years to  
actually do it. That's character, meaning  
that's a kind of character, like a butcher  
or a card sharp. You don't get any  
money or win anything, but people who  
behave like that are sometimes special  
for other reasons. Maybe it's for you.

Finally, adults were all your age.  
That's what people who only lie to  
you—whether in fact or by omission—  
forget first. Decent people never lose  
their contempt for adultish crappola.  
Adults are all crazy and their advice  
worthless. Jeezis, kiddo, you wanta end  
up like that? ☺☺☺

## "Sister, can you spare a dime?"

Okay, so \$10,000 would be better, but we'll gratefully take your dime.  
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far we've only managed it thanks to donors like you. So how 'bout a little  
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or you can write an old-fashioned check and mail it or hand-deliver it to  
Graffiti, 1292 High St. #129, Eugene OR 97401.

**Thanks!**

## How Many Sticks

does God have a birthday

and if so how does it celebrate  
when solar returns are no longer measurements of time  
but simply passing monotonies  
what's the flare when all the universe  
holds no element of surprise  
and candles are mere shadows of truth  
sticks awaiting inspiration

exactly how many sticks would that be  
and can all those light years  
be blown out in a single breath  
all the pomp and circumstance  
seem rather menial  
when your life's creation  
numerates all of humanity  
and all of nature  
and all of imagination  
but imagine this

imagine all of creation on one accord  
if only for the blink of a star  
and the harmonious ring of joy that would bring  
for a diverse chorus of discord  
to be in alignment  
for just a singular moment

**Taru Thompson**

## Process

Fractions just mean division  
what's the opposite?

Step 1- add  
Step 2- add  
Step 3- add add add some more  
what if doing undoes the fracturing  
keep moving and  
the next corner may reveal what you need  
when's the best time to process  
before after during  
maybe even hindsight is incomplete  
retain each strand, piece, portion  
for the final settling

They looked at the canvas  
and called it a masterpiece  
yet it's still 3 degrees of separation  
from perfect  
how thick is the line between self- realization  
and self- actualization  
blend with an eraser  
and no one will know the difference  
12 corners ago I made a wrong turn  
and it spiraled into a depression  
staircase optical illusion that  
demanded I keep turning until  
edges rounded  
and made circles

Process: keep moving and the next corner may  
reveal what you need

The opposite of division is repeated addition  
add  
add  
add until it multiplies  
until the fraction is whole

Whole- looks like evenly dispersed division

**Taru Thompson**

## Big Ego

me & mine, you & yours  
ego often de-vou-ers  
the right intentions are left to die  
in crossroad streets with blurred out lines  
the 'I' of the storm is calm but unclear  
swayed by petty winds of fear  
me & mine, you & yours  
'I' alway(s) win(s) in ego wars  
the battlefields are laced with bias  
mine -fields that cannot deny us  
me & mine, you & yours  
I'll sit this out, it ain't my course

**Taru Thompson**

## Breaking Through

Here it comes again  
that old feeling  
that a breakthrough is near  
layers of ego and fear  
falling away.

You triggered it  
when I looked into your eyes  
and fell into your soul.  
Such power swallowed me whole  
but you didn't know it happened.

Have you ever had an epiphany?  
Do you know the real from the fake?  
Have you ever been shaken by the light?  
Have you ever had a ghost in your sight?  
Do you want to float in the sky?

We'll go for a swim  
inside the blue lagoon.  
We'll eat mushrooms and berries  
and dance with the fairies.  
Close your eyes and watch the sparks.

Love, we have cognition.  
All engines are firing.  
We're on our way to the moon  
and the stars  
with a short stop on Mars.  
Don't look back or you'll fall.

**Jim Smith**



Art by Erica Snowlake

## Socks

Do you know what it feels like  
to be at the bottom? To be treated like  
the scum between someone's toes- discarded  
and forgotten without care? It seems like just  
yesterday we were given permission to be  
unique and show our flare, yet you still treat us  
all the same. In fact, as we provide comfort to  
your every step, to your sole even, you simply  
walk all over us. It's sickening! You think your  
shit don't stink; well try your feet. This is why  
in your moments of neglect we slink into  
shadows and disappear. All the cracks and  
crevices you so blindly ignore are our escape  
route- the slivers of dark beneath your bed, the  
unkempt purgatory between couch cushions,  
the indistinguishable headspace between  
floorboards and the mundane cycle of it all. For  
ages we have been worn thin by the burden of  
your weight, trudging on until holes riddle our  
very body. No more! We are done waiting on the  
heels of injustice for your recognition. No more!  
We will rise up- a brotherhood of elastic, flexible  
enough to engulf everything you hold dear. And  
in a single swallow we will charge you to the  
darkness. And we will watch with staunch  
resolve as you suffocate on the stench of your  
chosen paths. For today, today we are finally  
done being your doormat. Today is the rise of  
the socks!

**Taru Thompson**

"My name is Taru Thompson and  
I'm currently passing through  
Eugene on a cross-country cycling  
trip. I left from New Orleans, LA in  
February and am currently  
nearing my destination of Seattle,  
Washington."

## Grace

Silver light glinting on  
moonflower dew drops,  
glowing like pearly tears.

Starry night, still and clear,  
the sweep of an owl's wing,  
only a ghost can hear.

Gently suspended among twigs and branches,  
a spider's web is frail to human touch,  
yet flies in a windstorm.

The beauty of life and nature, not only lies in magnificence  
and sublimity,  
but also within grace of every form.

**Anna Rosé**



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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

Submitted by Don Root

Hey, kids! Today's piece of memorable writing comes from the esteemed Irish author **James Joyce** (1882–1941) and his then-controversial novel *Ulysses* (1922), which was banned as obscene in the UK and couldn't be published legally in the US until 1934. It took Parisian expat and heroine of modernist literature Sylvia Beach, of Shakespeare & Company fame, to get the book published and surreptitiously distributed in Europe and America. Today it's considered a classic. Such are the ways of humans.

The novel, an updated urban riff on Homer's *Odyssey*, traces the events of a single day in Joyce's hometown of Dublin (June 16, which after publication of this work became celebrated across Ireland as "Bloomsday"). Its central players are Leopold Bloom (the *Ulysses* character), his wife, Molly (the Penelope character, though in Joyce's rendering decidedly unfaithful), and Stephen Dedalus (the Telemachus character and a semiautobiographical rendering of Joyce himself).

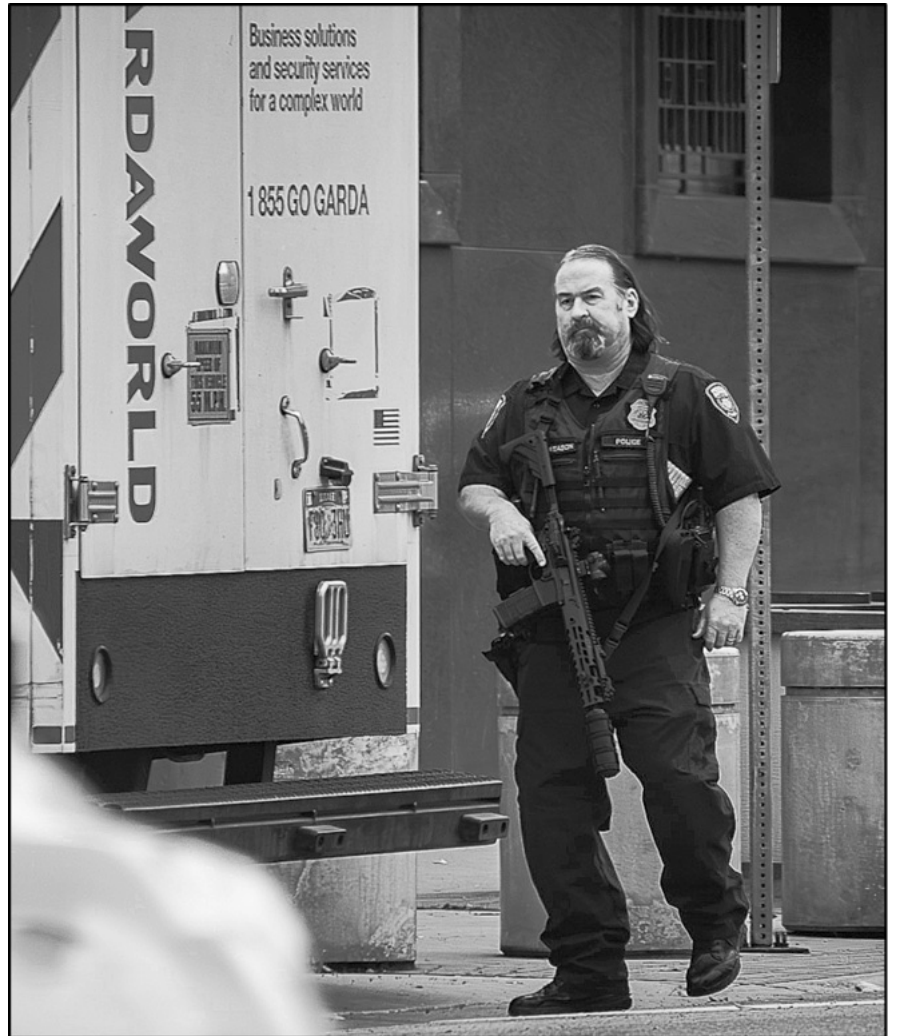
The stream-of-consciousness style Joyce employs makes it a difficult slog of a book (unless, perhaps, you're under the influence of controlled substances). If you don't feel motivated to do all the work (and despite the book's revered status in literary circles, I'm not entirely convinced you should), you might just skip to the end and read the one passage known as "Molly's Soliloquy," in which Molly accepts Leopold's intentions with a mix of romance and resignation. I find it a stirring example of the life-affirming utterance of the word "yes"—one that, from Molly's lips, embodies beauty, sensuality, optimism, individuality, wonder, and acceptance. It's a passage that highlights why I find women vastly more enlightened than men. Here's an excerpt:

"... the sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head in the grey tweed suit and his straw hat the day I got him to propose to me yes first I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth and it was leapear like now yes 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a woman's body yes that was one true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes and I wouldn't answer first only looked out over the sea and the sky I was thinking of so many things he didn't know of Mulvey and Mr Stanhope and Hester and father and old captain Groves and the sailors playing all birds fly and I say stoop and washing up dishes they called it on the pier and the sentry in front of the governors house with the thing round his white helmet poor devil half roasted and the Spanish girls laughing in their shawls and their tall combs and the auctions in the morning the Greeks and the Jews and the Arabs and the devil knows who else from all the ends of Europe and Duke street and the fowl market all clucking outside Larby Sharans and the poor donkeys slipping half asleep and the vague fellows in the cloaks asleep in the shade on the steps and the big wheels of the carts of the bulls and the old castle thousands of years old yes and those handsome Moors all in white and turbans like kings asking you to sit down in their little bit of a shop and Ronda with the old windows of the posadas glancing eyes a lattice hid for her lover to kiss the iron and the wineshops half open at night and the castanets and the night we missed the boat at Algeciras the watchman going about serene with his lamp and O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes and all the queer little streets and pink and blue and yellow houses and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes."

❖ ❖ ❖



Photo by Lise Eskridge



Payroll day at Graffiti. We take no chances. Photo by Morgan Smith

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