



Unsolicited Literature Issue 2: Rise, 2017.

Produced in New Orleans, Louisiana

Cover art: Mikaela Zwyer

Thank you to the people who created something for this.

Pass it on when you finish reading.

Write some info below to keep a record.

I don't believe in climate change

deniers, though some say
they don't believe in climate change,
I don't think that's the case.

At the rehab where I work,
we talk about denial.
The addicts talk of knowing
long ago they had a problem.

It takes the loss of everything,
a family, a job,
and even then they tend to think:
Well, this is my world now.

We lose our coastlines every day,
our atmospheres, our trees,
and even still we tend to think:
Well this is how it is.

She lied and stole for heroin,
he drank in secret daily.
They associated with disturbed people,
and lost their sense of caring.

We reaped the hills to power cars,
we extracted for a while.
We dealt with kings who chopped off heads,
we lost our sense of caring.

No consequences could make her stop,
He had to lose it all.
They adapted very well,
Lowering and lowering the bar.

Facts could change the minds of some,
But not the minds of all.
We, who were the most invested,
Wouldn't heed the call.

TO THE VIRTUOUS CITIZENS OF COASTAL AMERICA :

As mother gaia, with her e'er waxing tide, driveth man from her coasts, preparations for the migration of civil society must be thoroughly and carefully conducted such as to minimise the hysteria and maintain a level of order and culture while moving to the barbarous central provinces of this great continent. In this spirit, the American Inland Company has been chartered to facilitate and manage the colonisation and expansion of this fine civilisation, and now calls upon all citizenry of brave and ambitious constitution to register within their localities to embark upon this new and exciting frontier! Hear ye! Not only for the ensured prosperity of one's self, but so the very fruits of modernity are not swept to sea; blaze the trail from the coast to the mountain top!

Address americaninlandcompany@gmail.com for further inquiries.

dress for the riot you want



not the riot you have

Pittsburgh:

Then the gunshots, then the sirens. Still the gunshots, still the sirens.

My neighborhood is gone. I like to think the heartbreak of that statement can strengthen my soul, but I am mostly just mad. Tired of finding the positive side of these changes, accommodating to them. Though some of it is good. Some of it I benefit from, I am sitting in a gallery residency that is funded by the neighborhood corporation largely responsible for the rebranding, renaming, the arts districts. I can walk down the street at night, when previously I slept in a dusty office after dark because I knew what happens to little girls alone at night. I knew of kidnappings and rapes and shootings, not as symbols of a broken society but as hallway stories in the schools. They were not broken faces and broken bodies but friends and neighbors. I knew the cabs didn't come but they at least pretended to try, the pizza companies redlined, and the cops, I always imagined, followed the pizza.

My neighborhood is gone.

The moment I knew I wanted to get out of this city happened on this street, on Atlantic and Penn by the outstretched hands of the church reaching towards the streets yet pointing at the sky.



I heard gunshots in the distance, up the hill, by my old middle school now abandoned. Within one second, I knew the noise, identified where it came from and knew I didn't need to hit the pavement. Where do you belong? I did not want to belong to this moment, this second of normalized calculation. I wonder if I am like the abandoned building that housed such memories. I wonder if the shots echo in my body years later like shells that mark that day.

The Jamaican restaurant I worked at is now a French restaurant, \$30 a plate. It's across from the new condos, the coming hotel, the designer men's underwear store. The projects are gone; bring in the banks instead of loans, banks instead of bail bonds.

The liquor store's now shiny.

August Wilson once wrote about the big church St. Benedict the Moor in the Hill district with a big black Jesus with outstretched hands, he said he was always angry they made him face away from his neighborhood, towards downtown. I wonder about the hands on Atlantic and Penn, who are they reaching for? Who do they want to grab?



Photo by Runoko Rashidi

New Orleans:

I left New Orleans 15 days ago. There have been 3 shootings within a 4 block radius of my house. Can these hands stretch that far? I talked to X today, he was almost arrested for defending himself in a bar when a drunk man said there were too many niggers there, followed him outside, and hit him in the head with a beer bottle. Makes me think why blood hitting the pavement is a cliché, an image that is never quite descriptive of how or why there is bloodletting in the street, whether it's a choice or a force. I think about his hands clenched, handcuffed because the cop assumed my friend, 6 foot seven, must be the problem. The same bar, months later, I'd return to, picking him up at 3 in the morning after his best friend was shot, his car burned and left under the St. Claude bridge. What to even say, feel like there's nothing to say when someone lies in your arms asking how someone could shoot at his head multiple times, once would do it, more than that- it's personal and in the fucking back, he said over and over, knowing it will and would always be personal. Reminds me of his hands waking up in mine as he jolted up not sure of where he was—after the night he tried tenth shot down to forget. His fingers clasp mine like the curve of a question mark, rooted by the weight on top without the foundation to stand on. Where do you belong? Still the shots, still the sirens, they pierce the morning air.

Struggles of the Democratic Socialist North

Axel Matfin

In 2003, Vancouver won the bid to host the 2010 Winter Olympics, and the future became uncertain for the downtown east side (DTES), Vancouver's notorious red light district. The toxic urban eyesore was re-evaluated by the city of Vancouver and many of the land developers who owned the property. Not long after the successful Olympic bid was announced many developers, in partnership with the city of Vancouver, began groundbreaking ceremonies for a string of inner city redevelopments branding this obvious gentrification as a *revitalization* or *reclamation* of the city's historic neighbourhood. One developer was so bold as to place signs stating the slogan *Be Bold or Move to the Suburbs*. Social welfare groups cried foul and rallied the residents of the DTES into an army of militant squatters. These people felt that the crumbling buildings and blood alleys were their home. They protested the developments and demanded subsidized social housing in the maligned part of the city. Lip service was paid, and deals were cut for the developers provide *low-cost social housing* in their new projects. These promises turned out to be lies. The *low-cost* housing that would be put in place provided not only inadequate square footage for sustainable rehabilitation, they were also priced as *affordable* based on the average annual means of the average non-impooverished or addicted Vancouverite. The housing was not, nor had it been meant to be, affordable.

The Olympics came and the city of Vancouver shipped out mass quantities of the city's homeless and addicts to the suburbs of neighbouring cities before literally pressure washing the streets of the DTES clean, removing all trace of their presence for the Vancouver's time on the world stage. The Olympics provided substantial shut up money to the social development advocacy groups who swallowed their values and used the money, which would soon disappear, to justify the stillness of their tongues. A massive community center, the biggest in Western Canada and independent from the municipality's parks board, was approved and funded by all levels of government only to be sunk by its administrators own ambitions and The city's lack of oversight. This community center overspent their budgets and operated like a black bloc rebel enclave suspicious of anyone without deep ties in the DTES, ostracizing many of the same people who may have been able to prevent their inevitable failure. The center ran an underground night-club venue with impunity for licensing or proper regulation, hundreds of thousands of cash dollars passed through their hands never to be accounted for. In the end the community center team was evicted from their massive space for not paying the municipality their annual reasonable rent, a fact which baffled many. Inquiry into the causes for the collapse of the much vaunted and publicized social institution met with dead ends or hostility from the groups administration. The group's leadership was given immunity through non-disclosure agreements with the city of Vancouver and dissolved without accountability for their actions. A prominent social housing non-profit was caught in a scandal that involved it's leadership embezzling money for personal gain as well as improper use of company funds. A new university campus in the heart of the DTES redevelopment accepted a 10 million dollar donation from a Canadian gold mining corporation with well documented ties to atrocious human rights violations at their mining sites in over 4 different South American and Mesoamerican countries. The death toll of the Highway of Tears, a continuing series of unsolved murders of Indigenous women, rose even higher. The province of British Columbia decided to do away with the Vancouver coast guard, citing costs, effectively handing the Port of Metro Vancouver over to the Hell's Angels who, with their connections to

international crime cartels, began operating the biggest drug shipping and human trafficking market in the Pacific Northwest. The remaining social welfare

institutions had been tricked with false promises or had been bought out by the developers, the city of Vancouver and the International Olympic committee. Many of the people who had designated themselves to be the saviours of the DTES wielded the at-risk and maligned population like a political weapon. First drawing in all sorts of positive publicity, then serious funding and political elbow rubbing before these saviours ultimately abandoned their charges having risen high enough in the socio economic position of our smiling city to venture farther towards their own politicized self-actualization.

Since 2010 Vancouver has become one of the most expensive places in the world to live, often compared with New York city and Dubai. Prior to the Olympics many condo developments were built only to be sold off to foreign investors who were willing and able to outbid Canadian citizens. The resulting housing bubble and lack of affordable housing has driven the cost of living through the roof and created a risky speculative market for real estate. The prospect of these skyrocketing costs has begun to drive out independent business, instead retrofitting the city into a sprawling strip mall of chain restaurants and boutiques. Rarely does Vancouver see a successful original idea form in the shape of a business and when it does it is celebrated then swiftly and tastelessly replicated. Our culture is built on the notion of investing solely in what is already popular with local artists and innovators seeing little facetime and even less money. The extensive grant systems of Canada are a labyrinthine process of legal jargon and financially explicit application processes that few have the ability to navigate without the help of a professionally paid grant writer. Vancouver's thinning field of performance venues do not cater to the local arts, instead engendering a *pay to play* environment where status, praise and money is directed at touring acts while local artists are forced to sell ticket amounts to ensure their unpaid place on a performance bill. Those that complain are cut out of the picture. Rare is it that a Vancouver band receives payment in anything other than *exposure*. In the face of this unfair and hostile environment artists have attempted to create DIY and underground spaces. The high cost of rental space, along with expensive and antiquated Municipal licensing systems for indy venues and liquor sales, has made the legal operation of such spaces prohibitive without a substantial bankroll. If a studio space goes deep underground it is an inevitability that the Police will appear, demand licensing forms and then proceed to shut down and arrest organizers for breaking the law, when only blocks away actual crime runs rampant in the now *revitalized* DTES. In Vancouver it's the artists who are prosecuted, not the drug dealers, pimps or white collar criminals who exploit our public institutions.

Vancouver is a prideful beautiful spouse, abused by their partner. Smiling and forthright to the world, presenting the best possible version of itself while covering it's scars in bright clothing and bruises in makeup. Too embarrassed and scared to admit position it's in. British Columbia, and Vancouver, loudly proclaims that it is *the most beautiful place in the world*, but for all our nature and splendour and democratic socialism, our society is not immune to the infected inheritance of those who acted before us. Before this city is ready to heal, it will have to admit that it is sick.

[. . . This is an excerpt because the writer had a lot to say. Hit up unsolicitedlit.com for the full piece. . .]

Meg Harlan



Do you experience any of the following?

*You may be experiencing
symptoms of
#InternetAddiction*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impaired diet | <input type="checkbox"/> Low self-esteem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sedentariness | <input type="checkbox"/> Preoccupation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Missing appointments | <input type="checkbox"/> Irritability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disrupted sleep | <input type="checkbox"/> Impaired inhibition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impaired impulse control | <input type="checkbox"/> Issues with working memory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression | <input type="checkbox"/> Impaired social development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> Hyperactivity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness | <input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal ideation |

Sexuality

Alie Eiseman

I like to meet women on tinder sometimes
For some reason even when I have the “women only” filter on
I still get men

I wonder if maybe these men are lying about their gender
Or maybe I shouldn’t make assumptions
Maybe they’re saying:
“I know my picture clearly looks male but I identify as a female”

I wonder if maybe it’s like an amazon “suggestions” thing
Women who like women also like this one person

I wonder if tinder just refuses to believe I’m gay
I mean it wouldn’t be the first time someone doesn’t believe me
I definitely sleep with more men than women

When I was in high school my good friend Alex told me
“You’re not gay you’re just a slut”
And that was when I really started hating the term “bisexual”

I sort of resented how easy it was to get a guy to sleep with you
Like, “hi I exist as a human” and they’re like “wanna fuck?”

And how much harder it is to get a straight girl to sleep with you
Their like “I dunno I’ve never slept with a girl before”

Straight girls, for some reason, seem to be my target demographic
I just have more in common with them
we can complain about guys to each other
And talk about birth control and periods

We can bond about watching Mary Kate and Ashley as a kid
And totally spies and maybe kim-possible if they're a bit younger than me

I sometimes wonder why do straight women date men at all?
I don’t have very much in common with the average male date

But if I keep sleeping with them for long enough
They eventually become familiar and I like having them around

ultimately I resent the fact that they like sports
But like the fact that they force me to grow in unexpected ways.

free shot

cara zajac

“I don’t want him to see me, I think he want to the bathroom. Can I have another shot of tequila?”

I’m always concerned for women on Tinder dates. A few weeks after the world series, I was playing cards at my neighborhood bar and stepped away to buy a drink. The woman next to me was ordering shots and lamenting to an older woman to her right. It appeared they were strangers.

“I just don’t want to leave with him. I know he wants to stay overnight, he had a bag packed in the car when he picked me up. He seemed nice enough and we talked for weeks online...maybe I’ll just drink more and it’ll be fine...”

“You know you’re not obligated to do anything, right?” I asked, hoping to offer an alternative. “Just because he’s made his intention of staying over clear doesn’t mean that you have to accept that. If you feel uncomfortable, you can ask to just be brought home or just ask him to stay on your couch.”

“I don’t know...then he’ll know where I live...maybe if I just get drunk enough it will be fine.”

“If that’s what you sincerely want to do, there’s no issue with that. But if you’re doing that because you feel uncomfortable in the situation, it may be time to explore your options. Think about this, he obviously has made it seem like he wants to stay over. If this is not what you want, say so! You don’t owe him anything, you just met him. I imagine you would want him to express his thoughts to you, right? And you would respect them? He should do the same for you without a second thought if he’s a decent person. If you want to just leave or you feel unsafe, just do so.”

“My phone is dead though and I can’t call anyone. I just really don’t know what to do. Wait, wait pretend we’re talking about something else, I think he’s walking this way. Actually, would you want to take this shot? The woman next to me bought it and I really don’t think I should have three in a row.”

We clinked glasses and I thought I heard her say “Well, here we go” into her glass. I told her if she needed someone to call her a cab, I would be happy to do so if that meant she would feel safe. “I’m sitting with friends at the first booth when you walk in. If you don’t want to leave with him, just come sit with us and say that you ran into some friends from work and we asked you to stay for a drink. I just want you to feel like you have a way out if you need it.”

“Thanks, girl.”

A few minutes passed and I scanned the bar. I didn’t see her anymore.

I hope you’re okay.



08/16

MC Nutriana

T-Money's Tactless Treatise on Men, Monkeys, and Myself

-or-

What I have Learned About My Place in the Patriarchy After Working Exclusively with Cis Men For More Than A Year

I know what you're thinking, not another self-indulgent thinkpiece about the Patriarchy, Jeezum Crow, can women just cool it already? But I promise, if you keep reading, you will find that it is more of a self-indulgent self-hatred thinkpiece and you will have ample cause to rejoice in my blatant self-deprecation, rather than have to carve another notch in the bedpost to remind you of why the Patriarchy must be defeated. And now you're thinking "Is she a spy for the other team? Did the Patriarchy pull a 1984 on her and make her love it so she can convince others to love it too?" I think you'll have to make your own assessment...

December 2016, I have immersed myself in the Monkey construction worker culture for a year and three months, working alongside them as the only female...

The following observations and judgments are based on a long-term study of a group of men who work in the construction/carpentry field, albeit for a very non-traditional company, which may or may not genetically modify men to become more manly, and maybe women too...

I waver between thinking that I haven't learned anything I didn't already know (or at least suspect), and thinking that my entire knowledge base on men has been expanded and altered. And wondering whether it's men I've learned about, or simply myself. I've come to understand the Patriarchy more, and of course all my fellow humans' relationship with and within it, but not in ways I expected. My expectations have been alternatively broken and justified. However, let me preface this all by saying I am not sure I can trust my own perspective when feeling justified by the unfairness of the Patriarchy, as my hackles sometimes get raised due more to personal pride and my flawed defense mechanisms than any actual injustice aimed at me.

I've learned that men don't feel they have anyone to impress. They are either hard workers or not, take well-deserved breaks or self-indulgent breaks, or keep pushing themselves, but it is all due to their own work ethic, not from a societal pressure to prove themselves. They are confident in their own work (when they fuck something up, it's never really their fault, it can almost be qualified as Destiny), fully accepting whether their worth is of minimal importance or if they are the only one capable of an important task, with no appearance of arrogance. They fear no reprisal based on their abilities, lack thereof, or illusions of either, even if real consequences loom. They will not be personally affronted in a way that affects their confidence, unless it be a building up of said confidence (said confidence, as if it was a hypothetical thing that men have, HA). Some men are well-known to be capable of swelling to thrice their regular size when praised, some remain humble, and some seem to remain humble. The monkeys have evolved enough to realize not to be obvious about their pride. But even with those, like one case study, let's call him "Sheep", who talks incessantly of his own achievements, there's a certain tone that draws attention away from the booster himself, and more toward the action committed in the story. It is not "I am telling you how great I am" but rather "That this thing happened was so impressive, and lucky it was me it happened to since no one else could've handled it the way I did."

The following observations come from pure ethnographic interest:

- Men like to clear their throats
- Men like to talk around subjects
- Men like to talk to women
- Men like to drink beer
- Men like to good-naturedly make fun of each other
- Men like to take any opportunity to get high or drunk - especially on the clock
- Men are afraid to delve into the subtleties of how women feel when the Patriarchy strikes. They can sense something is bothering us, but it is too sensitive a subject for them to enquire further. The poor dears, they're the ones that really suffer from the Patriarchy, how it must plague them not to be able to ask women what's wrong for fear of opening a can of worms. (Oooops...this one might have some bias)
- Men like to tell stories in which they are the hero
- Men like to complain about people behind their backs but act like nothing is wrong to their faces
- Men sometimes show genuine concern for each other...but also not to their faces
- Men are not usually good communicators. They either assume the diplomatic approach, avoiding delving into deeper issues, or ignore the issue completely
- Men can be trained to accept that a woman is just as capable as them at doing a job - but sometimes they have relapses

The Study Will Continue Anon, Probing Ever Deeper Into the Psyche of That Mysterious and Enigmatic, but also Totally Readable Creature, Man.

I have learned much, some of which I have not said here, and some I may have said in too generalizing a tone for the contemporary public to digest. If this is you, I would direct you to the fine print at the bottom of this article. I will, however, pose some questions for you to think on until we meet again (and then I will answer them, but you are free to ignore my answers and form your own): Are some of the things I allegedly discovered in this study simply due to my own flaws, such as the fact that I'm a Callous Controlling Cunt? Perhaps. Is the fact that I'm questioning whether it's because of my character flaws or because of the Patriarchy a sign of the Patriarchy's existence? Probably. Do the Monkeys think about that distinction? Aha...

DISCLAIMER: The lens through which I have observed and interacted with the subjects of this paper is not without its subjectivity and specified view. As a fully immersed ethnographer, it is widely acknowledged that there is almost no way to make completely unbiased observations. Every experience is compared to the experiential background of the observer, and being a woman, coming from a certain background, education, and class, the conclusions I came to about these men cannot escape the fact that it is a woman's perspective. I cannot fathom the psyche of someone who has a penis, who is primarily attracted to females, who has grown up in a world where he is the dominant gender, whether it was overtly stated or not. I am able to surmise subtle differences because of my differentness, but I am not able to disassociate my own personality from the surroundings in which I have worked with these men. This is just one female's thoughts on the matter, and it is as much a paper on what I've learned about my place in the world as it is about what I've learned about men.

For one thing, I consider myself to be a female who has bridged the gap between the genders somewhat more successfully than many other females, in terms of my acquired ability to do traditionally masculine things, my confidence levels, and my physicality as a tall, strong, and high-stamina person. This has helped me make encouraging conclusions about men's acceptance of women in the workplace, but I hope that I am not viewed as an anomaly among women, and that their perception is that women are indeed capable of physical equality, even if not many women display it. What I am trying to say is that I hope it is not me specifically that the behavior I've witnessed has geared itself towards, but rather the female gender as a whole, and I hope that neither my own internalized patriarchal attitude nor my sometimes overly radical sense of feminist rebellion, have skewed my perception of women's role in this type of work environment.

Mom

Greg Goldstein

She kept a glass of water
tucked under her bed,
stung my throat, like the green tabasco sauce
I used to be punished with,
Only flavorless.
It didn't smell, unlike her bare foot.
Maybe Camille would know, if I called her.
I didn't want to cause any trouble

She'd order a good filet –
Her stomach couldn't handle it.
Ate it cold with her hands the next day,
A little A1 sauce and garlic pepper,
It stung
hearing her slam her door
at the end of the hall,
weeps radiating with the
little light that escaped.

Or when she'd yell,
"Your dad did this to me,
You have no idea."

I didn't see her much
after I got dropped at school.
I was worried mom would swerve
and speed and we'd die.
But she wanted to.
I knew
because she said so
Over the speakerphone.

Boost® for breakfast,
Easy,
She couldn't spoil it.

Home early from school.
The usual headache.
My friends didn't understand
How to raise themselves.
At 12, tucking myself in.

Fashion

Anonymous

Glossy magazines tell us what's in
Skinny white girls, rarely smiling
We welcome Kardashians, bodies and smiles
(Ass so fat it got some injections)
But Kardashians know what's in: family.
New noses, lips, butts, boobs, and hair
But love for your sisters is one thing they got right.
Love your family
Appreciate your family
Not everyone has a family
If you don't have a family, what do you have?
Some mothers leave daughters
Some daughters get separated into foster care
Some fathers end up in jail tryna provide for their family
Orange suits for those who are black
Brings green paper for those who are white
White t shirts and leggings are all that you need
But girls making millions sharing pics in different outfits
@somethingnavy @manrepeller get followers and cash
Spending dad's money and sharing purchases
Industries run by teens in bedrooms sharing shots
How are you qualified to speak at Penn?

Children don't know the Kardashians are fake.
Magazines exist on advertising money
Sell things to buy but all you need you already have
For those blessed with food water and shelter
You will always be cool if you love yourself.

Appreciate your family and what you have
Others lost theirs in fires making that t shirt you're wearin
To Bangladesh with love
Have we learned nothing since 1911 NYC?

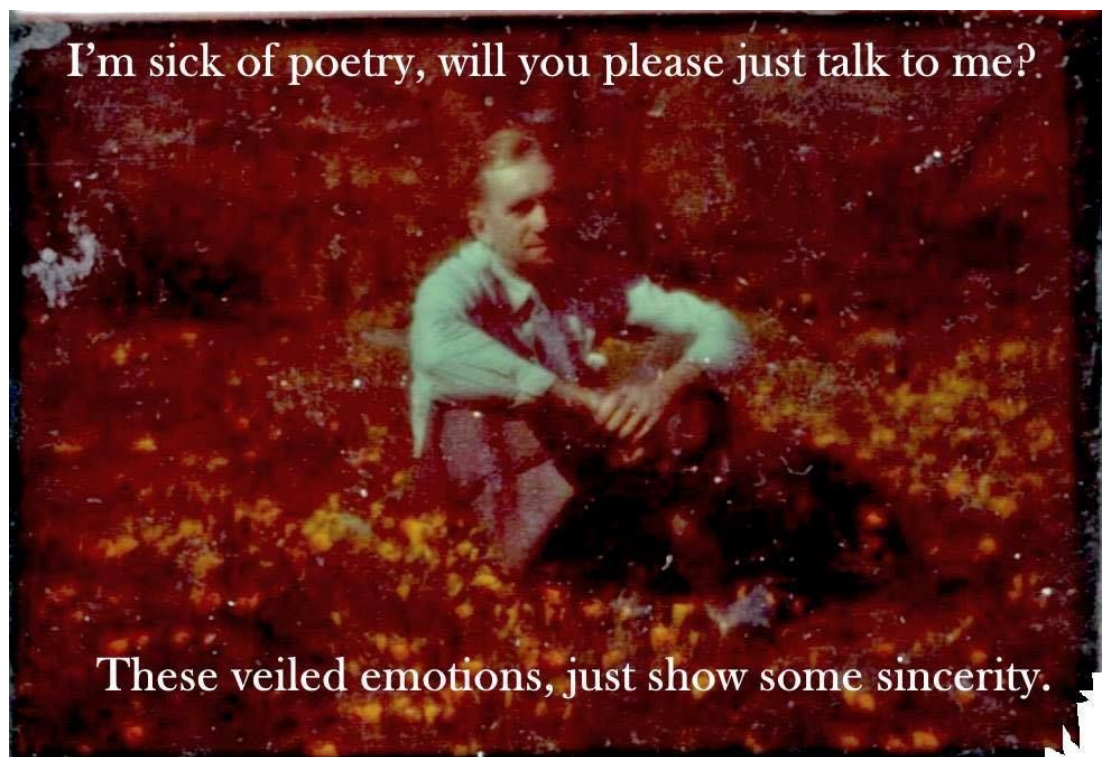
Disney Puff Daddy Walmart Sears H&M
Fuck your social corporate responsibility
Your investors are wack
Your board of directors all men
3,000,000 people in the streets of America
Pink hats and signs: we will effect change
History is being made but fashion never changes
Diversity love and gratitude are fashion
Compassion and respect are always on trend

Alexander McQueen R.I.P. we love you
Financial pressure on designers cannot end like that
How does Karl Lagerfeld do it; is he a robot?
Marc Jacobs we love you; thanks for everything
Into beauty Marc heads since clothes are unprofitable
Cheap manufacturing won't kill design
To the youth of the world please let your talent shine
LVMH claims to support new talent
Tory Burch, thank you for killing this game
Rasheeda ditch Kirk; keeping brick and mortar alive.
The fashion icons of tomorrow will all share these traits
Confidence self-love diversity gratitude
Appreciate your family and show love
Live in the moment and plan for the future
Thank you to history for where we are today
Did Gabrielle Coco Chanel even imagine the
house in this way?
The future is beyond our wildest dreams
We will be there in fashion with love and family
Alexander Wang Spring 2018 may have
the hottest shoes ever
But nothing is as cool as having a family.

Untitled

Gabriel Orion

When I see a shitty mirror selfie, sometimes my first
thought is of the person in the pic's grandkids
who may one day see it and try to imagine a life
spent taking mirror selfies and listening to music
on MySpace. Come to think of it, my high school band's
music is still on MySpace, and now that
thought doesn't have to be in my head anymore,
so I let it sit somewhere on a server,
waiting for a lonely late night google search



by Lucas Lysne

How to Smoke a Cigarette

Isabel Sanhuesa

You wake up abruptly, and instantly sense that something is not quite right. Your room is flooded with a warm light which, while pleasant, unsettles you; 8:15 a.m. is supposed to be hazier and quieter. Upon inspection of your phone, you discover that it is, in fact, 10:32 a.m. “If I leave now,” you think, internal monologue dripping with facetiousness, “I can still make the last three minutes and forty-two seconds of class.” Might as well go back to bed.

You can’t fall asleep. The drowsy fog which, upon waking, shrouded you from reality, has quickly faded, and you feel your heartbeat quicken, palms starting to sweat, the ruminating beginning, thoughts like “I will surely fail this class,” and “I am a failure,” and “I am a bad person,” swirling around in your head like a tornado. You reach for your bottle of Klonopin. Empty. You fidget in discomfort as you recall that you forgot to fill your script— or rather, that you were three dollars short. You spent your last fourteen dollars on a pack of Camel Lights (or Blues, I guess they’re called now, because advertising cigarettes as ‘light’ was banned in the 1960s. Cancer, etc.).

A smoke. You need a smoke. You frantically search your backpack, coat pockets, the hardly visible floor of your room, drawers, but the pack is nowhere to be found. Hesitantly, you rouse your boyfriend, who is no sleeping beauty, and inquire about the missing pack.

“Oh yeah,” he says groggily, “I finished that pack last night.”

Fuck.

You have three options:

1. Suffer.
2. Scrounge up all of the loose change hiding in the cracks and crevices of your couch and buy loosies (Newports, ugh. Whatever happened to brand loyalty? Momentarily your brain replays the first scene of the first episode of *Mad Men*, wherein Don Draper attempts to convince a server to switch cigarette brands, to no avail. The good old days— but you digress.)
3. Take a 20 from your boyfriend’s wallet and write him a sweet note— promise to pay him back, it’s just that you’re going through a really hard time right now, but you love and appreciate him so, so much— etc.

Choice one seems ludicrous and masochistic. You can’t fathom how you could suffer more than you already are, and after you process that thought, you immediately feel terrible. People are being murdered by cops and the homeless population of NYC is rising dramatically and 15% of the American population lives below the poverty line and Aleppo, god, Aleppo— it could be so much worse. This is not a comforting thought. You begin to shake slightly.

Choice two was a joke sort of, because Newports make you literally vomit, so all you are left with is choice three, the most logical, albeit embarrassing.

He keeps his cash loose in his pants pockets. First you search the blue slacks. Nothing. The gray sweatpants. Three nickels, a Metrocard, and a quarter caked in... gum? potentially? Finally, you find the black jeans, and in the back left pocket is the cash.

At first you are relieved, but then the guilt sets in— neither of you have much money. Still, you rationalize, he stole your pack. It’s only fair. Plus, the note.

Now you have to decide whether you are going to spend thirteen dollars or eight dollars. On the surface, an easy choice; however, because of the bipolar or maybe the anxiety or some mixture, no choice is an easy choice. The thirteen dollar spot is closer to your house, and you have a friendly rapport with the people who work there (habibi, they call you affectionately). The eight dollar spot is one block further from your home, which means a higher probability of running into people you don’t want to see, like the man who, not two days ago, whipped out his junk and started masturbating in

front of you in broad daylight. Also, the men who work there are less friendly, and treat you like an outsider. You are, of course, an outsider, but that doesn't mean you enjoy feeling like one.

Thirteen dollar pack it is.

"Sorry, habibi, no camels today."

"Do you have Parliaments?"

"Only American Spirit and Newport."

You sigh, but inaudibly, because you don't want the deli man to think you're frustrated with him. You choose American Spirits, the lesser of two evils. Sure, they take ten minutes to smoke, but at least they don't make you spit up on yourself, which is what happened the last time you smoked a menthol.

Upon leaving the deli, you realize you have no lighter. You make sad eyes at the deli man and plead your case, and he gives you one for free. Hallelujah, hallelujah. Seemingly out of nowhere it has begun to drizzle, so you stand under the awning of the deli, breathing in the frigid air as you whack the top of the pack against the palm of your hand. It doesn't matter that it barely serves any function; it is all a part of the ritual.

Truth be told, you love the ritual more than the actual smoking. After you've whacked the pack a sufficient number of times, you tear off the plastic casing and remove the foil from the inside of the pack. You flip the two median cigarettes of the first row up so that their filters are facing down—good luck, good fuck. You've been doing this since high school, and even though you don't believe in good luck, you definitely believe in bad luck. Why tempt fate? Your friend taught you that in the tenth grade—as you cautiously put your first smoke to your lips, she ripped it out of your hands, and revealed to you the teenage mythos of smoking. Back then, you really did believe. It feels nice to remember believing, so you continue the tradition.

After "good luck, good fuck," you take the third cigarette from the left of the front row of the pack and put it between your lips. You take out your newly acquired lighter and ignore the man bellowing "You're too pretty to smoke" at you from down the block. Finally, after three clicks, you manage to light the cigarette and take that first drag. It is some perverted iteration of heaven—the back of your throat burns, your head stops spinning, you start to calm down, slowly.

But then you think of your late aunt Juliette, who died in June of breast cancer. You think of your mother, who cried when she found out you smoked, and who you still attempt to hide this fact from, even though your juvenile desire to keep secrets only makes her more paranoid. Head starts spinning again, so you take another drag.

A baby and her mother come to stand under the awning, seeking refuge from the rain. Immediately, they cross the street, even though there is no awning there; a baby should not be subjected to cigarette smoke. If you were to trigger an asthma attack, god forbid, or even merely make the mother salty, you would melt from the shame.

Take another drag. Spirits, as previously mentioned, take forever to smoke, but don't smoke half and then chuck it, even if you're tempted. That pack cost you thirteen dollars of your hard-earned (well, your boyfriend's hard-earned) cash, and plus, you don't want to look like a total yuppie head ass. If you really can't finish the smoke, either clip it and save it, or clip it and set it somewhere dry and in plain view, so that maybe somebody else, someone without a boyfriend who has 20 dollars, can happen upon it. Assuming you do finish it, flick the butt as far as possible, maybe into a puddle.

Finally, you have calmed down. "One late homework won't ruin my chance at an A," you think. "And besides, my professor seems to like me." Just as you've finally managed to assuage yourself, your phone rings.

Debt collectors. You turn your phone off, and, with trembling hands, fish another cigarette out of your pack.

COOPED

Grace Nix

Times were so slow we took Benadryl for fun, and missed our only chance to bond with the only good neighbors, our weak hearts too strung out from a single dose to realize there are some things in life you have to plan for, or else you wind up sitting in a box watching endless reruns and wondering where all this real life happens. I guess the cities?

After you left, I didn't even go into the house. I was planning on spending a whole day in there, sitting in your half-finished skeleton that would be an architectural marvel, once complete. A full baked idea in the middle of its cook cycle—let's say a twenty minute goo in the center and still oozing and dripping. Run for the napkins.

It was beautiful. Open and risky, with lofted second floors, stepladders reaching the bunkbed air. Good for kids. An old man, though, could make a tumble, when crawling clumsily across a big top shelf jogs the fear that you won't be found, until weeks later.

You were building a house in the latter years of your life, for your grandkids. A last legacy in a life full, I gathered, of regrets, though a refrigerator scattered with emailed photos of young faces. Angels and absolution, to this old man.

You had plays still beating in you like unfinished love letters. I admired you for your tenacity, and when I heard the same stories twice, of the same adventures, performing plays where no man had performed plays before, I held judgment, remembering your tough times, how those were probably the only ones on your mind, so you might as well tell the good stories over and over again to Kerry and me, who were listening.

The time you told the story of pollution in the Yangtse river, to a stunned crowd marveling at the beauty spun from their yellow blight. The time you energized your tired town, spreading ideas from Tokyo all the way back to these western Virginia hills, bare, now, this winter.

Not the time you lost love by feigning sober, drunk and ranting at the wheel, steering badly towards the airport, leaving her stranded, you cuffed, as they locked you away. You told that story too.

You needed someone to feed your dears—twenty-six of them, twenty five hens, one old brute rooster. The finest of them colored like wine, and full of feather. You needed someone you could trust.

We forgot to name them. They walk like dinosaurs, unafraid and towering. They believe themselves giants in the grass, claws piercing hard dirt.

The open air sucked a lot out of me, more than I thought it would. The only sound in those woods was shoes sinking through leaves. My eyes landed on nothing, really, though I'd tell myself I was watching for those bears you said were known to bound down your hills without warning. It wouldn't do to be paranoid. In honesty I was more afraid of passersby, having heard no good stories about your neighbors. You spoke with ill-translated fear, your parting words, assuring us there were more than enough guns in the safe. I counted when you left. There were fourteen. And you never taught us how to use them.

You trusted us strangers more than the kid who lived next door, whose parents you thought would tell him to steal it all, wouldn't consider a neighbor a Neighbor when there's something to pillage.

When you asked me if I would feed your chickens, I didn't realize you were asking me to save you from heartbreak, from getting run out of your own hometown by fear, from rethinking your habits of keeping your guns unloaded and locked away, from losing faith in the house you hoped would one day protect your grandkids whose love kept you going since she left you here.

We left long before you came back. I felt like a kid barely breathing on the top bunk. Marooned in your house, surrounded on all sides by walls and fear. We were strangers to these hills, and all we had was an exit strategy.

An Ethnobotanical Endurance Race

Sefra Alexandra - The Seed Huntress seedhuntress.com

When I tell people I am the Seed Huntress: on a perennial expedition to save the seeds of our Earth's genetic biodiversity! I am usually met with a polite confused stare of wonderment or a vague cogniscience of, *that doomsday vault somewhere up in Norway?*

Well, that vault is called Svalbard and was started by a visionary named Cary Fowler. What Cary consistently witnessed was what he likes to call *genetic erosion* of our planet's seeds. Industrial farming, natural disasters, changes in climate, drought, and a cultural worldwide shift away from the land and towards the cities, has led to a mass extinction of the vegetable and wild plant species on our Earth. We are the People of the Pinch- at a pinch in time when we can either save the seeds of our biodiversity or standby while it is lost...

What does that mean? Our grandparents, their grandparents, all of our ancestors participated in the time honored tradition of saving seeds. Every plant that grows has a seed or a way to be propagated:

Tomatoes: scoop out seeds, let sit in open jar for four days, wash off mold, dry seeds, store in dry/dark/cool place... boom.

Lettuce: let the plant bolt i.e. let it grow a stalk, flower, then it goes to seed (they look like dandelion seeds... the tufty wind-pollinated sort)- put a paper bag over top, shake seeds into it... store dry/dark/cool... boom, enough lettuce seed to plant many years of gardens.

Beans: dry on vine... shuck.. store dry/dark/cool.

These self-pollinated varieties are easy to start with as they breed true: the seed you save will produce the identical variety the next year. Let's think back to the grand era of hunter-gatherers who out of survival identified edible wild plants, and naturally, would select the ones with the biggest fruits or largest grains. Overtime these selections of the wild relatives of our now cultivated plants, made by indigenous cultures, have led to some of the familiar crops on our plates... teosinte to corn (*Zea mays*) for example.

Here is the basic questions you can ask yourself to start your own seed selection process:

- What tastes good to me? What plants? What varieties?
- What agricultural zone am I in? Will this crop grow indoors or outdoors here?
- What is my soil like? When should I plant?
- What do I want to select for: yield, taste, pest resistance, ability to survive drought?

Then...

- Let the plant go to seed- meaning longer grow time then when you would harvest to eat.
- Read how to save the seed of that crop. Store in a jar in a DRY. DARK. COOL location.
- ...and VOILA--- Welcome back to the ancient art of seed saving! May you enjoy this variety for many seasons to come with friends, family & your local creatures.

Why is this important? Well, lets see folks... 93% of our vegetable varieties have been lost. Thank Gaia for organizations such as the [Seed Savers Exchange](http://SeedSaversExchange.org), that have helped conserve and multiply

the true *heirlooms* of our grandparents and ancestors. Think of their favorite yellow tomato that they saved year after year after year ... each year that seed was increasingly better adapted to their soil, to their climatic conditions, to their tastebuds- ensuring their bioregional food sovereignty and food security. They in effect were creating their own landrace ... meaning, selecting for what does well where they are and for what they like... then *hey*, guess what? You can name the selection after your family/ your dog, whatever and badda-bing! Your legacy is stored in the land. We are in an era with an uncertain climatic future, diversity, especially *biodiversity*, is key to an ecosystem's resilience. So while we are on the topic of biodiversity, let's take a slight excursion or tangent if you will...

As a greenhorn ethnobotanical ecologist, I have been fascinated by the concept of landraces in my travels around the world. What are the flavors that the ecotypes (specific species to particular ecosystem habitat) soil supports and nourishes, and further, what biotic (living) neighbors does it attract: the pollinators, the decomposers, the humans?

To begin this conversation let's dive into the wild world of ecology. Starting with the soil, which is woven together by a sophisticated internet web-like system of mycelium: the threadlike hairs that transfer nutrients from the various plants within a polyculture whose fruiting bodies are what we know as fungi or mushrooms- so cool right? Now what pretell is a polyculture? Great question. Glad you asked!

First lets discuss, what it isn't: i.e. good ol' monoculture- the predominant method of industrial agriculture where they plant one crop of one variety for as far as the eye can see...then the pests have a dionysian field day because it's an all you can eat buffet... and then, oh yeah, don't forget to deluge it with an exorbitant amount of pesticides that kill the beneficial microorganisms in our soil, seep into our groundwater and then everyone complains about the mass epidemics of various and sundry diseases... but i digress. Polycultures i.e. multiple different types of species planted together in a *guild* help to mediate these issues and facilitate a more resilient ecosystem.

Perennial polycultural guilds are emphasized in the regenerative design movement known as Permaculture. The object of this design framework is to choreograph your systems (be it an office building, a home or a garden) to function as nature does- utilizing some of the following principles:

- no waste: the output of one facet is the input of another which creates-
- closed looped systems: one facet feeds into another. i.e. dead tree > decomposers> new soil > germinates seeds of tree> the loop continues... and reveals the concept of-
- stacking functions: each aspect of the system should serve more than one function- trees provide habitat for animals, food for humans and shade for leisure etc..

[. . . for the rest of this piece, check out unsolicitedlit.com. . .]

These days it seems fair to say that anything even resembling a separation between government and corporate power has disappeared. Hardly a new phenomenon, though, and maybe it's a refreshing bit of honesty from our politicians. Either way, our new administration has made it resoundingly clear that corporate interests dominate public policy when it comes to environmental regulations, financial industry oversight, healthcare accessibility and consumer protections. While obviously problematic for some dissenters who value livable ecosystems and fair play between companies and individuals, a lot of other folks support this consolidation of corporate power—they *want* it—so long as it creates new jobs and grows the economy by 3%.

These were the issues on my mind when I recently read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (for the third time) and pondered its provocative allegory of corporatism. Right off the bat, consider Victor Frankenstein making his creature "of a gigantic stature" to compensate for the difficulty of working with minute human body parts. The resulting superhuman power of the monster obviously alludes to human technologies and weapons capable of far more destruction than any person can ever be with only his or her native parts. (My pointing this out is hardly original)—but compare Frankenstein's monster to *another* of man's creations: the corporation, which, like the monster, has become man's subtle master, a thing created to serve the populace but now grown into a hulking threat.

In 1933, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis made this comparison in a dissenting opinion of *Liggett Co. v. Lee*, a case concerning chain stores in Florida, in which the Supreme Court *reversed* an attempt to limit large corporate power. (In other words, the chain stores won, to Brandeis's dismay). His dissent expounded upon the problem of separating ownership from control, and the resulting difficulty of reigning in corporate power: "Such is the Frankenstein monster which States have created by their corporation laws."

Let's develop that a little further. Corporations make our lives convenient and comfortable: they help, in no small part, to sustain the life of our species, since the more humans there are on the planet, the more that corporations are needed, in quantity and size, to sate our biological needs (and more frivolous wants). And when it comes to commercial efficiency and economy of scale, corporations are formidably effective. Could a local business provide billions of people with toothpaste and aspirin and soybeans?

But there's another side to the story. Corporations are insensate, inhuman legal constructs with no biological needs: not for potable water, or clean air, or uncontaminated food. Mandated exclusively to generate profits, corporations live outside the natural bounds of mankind—like Frankenstein's monster, who flees to the North Pole, where Victor himself will feel the misery of cold and frost but to which his humanoid handiwork is impassive. That's why one of the most germane and provocative questions of *Frankenstein* is whether Victor should have kept his promise and created a bride for the monster. While repulsed by the idea, Victor also empathizes

with the demand: the monster didn't ask to be born—but now that he *does* exist, isn't it reasonable to want a mate? But to save humanity, Victor does *not* create the bride, because the two monsters might propagate a usurping race.

It seems we've chosen otherwise, duplicating and empowering invisible corporate monsters—how? Corporate personhood, the march of deregulation and privatization (“neoliberalism”) since the 1980s, win-at-any-cost corporate lawyers, *Citizen's United*, and above-the-law “globalization”—until our species and many others are now threatened by corporations' insatiable need for profits, usually at the expense of indigenous peoples whose land is ruinously polluted without any accountability to the companies that employ “private contractors” (read: heavily-armed mercenaries) to quell any protests or uprisings.

Or, as described in *Frankenstein*: “I enquired of the inhabitants concerning the fiend and gained accurate information. A gigantic monster, they said, had arrived the night before, armed with a gun and many pistols, putting to flight the inhabitants of a solitary cottage; through fear of his terrific appearance he had carried off their store of winter food...”

Above-the-law globalized capitalism transcends local laws and judiciaries and allows for practically unlimited corporate power—yet demands practically zero corporate responsibility to maintain a livable planet for our species or any other. If I knowingly poison a public water source, I will be sent to prison. If a corporation does the same thing, on a much larger scale, it will at worst be subject to an insignificant fine. No executives will be personally prosecuted—so corporations are highly incentivized to commandeer and despoil public spaces for their own private profit. No surprise, then, that profitable fiscal quarters come at the expense of ecological damage that can last for centuries, if not millennia. Sure, logging companies plant trees to replace demolished old-growth forests, but that takes a couple thousand years and, ahem, what happens in the meantime?

Of course, if our species perishes, so would corporations (presumably)—which means we humans still hold the power, right? We *could* dissolve the whole corporate system at any time, just as Victor Frankenstein thwarted his creature's chance at procreation. But consider living one day, one *hour*, without modern corporations. No more cell phones or computers, for starters, not to mention cars or electricity. “Slave,” the monster cries out to Victor, “I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!”—and that's the moment when Victor realizes the difference between *ownership* and *control*.

Classic novels like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*—composed when she was *nineteen*, by the way, and first published in 1818—tell a great story *and* dramatize timelessly relevant questions with no easy answers. What *is* the responsibility of creators to their creations? How do we reconcile that what sustains our species on a crowded planet also threatens our very survival? And while great literature isn't didactic, reading *Frankenstein* should give us pause to consider the consequences of our corporate creations, before they push us to the ends of the earth, to meet Victor Frankenstein and, perhaps, share in his lamentations and regrets.

↑ [-] [fencerman](#) 23 points 2 months ago

↓ It's an intractable problem in US politics. Any leader that alienates the Saudis has to deal with the fallout of skyrocketing oil prices, recession and instability. That's death to any presidency.

Between allowing that or terrorism, most US leaders (and most Americans, in the end) would rather permit terrorism.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [Delestoran](#) 19 points 2 months ago

↓ If we move our nation away from petroleum, the power of Exxon and Saudi over us goes away. Of course that is an economic competition that is slowly being won by companies like Tesla. When the time comes that the US is mostly powered by electricity derived from clean sources, the power of the Saudi over US presidents will vanish.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [EvilWalnut](#) 24 points 2 months ago

↓ If they stop selling oil in US Dollars, hyperinflation would destroy the US economy (because countries will trade in their USD in favor of other currencies trading oil, and then the US gets FLOODED with too much cash because countries are trading them in for more useful currencies).

Right now, all these countries trade in US Dollars (thanks to Nixon and Kissinger's Petrodollar system from the 70s, replacing the "dollars for gold" system).

Petrodollar system dumbed down: Countries (including the Saudis) agreed to trade Oil exclusively in US Dollars, then they end up holding US Dollars in western world banks. It's great, because if US needs more money...just print it! It was getting hard to do that near the end of the Dollars for Gold era.

Now countries are hungry for US Dollars, because that is the only currency that can be used to buy oil from OPEC!

Skip ahead: Saddam says in a meeting in 2000 he will start trading oil in euros instead of USD. At the same time Bush was building Al-Adid base to prepare for "renewed action against Iraq" before 9/11 ever even happened. Did you ever wonder why the administration was at Rumsfeld's doorstep every day asking him to find a connection between Iraq and 9/11 (despite there being NO connection while they were building invasion plans hours after the 9/11 attack)? In 2002, Saddam is now trading oil in petroEURO and in 2003 the US goes in and reverses that right quick.

Gaddafi in 2011 then wanted to ditch the petrodollar system and trade in a new currency (not euro either) -- after all, they had oil AND gold to back it up. Boom: the US goes in and takes him out! Easy peasy.

The US cannot afford for countries to stop trading in USD.

If Trump and Tillerson make friends with Putin to get at his \$100 billion oil deal in the arctic (as the American company Exxon is currently the only one with the means and know-how to extract that oil for Vlady)... could it secure the power of trading oil in USD despite several middle eastern leaders' attempts at ditching the Petrodollar system time and time again?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [Delestoran](#) 1 point 2 months ago

↓ Good point. I had not considered the petrodollar thing.

I don't think that the hyperinflation would occur. If the USD was not used as the exclusive currency for oil trades, AND the US was not dependent upon the output of the oil industry to meet energy needs (agriculture, heating, etc.) then I don't think that impact would be hyperinflation. The value of the dollar would decrease and that could cause pricing trauma in a lot of markets which could lead to a recession - or boom depending upon how it played out. A decrease in the dollar value relative to the Euro or Pound, would improve the trade balance in exports from the US while increasing the cost of things from the far east. However, the underlying energy costs would be independent of the price of oil or its trading currency and thus have little to no impact on the US markets except through the diminished utility of the dollar.

Do Terrorists Call Themselves Terrorists?

By Derek Zwyer

Players innumerable,
What is their need?
What is their creed?
Or are there many
Ideologies?

Slaying as usual,
How to appease?
How to make cease?
Or, are we even
Striving for peace?

Saying "Unacceptable,"
Who even hears?
Who even fears?
Or, are supporters
Still building their lairs?

Layers inscrutable,
Where are their funds?
Where are their guns?
Or, all their other
Heavier weapons?

Paying in crude oil,
Why are they blessed?
Why are they stressed?
Or, are we
Misunderstanding protests?



Border Wall Proposal

Charles Weimer

Government shutdown

MC Nutriana

The paper reads:

They does not deserve healthcare.

She do not deserve health-care.

Shim do not deserve care.

She do not deserve.

I do not deserve.

I am not.

I am.

How We Elect a President

Kerry Nix

I slide past the propped door of the senior living apartment building. Ring and knock, knock, knock again. A Mr. Stills on my list creaks open his door.

“Hello, sir. Wondering if you voted today.” I smile.

He bares his gums. He gargles.

I pause, and rephrase, louder. “Did you vote today?”

Mr. Stills’s crinkled eyes widen to match his jaws. Either he can’t hear me or can’t respond.

My smile deepens. “Have a good day, sir,” I say.

Next voter, room 102. Okay. I descend the stairs, and see a fair-haired and fair-skinned lady leaning against a door.

“Oh, everyone here’s voted, at the church this afternoon,” she tells me over the rumble of nearby washing machines, eyeing my *Home Care Workers for Hillary* union staff t-shirt.

“Let’s hope everyone else did, too,” I grimace. “Did Mr. Stills in room 204 join you?”

“Aaron? He was there. I’ll tell you, I grew up around the corner, and raised my kids one block in the other direction.”

Another old woman, gray afro popping against her brown skin, ambles up to lean on neighboring 103.

My nod urges Ms. 102 to keep sharing with me, the grandchild of no one in this senior home.

“Oh, yes, little lady, it’s changed since I was young,” she continues. “We used to have dances. We’ve stuck here through the bad times, but things are gon’ go down more if today goes the wrong way.” She sighs.

I sigh and nod. The laundry room rumbles louder, and she tells me about her grandkids.

Mmmm, what a canvassing lullaby.

The chime of a dryer snaps my attention back to my mission – prevent fascism. These ladies’ names are the last on my voter list before the next neighborhood.

I say goodbyes, leap up the stairs and slip back past the propped door to return to my car. Shifting into gear, I cruise for the sixth time today over these streets, now to a Pittsburgh Clinton campaign office. I pull the parking brake and skip up into the office.

The floor is covered with voter lists, promotional posters, rally signs, stickers, clipboards, pens, and *I’m With Her* buttons.

“If you’re experienced, we’ll give you Pitcairn,” the Clinton staffer tells me between yawns and sips of coffee. That’s either cause the streets are wonky or the people are Trumpy, I wager. I eye the canvass packet map – Pitcairn looks orderly.

“Sounds good,” I respond. Purpose and impatience beckon me toward the door.

“Just a minute—you know much about Pitcairn?”

“Isn’t Pitcairn some Gilded Age industrialist?” Gilded Age industrialists are the namesakes of half Pittsburgh’s streets, parks, and schools.

“Yeah, this town’s named after Robert Pitcairn. He’s the guy who managed the Pittsburgh part of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company in 1877. That’s when thousands of workers struck against wage cuts and layoffs and unfair pricing. A hundred people died and buildings burned. Local cops refused to fire on the crowds—that’s when they called in the feds.”

“Yikes. Well, I should get going....”

“Wait, just, fifty years ago Pitcairn was this thriving town of maybe 10,000. But now the railroads mostly routed through other cities, so basically everyone’s left. It’s a little over 3000 now.”

Whew. Pitcainners might kill to be great again.

It’s time to go. I skid over pens as I cross the room to grab a granola bar, apple, and bottle of water from a table, passing on the pies and casseroles before pushing the door open into the cool evening air.

I sigh for the thousandth time of the past nine months, disbelieving this, *this*, is how we elect a president. After my five months of campaigning for Bernie, my work today is more preventive than inspired. If I make it to all these houses by sundown, I’ll have knocked over 200 doors today. Not bad, for Pittsburgh’s winding streets and rolling hills.

I sink back into my car. My heart quickens as the sky grows pink, even as my legs relax into my longest drive of the day. The engine cranks and coughs me off toward Pitcairn.

As the sun sinks behind the hills, I pass steel mills re-purposed as car dealerships, hand painted *Trump for Pres* lettering atop a bar entrance, and Trump lawn signs wagging on browning grass. My car chugs up a slope and I pull up to scan my map.

Two tween boys toss a baseball in the street outside my car. Metallic clangs from the houses announce dinners are ready. Neighbors greet each other and laugh. I give smiles and “How’re you doing?”s. These neighbors by now must’ve seen every odd-hour coming-and-going; forgiven or else resented every noisy habit; invited each other over for dinner and helped move furniture. I hunger to belong in this town, just for these hours. I’ll sneak glimpses of their normal existences during each semi-scripted exchange.

Ring and knock, no answer, sticky note on door.

Ring and knock, no answer, already a sticky note – someone must’ve been here earlier.

Doors sag from tightening budgets and landlords’ neglect. Porches are tricked out with year over year of decorations rejoicing in Easter or honoring vets or uplifting local Boy Scouts or scaring off would-be-intruders with outdated security stickers. The barking dogs do a better job.

Ring and knock; a twenty-something black woman answers.

“Hi! I’m looking for Stephanie. I wanted to make sure you voted today.”

“Yes! I voted for her this morning,” she smiles, pointing to her *I Voted* sticker.

“Yeeeah! Did everyone in the house who’s registered go and vote?”

“We went together!”

“Wooooooo! Have a good night!”

“Thanks, you too!”

I bounce down the porch steps. Did I just augment someone’s joy? Her smile, eye contact, innocence, and pride restore me.

Ring and knock; no answer; sticky note.

Ring and knock. A forty-something white woman with streaked blonde hair opens up.

“I voted already,” she says, eyeing my t-shirt.

“Oh, great. Have a good night!” I turn and walk off.

“Not the way you want!” she laughs after me.

A voter on my list, lost to the other side. Her cackle prickles my neck. I stalk on. The pinked sky is turning blue and gray.

Ring and knock. A white lady opens up. The voter on my list is her 22-year-old son.

“He doesn’t live here,” she says. “I’m voting – not for *her*,” she says. Her cold glare pushes me off her porch.

I walk past some white thirty-somethings chatting by a car. I don’t engage.

I’m an intruder. I’m alone. Dusk flattens everything. This is America.

Ring and knock. The porch is covered in plastic turf, an old grill, some basketballs, and a lawn mower. A girl half my height of six or seven years opens the door. Aww, she’s the smallest person I’ve seen today. She smiles up at me and looks shyly at the floor. I melt and lean down.

“Hi there! I’m looking for – Aaaaggggh!” A searing white pain spreads from my left knee. I escape backward down the steps.

“Fuuccck!” I heave.

A 45-year-old man, bald and chubby with glasses, is on the porch, grabbing the collar.

I yell, “Your dog bit me!”

“Hey, uh-hh.” He trails off, and our eyes meet. We’re silent, without a script.

The dog barks, jumping against the father’s grip. The girl’s eyes wander, lost.

“Nice going,” he mumbles to his daughter. She’s still looking around.

My leg pounds. Maybe I die from this.

“She doesn’t have rabies,” the father conjectures to his daughter and me.

The girl stares at the ground, then at her dog, then at the ground.

“Well. I’ve never been bit by a dog before. Can I... have your number?”

“Aww, you don’t even know if you’re bleeding.” His lack of empathy disgusts me. This is the guy on my list.

“It hurts. It’s swollen, and throbbing.”

“Okay, fine.” He recites his number, which I transcribe into my phone.

The girl carves circles into the yard with her eyes. The father clutches the collar. The dog groans.

I hold my clipboard, the father’s voting status unchecked. “Have a good night,” I say, and turn away.

I want to kill this dog.

I rip off my *Home Care Workers for Hillary* t-shirt, left with gray long-sleeves. Blood courses fresh through my arms, my legs, my chest. I don’t feel the evening chill. I hobble back across town – up a hill, past doors I’ve knocked, past people I’ve badgered – back to my car. Rain begins to fall as I drive to a Shell station I’d passed on my way into town and stand in line behind a few customers buying cigarettes and lottery tickets to retrieve the bathroom key. Inside, I check the wound – yes, that dog’s spit has entered my bloodstream. I get back in line.

“Where is the nearest urgent care center?”

[. . .due to space restraints, drop in at unsolicitedlit.com to find out what happens next. . .]

Political Nonsense

Alie Eiseman

Cultural identity

Seems a matter of perspective

What should I do when Jay-Z blares over the radio

As I drive through rural romania

Their english is better than mine

And they laugh at the gypsy music

That says I made my fortune

Stealing money on the internet

Everyone knows america

But every few days I learn there's another country that I had no idea existed

I can look at maps of refugee camps

And wonder to myself

If maybe less is better?

Being born to so much privilege

I feel some responsibility to change things

But I'm always an outsider

To every place, and every group

And how could I have such airs to think

I could solve a problem that I know nothing about

I want to be told how to help

I'd gladly break my back in the sun

If I knew what was good



control is an illusion
by cara zajac



Unsolicited Literature 2017