

Graffiti

#6



to Love and to Create



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FRONT LINES

Don Root

Greetings, Graffiti-ers! How are those creative urges coming along? I know you're working on something to send in for Issue #7, right? I can't wait to see it.

So, it's been a crazy month. I spent more time around doctors and nurses in July than in all my previous life combined. That included a 10-day stint in the hospital — in a dark room with no windows, no less. I won't get into the gory details, lest I start sounding like the old fart that I am. But let's just say, the month was a big reminder that good health is by far the most important asset we have, and the one we're most likely to take for granted. And that reminds me of one of my favorite sayings: "Everyone gets two lives. The second begins when you realize there is only one." Make hay while the sun shines, friends!

In other amazing news, an anonymous donor to Graffiti pitched me on a really cool idea. Pure donations to this esteemed rag for the good of the cause are great, she said, but what if those funds were used to buy an ad in Graffiti for a local nonprofit? My answer was immediate: I love it! So as long as we have room in any given issue, any donors who want to sponsor a local nonprofit's ad should include a note to that effect with their donation. Then we'll see what we can do. We'll start next issue with our first such ad — for the wonderful and deserving **Cascades Raptor Center**, sponsored by Anonymous. Thank you, Anonymous!

Now let's move on to the "Goings-on About Town" department. I would like to think that Wes Anderson's films — like kimchi and kale — are "acquired tastes" that I have yet to acquire. I enjoyed *The Royal Tenenbaums*, but many of his other films leave me cold. They strike me as "clever," in a facile sort of way. I'm entertained for about 30 minutes, then the shtick just gets old. Anderson's recent *Asteroid City* bored me. But art is subjective, and I don't pretend my feelings are shared by the majority of moviegoers. So if you want to make up your own mind, head to our amazing local art house — called **Art House**, oddly enough — as it continues its **Wes Anderson series** through September 19. For the schedule, visit www.eugeneartshouse.com.

As for festivals, I'm not sure if you'll read this in time, but two great festivals take place in Alton Baker Park on two consecutive Saturdays in August. On the 12th, it's **Eugene Pride in the Park** — a great time to have some fun and maybe wash off any sticky homophobia you may once have sat in. Then the following Sunday, August 19th, it's **Eugene's Black Cultural Festival**. Eugene's black community makes up only about 1.5% of the city's population; the city is over 80% white. That's Casper territory, folks. Don't whites ever get tired of so much whiteness? Does the city ever remind you of some minimalist Ikea bathroom display in all-white, with everything bleached into submission? Anyway, between these two festivals, you can get a good booster shot of cultural diversity. Come enjoy food, music, arts and crafts, and human interactions that may be new and exciting for you.

Okay, well, the sun is out and the birds are chirping, so I think I'll do my recuperation outside for the rest of the day, checking out the flowers, trees, birds, and bees. "Focus on the beauty, Root-man, focus on the beauty!"

Until next time, my creative friends, stay beautiful!

--Don



Photo by L. Eskridge

"YOUR ZINE IS COOL. HOW DO I SUBMIT?"

You put on your leather and get on your knees and beg, slave!
What? Wrong kind of submission? Oh. Sorry.

This box used to be called "Instruction Manual for Beginners," which I thought was obvious. But you all kept asking "How do I submit?," so I guess that title was too tricky. Or maybe you thought you weren't a beginner, so you skipped right over it. Well, got news for ya, Holmes: we're all beginners. Anyway, here are the exceedingly difficult submission procedures and requirements:

How do I submit work?

You email it to graffitieugene@gmail.com, or you snail-mail or hand-deliver hardcopy to 1292 High St. #129, Eugene OR 97401. Just FYI: at that address you'll find PakMail, not Graffiti's swanky corporate offices, the location of which remains a mystery, even to us.

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. 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 in this paper, look for it online at graffiti-magazine.com.**

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! And 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.

Does Graffiti accept previously published work?

Generally not. That said, if we think something is cool, we'll consider 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. We won't print works longer than 1,200 words in this paper zine, but we'll post those submissions and others on our website: graffiti-magazine.com.

A big Graffiti THANK YOU to our faithful advertisers and to our generous donors to this issue:

L. Eskridge
Hillbilly
Erika Jones
Jean Murphy
Terah Van Dusen
Oak Prairie Woodworks
Stephen Swiftfox

Graffiti

NOTE our new mailing address!

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

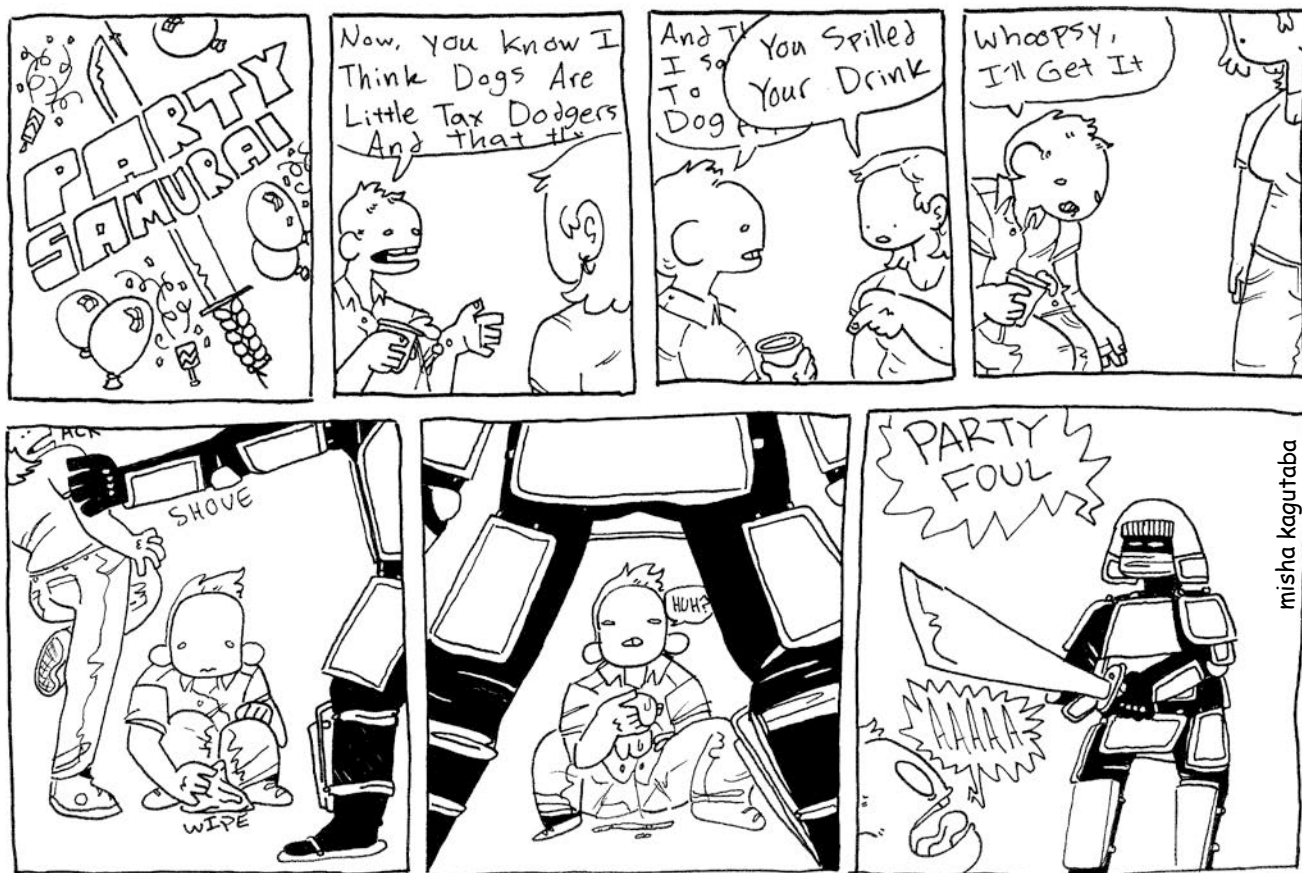
ON THE COVER: "Strawberry Senegal," by DeBobby Ross
Want to be on the next cover? Interesting faces welcome. Email us your pic.

"Sister, can you spare a dime?"

Okay, so \$10,000 would be better, but we'll gratefully take your dime. It costs us \$575 just to print this beautiful work of art every month, and so far we've only managed it thanks to donors like you. So how 'bout a little help? Isn't a voice for community creativity worth it?

We take PayPal and Venmo, or you can write an old-fashioned check and mail it to Graffiti, 1292 High St. #129, Eugene OR 97401.

Thanks!



The Green Flash

Rod Williams

It's said to be a rare atmospheric occurrence best viewed on the canvas of an unobstructed horizon. Say, over an ocean, at sunset, the duration generally less than two seconds.

I don't understand the science, something about denser air acting as a prism when the sun drops, bending its rays just so, creating a green column of light flashing off its top rim.

Twice, I've thought conditions were prime for me to witness the phenomenon. But the first time turned out to be a red herring, the second a glare of fool's gold.

At Pacific Beach, I approached a deranged old man on the boardwalk. He sat on a bench, drinking a glass of beer. Nachos were sprinkled throughout his wild white beard. I asked if he'd ever seen a green flash. "Not me!" he cackled. "Don't you know, it only happens once in a blue moon!" Leaving me to ponder life's other rarities: exotic birds, four-leaf clovers, Halley's Comet. Scoring a jackpot.

"I think you may be the love of my life." She says it wonderingly, surprising me. Hell, surprising herself. She frowns slightly, her green eyes steadily searching my blue ones, taking my measure.

When she speaks, her tone is matter-of-fact, as if she's talking about her work day ("It was fantastic! I love my clients!"), or analyzing last night's dreams ("They were so weird!"). "That's because you're so weird," I tease, and she laughs her genuine delightful laugh.

She's a little puzzled at the depth of her feelings for me, I think, but also brave enough to embrace them. Take that leap of faith. Ride the whirlwind. Let's see what happens.

What a gift, to discover, against all odds, against common wisdom, against my inherent pessimism, this capacity for late-life love.

Hey now: it's no small thing to be told you might be the love of someone's life. And if that's not a green flash, then tell me what is? 🍀🍀🍀

Welfare check

A term familiar to firefighters and police.

Stephen Swiftfox

It was a relatively long drive home. Just been fired for taking too much time off of work. My wife, Donna, had been too busy dying that week, culminating in my removing her from life support.

As I drove up to our fire station I wondered about the rather large dog laying on its side in front of one of the open engine bays. I exited my car and walked a little distance away from it on my way to the office. It was a brilliantly beautiful female wolf. Her silver coat appeared free from wear and tear and parasites. She lifted her head and watched me walk by then laid back down.

Entering my office I told the secretary to transfer the fire phone to my house and I'd close up. We have an all-volunteer fire department and I was the medic and fire chief. As she was packing up I inquired as to the 'dog' outside. She stated that it was there at 7:30 when she opened. It didn't allow anyone close and refused water and all treats.

As I was closing the engine bays the creature sat up and watched me. She didn't bare her teeth or growl as she had done to the curious townspeople who walked by to see it. I really didn't pay much attention as my mind was pretty numb from the events of the day and the past week.

As I approached my car I observed that the dog was standing and facing me. She was huge. A true wolf. Something that had never been seen in our section of Northwest Arizona. For some reason I thought it quite sensible to open the passenger door of my car and call the beauty. She slowly loped over and jumped in. Closing the door, getting in, and driving home was one of those trancelike unquestioning actions that causes a "WTF?" in the future.

Going up the hill and the long dirt driveway I didn't hear the habitual barking of my Jack Russell terrier, Maggie, a gift from my Donna. As we exited the car I did have a slight niggling in my head that this animal could easily dine on my dog, almost a snack. Maggie just watched behind the patio gate.

I opened the gate, the wolf and

Maggie exchanged polite sniffs and both passed through the doggie door. I closed the gate and followed. Both were in the living room having some sort of silent conversation, then both went into the bedroom. After a minute or so there was the tour of the house, drinks of water and laying down, wolf taking up the whole couch.

The evening flowed from evening prayers to a group dinner to just sitting with each other. Sleep was uneventful. Maggie up on the bed and wolf at bedside.

Over the next couple of days the town went wild. This wolf hung around the house pacing around outside for awhile then entering, having some water and napping. A neighbor, retired rancher that he is, threatened to shoot the wolf if she wandered off my property. Another neighbor asked permission to visit and create a painting of her. I still have the painting. People from town and out of town would drive down our dirt road, park, and wait to see the wolf.

In seven days it disappeared. I woke up, called for it, searched everywhere. Not a trace. No prints anywhere on the dirt around the house. Maggie was calm, like we'd never had a visitor. I was crushed. I had never experienced anything like this, nor have I heard anyone else having been so gifted.

The fire department was strangely quiescent for that week. No fire calls, no medical calls. I had time to think of what had happened in the previous two weeks and what I was going to do for work. Townsfolk knew I was despondent. I was a frequent visitor of any one of our three taverns. That came to a quick end when a long time resident pulled me aside. She made sure that she had my full attention. She said that the wolf was Donna coming to see that I was okay. Once my wife accomplished what she wanted to do she left. Simple. That brought me out of my self-pity and depression. I was so thankful for my wife who had always given her all to everything that she did, including our relationship. 🍀🍀🍀

Another True Story

... from the streets of Eugene

Jean Murphy

I'm part of that old-hippy Peace Vigil in front of the Eugene Public Library every Saturday. This happened some years back, but I remember it vividly:

It was Halloween, and I was dressed in a long pink gown with sparkly pink wings. I had a tiara and a magic wand, and held a sign: ANOTHER FAIRY GODMOTHER FOR PEACE.

A middle-aged woman wearing lots of makeup and several layers of skirts and sweaters rushed across 10th street to confront me.

"There are only three people in America who are allowed to wear tiaras, and YOU ARE NOT ONE OF THEM!!" she declared. She seemed to know what she was talking about.

I said, feebly, "But I'm a Fairy Godmother," and she said "THAT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE!" and walked off in a huff. I almost ran after her to ask who those three people are, but decided to let well enough alone. Besides, it's hard to run in a long pink gown... 🍀🍀🍀

A Dirty Man and His Dirty Deeds

Jordan Rose

She watches as the slovenly man across the counter dunks his hand into a dank chasm passing for a pocket.

Feeling around for shapes that could be coins, but then again, all sorts of brick and brack have burrowed their way into the fabric lining of his pants. He takes steady inventory of the chaos he has curated, And as if to permanently unsettle those who have been pulled in by the spectacle, He drips a heap of something into her palm.


She watches in horror as the brass and nickel likenesses of leaders past shriek and wail in despair, The carnage is brutal, the loss is innumerable.

Just for added measure, He caresses his tongue against the rough and scaly surface of his fingertips, And selects his final victim; A dismembered reconfiguration of George Washington, but Sir George did not receive any medals on this battlefield, Instead his mangled corpse was to remain within the ruin and the swill in this man's cargo shorts pocket. The dust settles and the landscape of the countertop comes back into focus,

"Shit," she mutters. She has to recount. 🍀🍀🍀



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? Email your writings and/or artwork to graffiti Eugene@gmail.com. Or send (or hand-deliver) hardcopy to Graffiti, 1292 High St. #129, Eugene OR 97401.



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Music Review: The English Beat

Rod Williams

“Who remembers The Eighties?” The question was posed from the stage of the Hult Center’s Soren Theater, the evening of July 13th by Dave Wakeling, frontman for The English Beat.

The Beat is a group often categorized as “revivalist ska,” but in truth their music has always been a mash-up of ska, reggae, punk rock, and soul. And yes, their heyday was in the early 1980s, along with bands like The Specials, Madness, Style Council, Culture Club, ABC and the like.

It seemed to take the group three or four songs to find its groove, kicking off the show with an energetic but uneven “Rough Rider.” However, once things gelled, Wakeling and his crew cranked out many of their familiar charted songs from (you guessed it) The Eighties. They played “Twist and Crawl,” “Too Nice to Talk To,” “Hands Off...She’s Mine,” “Doors of Your Heart,” “Mirror in the Bathroom,” and the ever-popular sly double-entendre hit “Save It For Later.”

For good measure, they added a couple hits from General Public (Wakeling’s band after The English Beat broke up for a time in the mid-80s). “Tenderness” has been featured on a number of movie soundtracks and was a definite crowd-pleaser.

They also featured two welcome covers: the Staple Singers’ classic “I’ll Take You There” and a nod to Smokey Robinson with a reggae-inflected “Tears of a Clown.”

Overall, their performance was spirited, though maybe a little hokey. The Beat’s “toaster” (a hybrid emcee/dancer/vocalist), Antonee First Class, supplied energy and entertainment by exhorting the audience to clap and

wave our hands, crediting band members with rhyming introductions, and shouting out some usual rock clichés to rile up the crowd.

“We’re from England. My geography’s not great,” he yelled. “I know we’re in Oregon, but are we in Salem?” “No!” “Are we in Portland?” “No!” “Are we in Yoo-gene?” “YEAH!”

Several times, he also touted Wakeling as The English Beat’s original co-founder (along with Ranking Roger, who passed away in 2018), main songwriter, guitarist, and vocalist.

Wakeling mostly lived up to the hype. He was animated, in fine voice, and played a mean guitar.

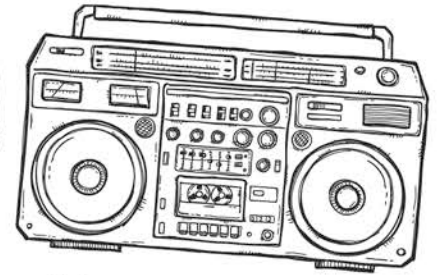
He led his talented band with confidence and humor, and displayed a workmanlike determination to give his audience a great show.

“Who remembers the Eighties?” By the number of gray-haired fans I observed from the balcony, the answer was, “Quite a few of us.” The theater looked to be sold out. The folks in the front rows danced and cheered for most of the evening. A few even executed the iconic Mr. Natural walk up and down the front-row aisle.

At “the end of the party,” I had to give the show a solid B-plus. It was much more than a nostalgic stroll down memory lane, but a shade less than a Top Ten All Time concert for me (admittedly, a tough list to crack). I’m glad I attended and I wish The Beat continued success on their current tour. If you’re not familiar with the band, I urge you to check them out on YouTube. Believe me when I say they were a force in their time (um, that would be The Eighties), but as evidenced by this performance, they’re still going strong. 🐼🐼🐼

Turn it up!

by Morgan Smith



Thank you to those who have expressed their appreciation for this column. It is back again with three fresh albums to entertain you. May you want to turn ‘em up.



A Man and His Music



Frank Sinatra
Released: December 1, 1965
Tracks: 32 (double album)

Frank is also known as the “Chairman of the Board” and “Ol’ Blue Eyes.”

My first memory of my favorite track, “Fly Me to the Moon,” was in the opening of Oliver Stone’s 1987 film *Wall Street*. This album includes that song, but it was first released a year earlier on his 1964 album *It Might as Well Be Swing*. Important note, “Fly Me to the Moon” was written by Bart Howard in 1954, and originally titled “In Other Words.” What? Frank didn’t originate it? So maybe Sinatra isn’t as cool as... no, yes he is cool, and this album — partly a retrospective — is a good introduction to his music.

I Remember



AlunaGeorge
Released: December 1, 2016
Tracks: 12

An English duo from London, England: singer-songwriter Aluna Francis and producer George Reid.

This “futuristic pop” duo is on hiatus, so this album is their last collaboration. Aluna’s silky, sensual vocals and George’s electronic beats are what draws me to their sound. The best: “Not Above Love,” “I’m In Control” and the title track “I Remember.” Aluna gave birth to a girl named Amaya in November 2019. She is now flying solo through the USA, Europe, and Canada as just *Aluna* in what is called the MYCELiUM TOUR — with branding inspired by magic mushrooms. If you enjoy this album then check out their first one, *Body Music*.

Music & Me



Nate Dogg
Released: December 4, 2001
Tracks: 14

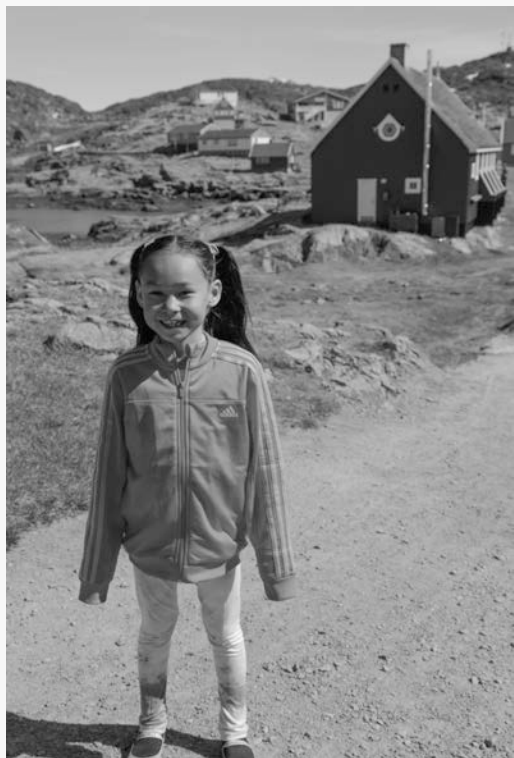
Nate began his music career as a member of 213, a trio formed in 1990 with Warren G and his cousin, Snoop Dogg.

I call Nate Dogg “The Only Crooner of Hip Hop.” His style was “...influenced by the gospel music he performed in the church choir as a child, though he also grew up listening to soul and cited Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, and Maurice White of Earth, Wind & Fire.” (Wikipedia) Dead at 41 in 2011 from multiple strokes and congestive heart failure, caused by drug abuse, this album is his second out of three. My favorites: “I Got Love,” “Concrete Streets” and the title track “Music & Me.”



TRAVELS WITH STEVE: GREENLAND

PHOTOGRAPHS AND TEXT BY STEPHEN SWIFFFOX



In the summer of 2018, I was on a small expedition ship traveling to Greenland. We had just arrived at Siorapaluk (pop. 47) on the northwest coast. The island's northernmost inhabited settlement, it lies at 77° 47' 08" N, 70° 38' 00" W.

Observing the settlement and its residents, I kept imagining what it'd be like living there, with not much of anything but the ocean's sealife to provide sustenance. By contrast, we were dining like royalty onboard ship. A plan was hatched.

After we made a few trips on a Zodiac to sneak fruit and vegetables purloined from the ship's well-stocked dining room to the settlement's post office for local consumption, the ship's crew finally got with it and invited the settlement's entire population on board, to be presented with a hot meal, food to take home, clothes, books, journals, and magazines.

The four local teenagers seemed the typical choosy ones, but their curiosity was a wonder to behold. I so worried about their future but realized that Arctic people have been having teenagers forever.

After leaving Siorapaluk we headed north to thread our way between land masses. Our intent was to go well past the 80th parallel. Being who I am, I was always on deck, at the bow. If I wasn't eating or sleeping or reading or in the can, I was always on deck. Life's too short to lose out on this.

One freaking cold day while looking forward I saw on the horizon something unexpected: tall towers of rock, and some distant features that looked like large mesas.

I called out "Land!," but a crew member, a former Sirius Patrol soldier, told me to calm down and wait. He said they were mere illusions. I said "Bullshit, these are real. I took photos of them! They were solid." He said to wait.

Sure enough, no matter how far we sailed we never reached them.

The crewmember told me I was seeing *Fata Morgana*, a mirage common to polar areas that had caused havoc and tragedy to countless seafaring explorers, especially in the Arctic.

What is still amazing to me is that I have real photos of something that's not there. I cannot stop wondering how many times in my 72 years I've mistaken solidity for an illusion.



Birders and the Heart's Life

Those guys know all the names: even when they can't see a bird they listen for the call and then jump and sing out in glee wood-peewee or red-eyed vireo. They make lists of every bird they've ever met anywhere and will draw you a picture given half a chance.

So I went out and bought the most damned expensive pair of green field glasses and spent half an hour caressing the just-so texture the perfect fit of the grips the green green until Kathy finally said you're supposed to look through them silly.

OK, listen, here's some names: ruby-throated thwarble undulating crested calliope purple-backed thwacker haruspicing bittern and I didn't even need to see the damned birds—

but I hear them, oh yes and I feel them rustling through the underbrush sailing around tight corners back-flipping in wind twists settling tight in their nests.

So I drag Kathy out of bed five o'clock Saturday morning: we're going birding! It's peak raptor time at Hawk Hill the paper says there's dozens every hour and we're going to see them all bring the book. You're not a morning person, remember, she says.

And the sun dyes the sky whatever colors it pleases and I lie back in the grass paralyzed by beauty and needing to pee while two soaring Northern Harriers, wait the color's wrong they must be Swainson's hawks, yes, juveniles, no wait they could be kestrels but—the color, dear, changes every damned time the birds swim elsewhere on the wind: whenever the sun decides that's enough here let's move up a notch they become different birds.

But Jesus! Will you look how the updraft curves their wings like lips waiting for a kiss.

Dan Liberthson

Dan Liberthson's poems in this issue are from his book of poetry Animal Songs, available on Amazon.



Illustrations by Cassandra Mettling-Davis

Adoption

In the park a steady rain thrums my black umbrella. Turtles submerge in protest but a snowy egret stands in a pond, white against the gray sky, still sounding, elegant fish listener amid the rainwater bubbles. Then my clumsy nearing starts him up and off, long loose head feather trailing, pipestem legs wafting through water-thick air.

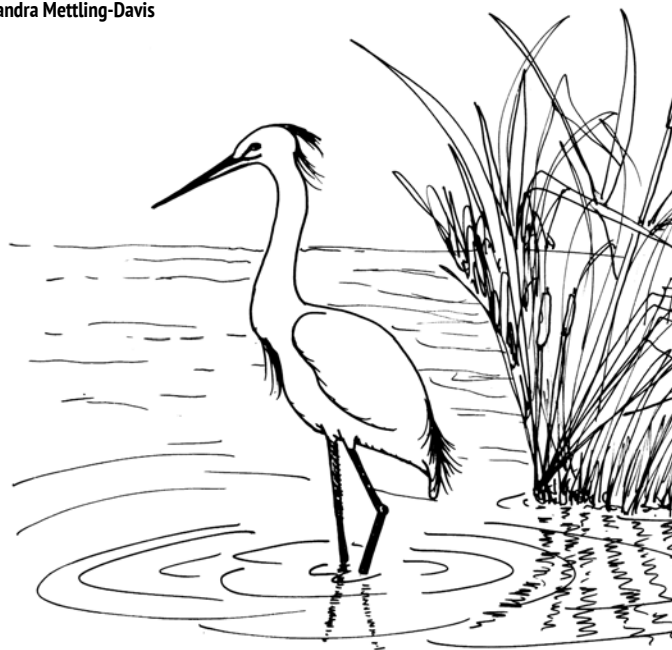
He lands behind a treefern ecstatic in the greening rain, aware solely of its own spreading fronds and tightly furled scrotum waiting for sun to break open its knot, uncurl its sex like a sprung spring and with the first warm breeze let loose its spores upon the air.

The whole natural world, guzzling wet, awaits the onslaught of seed, the opening burst of blossom and fresh life. But—there, against a dumpster, a large fine teddy bear sits glumly moistening, dark eyes forlorn as a lost dog's. What sort of mother would throw away a child's long-treasured friend, what father so crass, unless they'd lost all love or hope, the child too discarded, unborn, or dead. By the teddy's foot swills a satisfied clump of buttercups.

A crow lands on the dumpster and directs his appraising glance at the teddy. The rain sharpens, takes aim. The crow wheels, wet black flash, and caws away to a drier place. Silently the egret glides back to his pond.

Childless
I pick up the teddy and turn toward home.

Dan Liberthson



Where are the birds?

Where are the birds?
Flitting around me—
little creatures
esteem seekers
purple crests
Blue feet
unique wing marks
an unfettered breast—
Ink and spikes drawn
to feigned interest
for a mating dance—
One fingered hackles
caution on a belt buckle—
Where are those drab tones
the neutral eyes
camouflaged to avoid
an inquisitive interloper
predatory obfuscator
hidden safely in a bland nest
mud and sticks
tucked under a highway overpass
But where are the birds?
Here under a tree—
Free wild berries
perhaps distasteful
of uncertain digestibility
dumpster diver wisdom
source your origins
some dry grass
sticks— for a nest
but though I hear
such variety— chirps, calls, and chatter
I see no place where birds are gathered—
The vulture and eagle—
said to habitat Skinners Hill
territory around frequent roadkill
this is how money smells
a decaying carcass in the corner office
opportunity comes while circling
behind glass panes in shiny buildings—
So where are the birds?
I see chickens—
Cage free
cooped up
plotted in their own backyard—
Some egg layers
withered— they sit
caged and depleted
after forty-five years on the factory farm —
Some claim ideology
disengaged from a production quota
a free range street roamer
under matted feathers
peck the fallen
splattered droppings
on metered vehicles
begging seed
from my pocket—
Nesting into illegal
cardboard thicket—
Then where are the birds?
I saw on migration—
from the dry high plains
to solidarity in Portland
as some birds
attracted to the ocean—
Others of similar origin
seem to be reverting
back to dinosaurs
lock and load carnivores
devouring entire forests
then turning
into hot steaming piles
of oil before us—
Where are the birds?

Jeff Southwick

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



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Power Washer 5: Secret Pain

James Otter

The second floor, psychiatric common area, Longview Medical Facility.

Twin figures, indescribable talent. One holding the other. Lovers, connected through their skeletons. Skeletons superimposed in light blue spray paint, with thin, precise detail painted on.

One heart split into three parts. Seductive red base color. Mahogany brown valves. The arteries are a neon green that extends up through the legs. Their skin is transparent. Both are full life sized. Their feet start at the floor, and their heads are mere inches from the ceiling. The wall is tiled and gritty; it appears the artist used an ice scraper to create a canvas of blank space.

It pains me to clean this up. Their eyes are blank sockets. Each tooth has been painfully detailed. Empty tubes of oil paint, a few cans of spray lacquer finish. This is a masterpiece. Untitled. How it was made on my watch is worth applauding. All I can do is take pictures.

My work pains me. A bucket of gray, heartless house paint. A roller. My boss knows all about this piece, and even though this complex is in ruin demands the room be cleaned out.

I start with the floor, sweeping up the dust and empty beer cans. I sweep the cigarette butts blackened at the filter, and I work from the rest of the walls backward toward the entrance. Sweeping up the history.

After this I make a note about the footprints. All I have to identify these artists are these footprints and these few leftovers from their work:

A black plastic smock is rolled up and stashed underneath a medical cream loveseat. Two office chairs and a step stool lean next to the door. After the floor, I delay further and begin wiping it down, as if nobody had been in.

My final task of painting over the masterpiece looms in front of me. I work through the sorrow and build a mental armory of pride. I am grateful people can make art like this. I'm proud they can do it and get away.

My delay ends gradually. I try to make the death quick, painless, rolling from the top horizontally, covering the faces. From here the masterpiece becomes fragments, as if a grey void has swallowed it whole.

This work was not random; it was my own. I was inspired by the horrors of this hospital as I painted the spirit of a man unjustly lobotomized. I sat and watched. He wheezed like the bellows when I finished. The spirit thanked me and disappeared.

I have to be a monk. All of my work is mandalas in the sand—my late-night secret.

I erase the final part of my hidden picture and look out the window at the burned chapel. I got away with this again.

The spirit of the man who watched me returned to the room. I do not know his name. His ghostly eyes stared at me with pity and sympathy. In a distant voice he thanked me for making something beautiful.

After all this hard work I went home and lay up all night thinking about my next mandala. How much longer until the next one?

Bring Back the Light

I'm overtaken by a dismal mood. The car devours the road and then craps it out again, black and tarry, as if sick on my behalf.

Where this malaise comes from and why it visits now are mysteries. Color me black is all I can say here among the refuse of this day

darkening to nightfall as I plead for some brightness to return—a cloudless dawn, a sunlit pasture green and spotted with white doves.

Dan Liberthson

A Dog I Lost

Lumps should have been your nickname for you grew them as the soil grows fruit, abundant, various to touch and sight, soft and mashable, hard and conical, regions between. Yet you lived on and on until, predictably but cruelly, one pitbull of a lump locked its jaws around your throat and would not loosen before it squeezed out your life. That's when I stopped believing.

Dan Liberthson

Two Tiny Tales

L. Eskridge

Local Watering Hole

Getting some local flavor at the local watering hole, just 15 miles from city proper and yet, a world away. I hear an accent. I hear a twang. A dialect that suggests I have left modern civilization and stepped into the eons of yester, wherein pronunciation and proper grammar are of no consideration. It is a throwback to a time I have never known, only tales I have been told. A time when education was an afterthought, traded for going to work young, very young. My favorite is the unabashed, utterly roaring laughter, as if no one was educated on decorum or social norms. This laughter is ear-piercing; it is pure jubilee expressed ever so raucously. Laughter that makes me laugh, too. Be in your joy, my brethren, it is infectious!

Happy Holidays

The fire burned so hot. The stranger at the bar said she had a 40-foot shipping container; no evidence of that shipping container remains.

That was some holiday, Labor Day Weekend, 2020. And then they gave us the name, the Holiday Farm Fire. A nomenclature based on geography, yet a vernacular much farther reaching.

Suppose anyone gave any thought to how that name will have its own reverberations and remembrances for all those living through that traumatic experience—fleeing from a wildfire. Fleeing for your life. Fleeing with your life, the life you were able to gather before you just had to go.

That was some holiday, indeed. Here's to happier holidays.



Poems by Bill Gunn

Born and raised in Cottage Grove, Bill Gunn was drafted in 1968 and sent to Vietnam, where he spent 18 months in combat zones. A UO grad and Cottage Grove resident, Bill is the author of *We Made It Back (Mostly Intact)*, a book of poetry about his war and postwar experiences. It's available on Amazon, in paperback and Kindle versions.

I Can Still Hear

I can still hear you screaming, John:

"Wait up Gunn--what do I do?"

I can still see the fireworks,
more real than the Fourth of July.

I can still see the green uniforms--
running, running.
Not sure where to go.
To the perimeter bunker.
A little game that the big boys play.
A little taste of ice cold hell.

I can still hear your boots
stomping back of me
imploing me to wait up.

I still hear the blasts--
the Viet Cong were more
accurate than usual that night.

I can still hear the last blast
that knocked me to the ground.
The deafening, ear killing blast.
I can still hear the silence,
the nothing.

I can still see me getting up
and running, disoriented,
not knowing what to do.

And you were silent, John.
I didn't see you go down.
I regret not being able to help.
I felt helpless that it was you
and not me.

I've felt guilty for forty-six years.

Logically, it was ill luck.
Emotionally, it was abandonment.
I can still hear you, John.

I named my son John William,
After my grandfather Gunn,
My grandfather Bailey,
And after John William Fritter.
November fourteenth, 1969.

I'm sorry, John.
I was the last one to see you alive,
the last one to hear your voice.
Here's to you.

Fireworks

With dirty knees and blank stares,
I weave my way home
through the streets
of a combat zone--to my bunker.

HURRY,
it's the fourth of fucking July.
A few extra beers
were consumed tonight
after pulling the curtains.
I brought a sleeping elixir--
twelve year old Highland Park.

It's sad, that after forty-five years
I still drop like a whore
when a truck blows a tire,
or blasts from
the neighbors down the street
who feel it is their patriotic duty
to go to the Indian reservations
and buy all the illegal fireworks
they can afford.

I wonder how many of those assholes
have a combat action ribbon?
How many have a NRA decal
that resembles the U S Marine Corps decal.
I wonder if they can even fathom
the painful memories
that this insanity represents?

I remember the rockets' red glare,
I remember bombs bursting,
not in air, but in contact
with the ground,
with a one hundred eighty degree
halo of molten steel.

I remember running
to a perimeter bunker
to defend an ill conceived base.

I remember a voice
back of me imploring me to wait.
I remember the rocket hitting
twenty yards back of me
with a force
that threw me to the ground.
I remember the screaming siren,

I remember John Fritter
twenty yards back of me.

This is to you John.
You would have been
sixty-four this year.

Shit Soldiers

The WWII veterans came home
to outstretched and welcoming arms
that spelled victory and valor.

The Korean war veterans
loved their homecoming.

If today's soldiers even touched Iraqi soil
or Afghanistan mountains,
they are automatic heroes.

But the Vietnam veterans
were the shit soldiers.

We came back to the world
and had to avert our gaze.
We couldn't or wouldn't
look people in the eyes.
We and they were ashamed
of what we had done.

We followed fucking orders,
as anyone in a war,
or anyone in the military does
that comes back
with an honorable discharge.
We did what we were
ordered to do,
and we got shit for doing so.

That duty was not fun.
It was hell on earth,
but we endured,
and here we are,
almost sane again.
Almost to the end of the page.

The Great Ones

I can only assume
That Joyce hit the Irish Whiskey
A little too hard.
Dostoevsky and Turgenev
Were partial to vodka,
And Faulkner drank his sour mash
Like a cotton picker drinks water
At the end of a row.

When I read Bukowski
I develop a terrible thirst
For booze and sloth.
But then I look in the mirror
And see this old man,
Gray and grizzled,
Sent to some unimaginable war
That could not be won,
And then come home
To the heckling of blue jays.

I survived the war--almost,
But I didn't survive the thirst.
The years ground on
Like corn in a grist.
The memories--some are pulverized,
Some are lost.
Some--only a few--
Linger and slap my face.

I am alive because of my reflexes,
And a lot of luck.
I am alive in my little hamlet.

A "Men Killing Each Other" Timeline

USA edition

Per Wikipedia, here is a list of the wars the US has been involved in since colonial times:

- 1609–1924: American Indian Wars
- 1775–1783: Revolutionary War
- 1801–1805, 1815: Barbary Wars
- 1812–1815: War of 1812
- 1846–1848: Mexican-American War
- 1857–1858: Utah War
- 1858–1861: Mexican Reform War
- 1859–1861: Cortina Wars
- 1861–1865: Civil War
- 1867: Formosa Expedition
- 1871: Korean Expedition
- 1875: Las Cuevas War
- 1882: Egyptian Expedition
- 1891–1893: Garza War
- 1898–1899: Samoan Civil War
- 1898: Spanish–American War
- 1899–1902: Philippine–American War
- 1899–1913: Moro Rebellion
- 1899–1901: Boxer Rebellion
- 1910–1919: Mexican Border War
- 1912: Little Race War
- 1912–1933: Occupation of Nicaragua
- 1914: Occupation of Veracruz
- 1915–1934: Occupation of Haiti
- 1916–1924: Occupation of Dominican Republic
- 1917–1918: WWI
- 1918–1920: Russian Civil War
- 1941–1945: WWII
- 1950–1953: Korean War
- 1958: Lebanon Crisis
- 1958–1961: Permesta Rebellion
- 1959–1975: Laotian Civil War
- 1961: Bay of Pigs Invasion
- 1965–1966: Dominican Civil War
- 1965–1973: Vietnam War
- 1966–1969: Korean DMZ Conflict
- 1967–1975: Cambodian Civil War
- 1976–1980: NO WAR DURING ENTIRE CARTER ADMINISTRATION**
- 1982–1984: Lebanon Intervention
- 1983: Invasion of Grenada
- 1986: Bombing of Libya
- 1987–1988: Persian Gulf Tanker War
- 1989–1990: Invasion of Panama
- 1990–1991: Gulf War
- 1991–2003: No-Fly Zone in Iraq
- 1992–1995, 2007– : Intervention in Somalia
- 1992–1995: Bosnia & Croatia War
- 1994–1995: Intervention in Haiti
- 1998–1999: Kosovo War
- 2001–2021: War in Afghanistan
- 2002– : Intervention in Yemen
- 2003–2011: Iraq War
- 2004–2018 Intervention in Pakistan
- 2009–2016: Operation Ocean Shield
- 2011: Intervention in Libya
- 2011–2017: Intervention in Uganda
- 2013– : Intervention in Niger
- 2014–2021: Intervention in Iraq
- 2014– : Intervention in Syria
- 2015–2019: Intervention in Libya

US Wars: The Body-Count Top-10 List!

(American military fatalities only. Civilian deaths not included.)

10. Afghanistan War: 2,402

9. Iraq War: 4,431

8. Mexican–American War: 13,283

7. War of 1812: 20,000

6. Revolutionary War: 25,000

5. Korea: 36,913

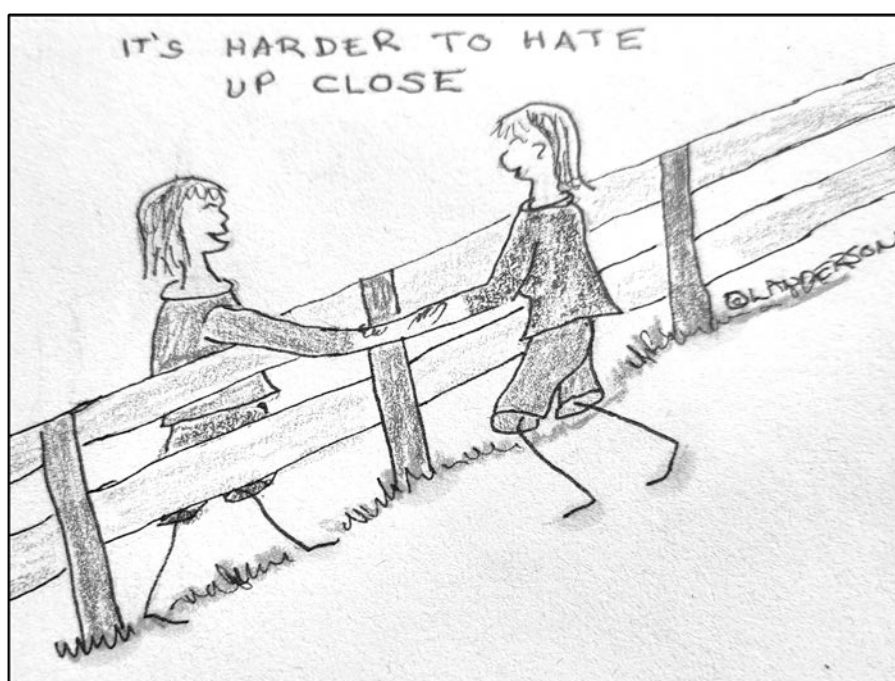
4. Vietnam: 58,209

3. WWI: 116,516

2. WWII: 405,399

1. US Civil War: 620,000

Cartoons by Lisa Anderson

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Yes, Collapse

John Zerzan

French deconstructionist Jacques Derrida famously remarked that “there is nothing outside the text.” Nothing outside the symbolic order.

Now there is pretty much nothing outside civilization and it is imploding. Failing generally speaking, on all fronts, in every area, at every level. Based on technology and capital, there is one global, totalizing civilization, cultural differences notwithstanding. Within it, we have become ever more dependent on distant, complex systems. The always-advancing control ethos that is domestication makes us civilization addicts.

Entropy too reigns in the ravaged world. Not good news for civilization, which depends on energy for its development, for its existence. This is the core message of Ian Morris's *The Measure of Civilization*. Like cancer, civilization must grow or die. It expands, parasitically consumes its host, and dies. Joseph Tainter's *The Collapse of Complex Societies* documents this process convincingly.

In its death throes, civilization becomes non-life; devastation and disease are the norm. But this isn't the “new normal,” for that term implies stasis or stability, and the downward spiral is not stable. Sudden, often unpredicted failures or anomalies are likely.

Michel Houellebecq's 2001 novel about two physicists, *The Elementary Particles*, portrays a prevailing fog of malaise. Not just malaise, but a condition of zero vitality. Society, if we can still call it that, has reached the end of the trail. There is no energy behind anything. A chilling and prescient best-seller. Now the TV ads offer buying a car without getting off the couch, putting on shoes without having to bend over. And why tackle anything, when the chatbot gives the answer with the push of a button.

As Tainter points out, the ever-greater complexity of civilization means it consumes more energy than it produces. Its crises call forth “solutions” that involve more complexity, at higher cost. This is the march of technology, producing a placeless, even worldless society. The rule of AI. A ruined, hopeless condition.

Derrida's “there is nothing outside the text” gives way to the realization that there is nothing inside the text. Nothing inside the high-tech machine that hasn't been borrowed from life and refashioned as if learned. Life-energy wanes as the pace of technology accelerates. We move at its false tempo. For some time now there have been more connections between computers than between computers and their users. Amanda Stewart offers insight into the texture of machine communication: the media voice is an “unrelenting, depressed, all-knowing voice, a voice that has no self-reflection, no ambiguity” (2011). The movement of technology has removed a sense of history, has replaced it in a basic sense, hence no perspective on what is happening.

Ed Ayres put it this way: “We are being confronted by something so completely outside our collective experience that we don't really see it, even when the evidence is overwhelming.” (2001). A couple of decades later, the reality is far more extreme across the board. Fear and anxiety mount as the very definition of humanity is up for grabs.

The tech juggernaut is lurching forward, with the most backward misjudgments apparently still in force. Technology is neutral, just a tool, etc. Such untruth is tech's ideological defense, but the lie wears thin. Technology is the embodiment of the dominant culture, its defining reality, nothing less. It is the cutting edge of civilization, revealing, in no uncertain terms, civilization's lethal consequences. It is the weapon at the essence of domestication. We are still being told that technology connects us, when it is clearly the instrument of our isolation, our separation from others and from the earth. In the absence of social bonds or community, we urgently need to dissolve what is destroying so much. Our dire situation shows the validity of what must be done.

Collapse can be defined as the transition from complexity to a simpler plane of life. This is not a dystopian horizon. Fragmentation can be the grounds for a radical decentralization, a return to connection, to an original way of being. We can embrace collapse and its challenges in the name of rewilding or de-domestication.

July 2023

“It was the Law of the Sea, they said. Civilization ends at the waterline. Beyond that, we all enter the food chain, and not always right at the top.”

— Hunter S. Thompson, *Generation of Swine: Tales of Shame and Degradation in the '80s*

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,

A note of thanks for publishing my poem "What If We Loved" in issue 5. And thank you for publishing Marissa Gamberutti's poem "Mother, will you tell me?" I enjoyed that one even more.

With thanks,

Terah Van Dusen

First, excellent idea and very interesting publication —"you write it, we'll print it"! Good job —

And, "Waving Leaves" . . . I hope that shoe won't be dropping soon, but — I'm almost 80, my husband is 82 and in Home Hospice; and we're not afraid, and "everything is still going to be okay."

Jean Murphy

NOTES FROM HILLBILLY

Glad to find your Rag.

I really appreciate Creative Anarchy. Communication — mental evolution. True Anarchy

There are other Names for Those who use Violence and Destruction

In '60s NYC Cops Smashed up the press and shop of the Lower East Side Anarchist Newspaper. History.

Thoughts don't just go away
Thoughts trigger Emotions
Emotions trigger Thought
Anger pulls the Trigger

Outside Animal Survival Instincts
it is Not Human Nature to kill
Without mental control
there is no Free Will Choice
Anger pulls the Trigger

Our thoughts collect in the
Cloud Matrix of Human Mind
Our Reflection:
The Soulless Cloud of A.I.

X marks the spot.

—Hillbilly

Remember the SELF

Immortal SPIRIT

Soul consciousness

Remember NOT SELF

Mortal personality to

Reflect, Learn and grow

with other personalities

Aided by 3 Bodies

Mental ~ Etheric

Emotional ~ Astral

Physical ~ Vehicle

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS

"Trauma destroys the fabric of time. After trauma one may move in circles now to then and back again." (Source unknown)

PTSD is a clinical label. Do not accept labels. We become what we identify with. Trauma has an impact on the emotional body. The past emotions worry the mind. No Peace. To accept the challenge this presents, (PTSC), means understanding that the assault on our emotions are part of our emotional life to be transmuted through opening to a Higher Love, through an open heart. Injury can either be a Wake-Up call (PTSC) or one can be a Victim.

To a Victim — no solution — no out. Do not accept the clinical label of PTSD and be an injured victim treated as a problem. Accept the injury as a Wake-Up call, a challenge to be overcome. As a victim with a problem there is no solution and the present system has no answers, either. PTSC is an emotional injury that becomes a part of us, a living history. To grow is to overcome the hurt with LOVE. LOVE Heals and HATE Destroys.

Hate has its expression in Anger. Anger is destructive and tears things down. We do need to let the old tapes run out.

OBJECTIVELY; there is something to learn and let go of.

SUBJECTIVELY; a nightmare some don't survive. Anger towards the past doesn't change it, but does affect the present. If your vibrations are from anger, they impinge upon the surrounding world and all in it beyond just oneself.

The solution; unconditional Love to the best of our abilities as we grow and overcome the challenges that force us to face ourselves. PTSC is part of our emotional History just like the first Love desire. Own it. It's yours for life.

LOVE comes from a source beyond us. We color it as it passes through us, limiting its full power which is Supreme above All. If we change perspective from being in a problem to having a priority in Life, focusing on the ideal one has for oneself, listing the things one may need or desire to be at ease with oneself.

From Victim to Warrior

From Problem to Priority

It's Good to have a Mission

Sorry, Graffiti

No time for writing
Brilliant sun and clear blue sky
Summer is calling

Du Nhat-Su

Half Sweet

I want to know your antidotes for bitterness
what you hang on the walls of your soul
to help soften all those hard edges
you know the ones
the ones that lol because you thought
after rounding the corner to thirty-five
all would be well and fine
and you'd have all you ever wanted
but you don't
(you have more than all you ever wanted)

I want to know your antidotes for bitterness
how many spoonfuls of something sweet
go into your morning drink
how many shots of something stronger
what you do to take the edge off
your go-to's:
spirituality, live music,
a sunset every day, something else

I want to know your path to acceptance
what tools you used to climb the hill from thirty
to forty-five
with such grace and that easy smile
what you did with the pieces that fell out
the bottom of the whole thing
where you air it out, and with who
and what you're all about
I want to know how you celebrate your little wins
what it looks like when you go big
I want to know your antidotes for bitterness

I want to know how you reimagined the
American Dream
and made your own happy ending
stitched together with hand-me-down furniture
and a nice, slow life you can somehow still
barely afford
perhaps some flowers, or whatever,
planted somewhere
I want to know how you maintained
after having bought everything they sold you
and still coming up half empty
I want to know your antidotes for bitterness

I want to know how you find shimmers
of gratitude
every morning in the bubbles in your kitchen sink
what treats you keep in your pocket
sweet one
what you carry through your day
that makes you so unafraid
and keeps you so positively humble and loving
I want to know how the wind and sea
have both softened you and made you stronger
how the sunrise still feels like a promise
I want to know your antidotes for bitterness

Terah Van Dusen

Liberty Bells

The liberty bells are ringing,
and in my heart I'm singing, "Freedom, Freedom."

Obtaining freedom is a choice,
when I choose to give it a voice.

But when my body houses bitterness, anger and pain,
I commit myself to being bound in chains,
And in prison I shall remain.

I must examine what's deep inside,
find the places where anger and hate hide,
Then slowly begin to swallow my pride.
Only then can freedom reside.

My anger is justified,
It feels right to hold on tight,
But the truth is, that's a lie,
It will only cause devastation inside.

For what's in my heart must eventually come out,
In my relationships and friendships without a doubt,
And leave destruction lying about.

So I must try in vain, to heal and release my pain.

I must put anger in it's place,
to experience freedom, finish the race.
Only then will my heart and mind be in a better place.

The liberty bells are ringing, and in my heart I'm singing,
"Freedom, Freedom."

Erika Jones

I Love You

I love you in ways that I cannot express,
I love you in ways that I cannot confess,
For that would be an awful mess.
But I think you know.
I know you know.
I keep this under wraps
The best I can.
Seriously? Shitcan
That idea.
It's nearly impossible.
Those closest to me know.
Or at least they can tell.
It's not exactly my secret hell.
Yes, it is.

Anonymous

A Singer In The Morgue

When I was a singer in the morgue,
People loved and respected me.
They would file in
To identify a body
And they would hear my singing,
Low, almost a whisper at times,
But somewhat accented
On the last syllable.

Their lips were the giveaway.
A slight upturn at the corners
Of their mouths.
They would never laugh
Or flash a wide smile,
But I could tell.
I learned to read them,
To detect the slightest delight
From my singing.
It meant everything to me.

Sometimes even facing the wall
To get just the right sound effect.
After all it was a morgue,
The air is not supposed to be light,
But I made it lighter with my singing
Of compassion, and grace, and human emotion.

Now, at ninety-six, in Assisted Living,
The helpers and the other patrons
Look askance when I sing or
Stumble by their door,
Making little comments
Under their breath,
But I hear them.
I still have acute hearing,
But I don't let them know.
I hear them, here, there,
And avoid any eye contact.

I am almost blind,
With lenses thick as a boot heel,
But I hear their jeers.
I hate them for it.
They don't see the whole picture.
They think, that at ninety-six,
The old fool drools, shits his pants,
And has no cognitive thought process,
But I have enough brain matter left
To hate them for their abuse
They too are old.
They too cry and stumble
And feel pain when getting
Out of bed in the morning.

They too slither around
Wishing they were young again.
They too are waiting for death.
A great release.
They too find comfort
In the past.

Bill Gunn

Popcorn

Primping and preening
Cooking and cleaning
Pining to be
The next Missus
To thee
Onward
Old Maid
Burnt a little
Still full of flesh
A burst of delight
Yearning to dance

L. Eskridge



Newsies at Skeeter's Branch, 1910. Photograph by Lewis Hine. Wikimedia Commons.

THE CIGARETTES: A chance encounter in three parts

Andrew Pardi

1

Every evening walk James took (which inevitably ended at the Two Lambs Pub) had an unbreaking fixture, which he was rapidly approaching. As he rounded Crosby Street, the autumn wind apathetically pulled leaves from the equally standoffish alders.

"A relatable separation," James mused out loud to an understanding post box. Peering through his glasses like the cockpit of a wayward airplane, he sighted his unchanging landmark: a hedge, fading into beige, bordering worn brick steps and alabaster columns. His pantheon of love that now stood unrequited. He didn't dare to fully stop, his throat caught by the notion that at any breath, her silver face would replace his sheepish reflection in the towering windows. She was nearly 312 kilometers away, three and half hours on the M1 if he left now.

"I wonder how often that's cleaned." The plastic dispenser in the pub toilet stayed firmly silent, unwilling to give up any secrets as he crumpled the plastic bag back into his pocket. "Fuck." Rivulets of blood escaped the tyranny of James's nostrils, determined to relocate to the cozy cracks of the amber tile floor. He tilted his head to match the rakish angle of the mirror and attempted to reestablish normalcy, a task which was hastened by the herald of a creaky swing. He soon reentered the pub, his raging heartbeat unbothered by the sleepy conversations, his pulse quite at odds with the fellow patrons.

Somehow there she was. He hadn't seen her before. She was at the oaken booth tucked behind the far side of the billiard table. Twenty-six agonizing months of expectancy fell with such a jarring clatter that it pulled her eyes upward from the creased paperback that had entertained her endless gaze.

"Jesus Christ," he thought, "that freezing March day in Weston." His mind drifted back to those streets that were as silent as the joy they used to share. The warmth she pulled out of his guarded core and into his ruddy cheeks, making them impenetrable to the briny wind blowing across the muddy shore. In their quaint seaside accommodations, mindful of the aged landlady downstairs, the night had bled into red wine and decadent words of nothing. The steady, unending percussion of a black ocean rocked their tangled limbs into the peace of unmedicated sleep.

"James? Holy shit. It's been a while."

"F...fancy a pint?" was all he could muster, with the gentle fog of blissful remembrance still clouding his periphery.

"I want to talk," he added, with more gravity than intended.

"As long as we can sit out front. The air feels heavy in here."

He bit back an apology. He felt responsible.

2

"I had forgotten, that's all," she quickly added, her eyes moving away from the glowing tip of his slowly burning cigarette, tracing the meandering smoke upward. "I don't blame you," he quipped back. "I only used to smoke when I was plastered or when you were still asleep; cold air and coffee kept me company most of the time." "I wouldn't have minded if you had told me. It's just a really fucking expensive way to kill yourself, that's all."

"I don't know, it's like hiring a hit man for a tenner a week. Not too bad of a deal." He sat back.

"Why are we doing this, James?"

He didn't know. He never knew the true motive of his actions and quiet desires, settling instead for soulless cliches that he managed to breathe enough life into that they felt believable. "I just wanted to catch up, seeing you're in town and all."

She looked deep into her three-pound-fifty lager, hoping his true intentions would effervesce and crackle through, like the steady stream of bubbles in front of her. Without knowing it, they were both searching for the same thing. Some form of logic that could empirically categorize this chance encounter.

In a way, it was as if two grizzled veterans were meeting, long after the birds of armistice had flown. Their violent delights had begotten violent ends and seasoned them on their respective fronts. And so now they returned to their battlegrounds, and attempted to look past the shell-holes and vestiges of past war. A car door slammed, she flinched. A child screamed through a distant open window, his pulse quickened.

This encounter was tenuous, their grasp on normalcy was weakened. But forward they pressed, mariners on a sea of uncertainty. He realized he had been staring at her freckled nose for around the past 25 seconds. He missed the way it used to crinkle when

she was stifling a laugh. She wasn't sure what she missed.

Certainly not the cigarettes.

3

As quickly as she had been thrust back into his precarious reality, she was gusted away; lighted upon winds of responsibility and time which was "rather late" in her words. As she stood, the tired oak bench begged her to remain as it played a duet with the sidewalk; but her ears proved deaf. A symphony of humming streetlights heralded her hasty exit to James's stage left, marking the end of the act.

"Maybe the end of the play," James whispered.

The weight of this dream deferred pressed squarely on the nape of James's neck, locking his mind and blinding his periphery to the passing stag parties and star-crossed lovers. When the motivation finally reached his feet to press into the turbid twilight, his journey led him to the back of the Wetherspoons, the air thick with oil and disappointment.

Fumble for the key. Smooth out the plastic. Numb the pain.

"It wasn't supposed to be like this, you know."

Electric nights, dissolving crowds of friends and stock EDM, purpose for pursuing pleasure never failed to present itself in the past. Formative years soaked in formaldehyde and fake ecstasy had frayed synapses and split cells, replaced foundations with silt and sliding sand.

"I just wasn't supposed to live this long, I guess."

Reluctant tears began to slowly drip down James's cheek, scoring glistening rivulets of vulnerability.

"Weakness," James corrected.

Without reason to live, and equally deprived of reason to die — a lonely soldier quietly patrolling the border of meaning, following the arbitrary orders of a shadowy general far removed. The intoxicating urge to defect, to steal away into the inky unknown and break for the other side, swirling through his skull.

James's hands, resistant and cold, found the square edges of his phone and punched out numbers that should have been long forgotten.

"James?"

"I don't think I'm okay."

"You never were."

☺ ☺ ☺

Here's your chance to vent your frustrations in print! Got a pet peeve? Write it up and send it in! Just label your submission with

The Rant

The least you can do is give me a toilet seat cover for an \$18 margarita. You gotta know, depending on the age of your margarita mix, I may need to sit for a while; which is also why I no longer order your over-priced, out-of-the-pitcher tangy grog. Instead, I ask you to make a custom margarita and you feel justified charging almost twenty bucks. For that price, my Cadillac should come with an engine that roars and wheels that burn. In the least, your washroom should come with a bum-tissue for my tinkle time. Certainly, you realize your grog-glugging patrons are making a splash with nearly every spritzing. And, consider how much toilet paper you will save; it's not like I forgo making my own seat-saver after having to wipe up the sprinkling of another's no longer needed flavor-of-the-day. The tacos are really good, though.

L. Eskridge & H. Sumpter

My Dear Friend

Who would have thought that two from two sides of the world from two different eras would meet
Your full dark beautiful hair tough and straight as summer's grass led my eyes to yours
Dark, deep, brilliant with the electricity of your life force
Your eyes it's a day's work just looking into them
When we first spoke a moment engraved on my memory
your voice, modulated and rich conveyed a stability not found in youth
Youth that you are rich in
It was wondrous to see you today
Waiting one year for both of us to see each other connected only by a web
I saw you reading in the sun
Your skin the color of golden sand
I tap your shoulder you turn your mouth drops your eyes get large
We embrace
I kiss your cheek
We spend the day walking
I want to hold your hand

But am satisfied by placing my arm on your shoulder
Walking me to my car
I am desolate at leaving
We hug
Your eyes are still wondrous pools to look into
Pure, kind, and maybe knowing more of me than I think
I pull away and say 'I love you'
I think that you say 'I love you'
But I am not sure
It is cut off
As you cross the street you turn in traffic and shout 'I love you'
My drive back
Is tolerable

To Tri Pham, my friend, my love.

Stephen Swiftfox



Mt. St. Helens. Photo by Morgan Smith

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Tectonic States

Beneath the surface of society, one massive plate pushes left against another pushing right. Friction between the two blocks causes intense heat and pressure, which builds and builds until it finally erupts through the weighty layers of tradition and sanity and spews its molten ooze across the land, killing everything it touches.

Choose to stay in your home and you will die there. Choose to leave and you may find yourself homeless the rest of your days. The wasteland created by this cataclysmic event is a drab, lifeless place buried in ash. Years go by. Decades. Eventually new life sprouts from the land. What will it look like? What would you like it to look like?

Where Do I Find Graffiti?

DOWNTOWN

Community Cup Coffee
Dark Pine Coffee
House of Records
J Michaels Books
Manifest Bar & Brewery
(formerly Doc's Pad)
Smith Family Bookstore
Tea Chai Té
Theo's Coffeehouse

THE WHIT

Equiano Coffee
Red Barn Natural Grocery
Sam Bond's Garage
Slice Pizza

OUT WILLAMETTE

Eugene Mailbox Center

UO CAMPUS AREA

The Copy Shop
Espresso Roma
Max's Tavern
Rennie's Landing
Sundance Natural Foods
Sy's Pizza

COTTAGE GROVE

The Bookmine
Coast Fork Brewstation

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