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assembly
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*the student newspaper of the evergreen state college
swimming against the stream since '71*

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The CPJ in 2021

Hello, and thank you for picking up the January edition of the Cooper Point Journal!

2021 marks the 40th year that the Cooper Point Journal has been in publication. Four whole decades! It's becoming clear the kind of history that has laid within pages such as these. It's exciting to be able to contribute to a legacy that stretches almost double my lifetime.

This issue, two of our staff writers chose to write about the protests in Olympia that are mirroring the national climate. Together, the different perspectives work to paint a commentary on how the situation is unfolding.

Hope you enjoy what you read! -Jacob

HOW WE WORK

The Cooper Point Journal is produced by students at The Evergreen State College, with funding from student fees, subscriptions from our readers, and advertising from local businesses. The Journal is published for free every month during the school year and distributed throughout the Olympia area.

Our content is also available online at www.cooperpointjournal.com.

Our mission is to provide an outlet for student voices, to inform and entertain the Evergreen community and the Olympia-area more broadly, as well as to provide a platform for students to learn about operating a news publication.

SUBSCRIBE

The Cooper Point Journal is funded by subscriptions from our readers. Our website, cooperpointjournal.com, has a link to a place to subscribe. In return for \$20, you will be delivered the remainder of the copies of the Cooper Point Journal for the rest of the school year as they are published. This is a key way to keep us afloat during the pandemic, and also a convenience to anyone who does not wish to or cannot access the public places we distribute to in the Olympia area.

WORK FOR US

We accept submissions from any student at The Evergreen State College, and also from former students, faculty, and staff. We also hire some students onto our staff, who write articles for each issue and receive a learning stipend.

Have an exciting news topic? Know about some weird community happening? Enjoy that new hard core band? Come talk to us and write about it.

We will also consider submissions from non-Evergreen people, particularly if they have special knowledge on the topic. We prioritize current student content first, followed by former students, faculty and staff, and then general community submissions. Within that, we prioritize content related to Evergreen first, followed by Olympia, the state of Washington, the Pacific Northwest, etc.

To submit an article, reach us at cooperpointjournal@gmail.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We want to hear from you! If you have an opinion on anything we've reported in the paper, or goings-on in Olympia or at Evergreen, drop us a line with a paragraph or two (100 - 300 words) for us to publish in the paper. Make sure to include your full name, and your relationship to the college—are you a student, staff, graduate, community member, etc. We reserve the right to edit anything submitted to us before publishing, but we'll do our best to consult with you about any major changes.

Inauguration Responses in Olympia

by
Brooke Lynch



Over the past few weeks, the country and world have seen the extent to which the supporters of our former Commander-in-Chief will go to voice their support. We all watched in horror on January 6th as the president, along with others such as Rudy Giuliani, and his son, Donald Trump Jr, egged on a mob of Trump supporters to storm the United States capitol. And they did. With little to no resistance, the supporters of our former president stormed the capitol, took what they wanted, vandalized the building, and threatened the lives of both the senators and our systems. Our democracy was threatened, people lost their lives, and fascists were emboldened.

While some have seen the consequences of their actions, such as losing their jobs or being arrested, many have not. This is in stark contrast to the hundreds or even thousands of BIPOC who either lost their lives or were arrested after protesting the unlawful and unchecked killings of BIPOC by the police forces this summer. But the protests have not been limited to our nation's capital.

According to The Olympian,

on the same day, Trump supporters stormed into the Washington State Capital and broke down the gates of the governor's mansion. The group was there supposedly to force the Washington State Legislators to reject the counted ballots of the United States Presidential Election that was held back in early November. As the day went on, the crowd got more and more aggressive, with chants of "Open Up!" being heard. This led to the group pushing through and breaking down the gate to the Governor's Mansion around 3:00. But their protest across the gate did not last long, as by 3:30 the crowd had been moved back behind the gate. According to State Patrol Sergeant Darren Wright, instead of using the "non lethal" munitions, such as tear gas, that had been used on peaceful BLM protests throughout the last year, the Trump supporters were merely talked into leaving the premises. Multiple rallies had been planned for the day such as the "Operation Occupy the Capital/MAGA Rally at the Capitol," which had been planned in not only Olympia but across the nation. Others were branded with names like "Stop the Steal"

and "Speak Truth," the latter of which was branded as a response to Trump's call to action. One of these protests had Joey Gibson as a speaker, a leader of the far-right group Patriot Prayer, who rallied the group around false claims of election fraud and pandemic restrictions. This led one member of the crowd to yell, "This is war!" It was hard to tell if the crowd agreed or disagreed.

This wasn't the only far right protest that Olympia has seen recently, as the following Sunday, the 10th, more pro-Trump protestors gathered in Olympia to protest various issues such as vaccines, the closing of the legislature, or just to show their support of former president Donald Trump. An armed protest organized by Tyler Miller of the far-right group Hazardous Liberty had been planned but was canceled Wednesday. Miller made a post on Facebook: "Due to our Political leaders being non-responsive and the 100% likelihood that our event will be hijacked by people with ulterior motives, we have decided to cancel the Legislative Lockout event." He did however voice his support for other rallies saying, "Please support the other

rallies that are happening in and around Olympia this weekend and coming week." The meeting was reportedly non-violent, with people leaving around 3PM, the same time at which the protest on the 6th reportedly got violent. Earlier in the week, the Governor had authorized the use of 750 members of the National Guard along with the Olympia police to protect the State Legislature, which started the next day.

Some would point out the disparities between the way the Washington politicians have responded to the far-right rallies in contrast to the way they responded to the Black Lives Matter protests of the last year; the way it took days after the groups broke past barriers for extensive police forces to be called in, even when armed demonstrations were both planned and occurred. The Governor has denounced these protests, but some may wonder if he is doing enough. Actions speak louder than words; how can we fight for social justice if we have a Governor who says he supports us but does less to fight off fascists than he does to suppress the voices of minorities?

Trumpers Gone AWOL by Jack Stroud

Owing to the historic swarms on the National Capitol and various state capitols (including our own) on January 6th, the nation awaited Inauguration Day with clenched teeth and private curiosity—not, “Would the Trumpers turn out?” but, “How many would there be?” Picket signs scattered throughout the suburbs of Olympia, stuck into wet lawns with a sense of pride and fear, begged (one may wonder who, in our city’s predominantly liberal subdivisions): RESPECT THE VOTE. PEACEFUL TRANSITION. Quiet coffee shop goers speculated about, derided, and prayed for an end to the nascent and well organized movement that is Trumpism. 500–700 National Guardsman, in coordination with state troopers, the Olympia Police Department, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Enterprise Services, and assorted military police took up arms and constructed barriers around the Capitol Campus, preparing for who-knew-what was to come. Conscientious Redditors warned Olympians to steer clear of the Capitol, and maybe even all of downtown, in the week leading up to Inauguration. But when the day finally came, as the 46th President was sworn in and Amanda Gordon subsequently recited her beautiful poem, in Olympia, there was a certain silence—the Trumpers had gone AWOL.

On the Capitol Campus around noon, journalists outnumbered Trump supporters twenty-five to one (by estimate), long-lense cameras pointing to the ground in poorly hidden disappointment. The one apparent Trump supporter that was there, a buff sporting man who walked at a brisk pace with

a large American flag slung over his right shoulder, received a moment of celebrity he is apt to never experience again: journalists from such outlets as the AP, the New York Times, and the Seattle Times jumped on him like fresh meat—Why are you carrying the flag? Are there more of you coming?

Interviews that lasted as long as it took for the man to walk a block dissolved back into waiting around, strolling the perimeter of the gated off area, trying to figure out how to take a photo to express the absence, asking one National Guardsman and then another if they could answer any questions, with lotto-ticket success.

I found some kids my age, fellow journalists, each strapped with impressive cameras. We got to know each other some and chuckled at the irony of the situation. I said that I had to have an article ready in two days and didn’t know if I should try to make this work or find something else. I said that well, my one idea is to go out to Spiffy’s, there’s bound to be some Trumpers out there (downtown Oly itself being characteristically bereft of the outwardly expressive sort), and then maybe they could explain the low turnout, and if not at least I’d get a pie out of it. I hung around for a while longer, picked up a few tricks of the trade from long-time photojournalist Ted S. Warren, and said Spiffy’s here I come.

A few hours later my roommates and I were loaded into the sedan, driving South on I-5. I chicken-scratched a few questions along the way: What were you thinking this morning leading up to inauguration? What happens now that Biden is in office? But that didn’t quite

get at it. Over the past two months I have spent a number of Saturdays at the Capitol, speaking with Trump supporters, and bearing witness to their passion, their sense of betrayal, and their familial spirit that altogether constitute a strong adhesive for a sometimes open-ended cause. In other words, many of them feel martyred and this shared trait fuels their fire. Of course I am speaking in generalizations, but only to illustrate that, if they want to be, and as we have seen, the Trumpers can be a powerful group of people.

But now that Biden is in office, the question can be asked: without Trump as their Commander-in-Chief, will the Trumpers any longer have an organizing principle? Will the movement fizzle? Because although Trump is the leader to whom all too many of them ask “how high?” when he says wave a F--- YOUR FEELINGS flag, they have still proved proactive, online and IRL, often without direct indication from the former president. Neither does Trump’s absence from office predicate his inaction. Moreover, the rallies that I have attended were grounded in specific political aims (end the lockdown, reform sex education, ward off socialism with torches drenched in caustic chemical compounds if we have to). Undoubtedly these political ideations will not die off so soon; they are much more long-standing than Trump. But will Trumpism and all its brashness and merchandise remain, or will it fade back into the regular old Grand Ol’ Party? Hidden as it once was, a modern day Lost Cause.

Because only five years ago, if someone said “Trumper” you might’ve thought they

had a minor salivary gland malfunction and politely ignored the mispronunciation—i.e. in no time at all a nationwide movement has been established laid down its fibrous and branching web and has even swung into international politics (q.v. Brexit and the rise of British Trumps). In light of this and the strong sense of identity that Trump has fostered for the Trumpers, it seems unlikely to me that just because they did not show out in numbers at our Capitol, or any other American Capitol, on Inauguration Day that we have heard the last of them. It was into all of this that I wanted to pry at Spiffy’s, and felt prepared to receive confirmation of my speculations as we barreled down the Interstate, Douglas fir’s flip-booking away behind us.

But as we pulled off on Exit 68 the parking lot of the restaurant and bakery was conspicuously empty, four cars total. On the glass door of the building was the explanation: they’d closed down for a few days to attend to their ongoing court case. But I didn’t give up journalistic hope; we were still in an area that I will affectionately call po-dunk, i.e. the potential for a coincidental encounter with a Trumper could no-problem become actual, and we still had to find something to eat besides. We plugged in the coordinates to the next eatery, Frosty’s Saloon & Grill, pulled out of the parking lot, and past the WE SUPPORT THE POLICE flag on the edge of it which made me think: maybe that has something to do with it, maybe now that the police and armed forces are in visible force at the Capitol (whether they will say it verbally or not directly *because* of the threat the Trumpers pose, maybe now

Trumpers, cont.

the Trumpers cannot well make a scene at the Capitol without eating their own words, those devout supporters of the police and armed forces who have only doubled down in their stance alongside recent traction for defund/abolish movements. But these thoughts passed as we extended further into the country, Patsy Cline's refined twang filling the space between us.

Frosty's, sadly, proved closed also, as did Spiffy's satellite bakery in Napavine, as did Ramblin' Jack's Rib Eye, and not one Trump flag, hat, or even bumper sticker did we see on our zig-zags across those foriegn back roads either—chalk it up to a tourist's sensibilities. Having learned our lesson, we called ahead to the next restaurant, Jeremy's Farm to Table, and set off along the highway again, as if we knew the meaning of the word transportation, a hot meal then tangible and the prospect of a chance encounter and some answers-sought not entirely lost.

As a piece of bubble gum lands in the V formed by a child's feet at the parade, a pink neon sign off Exit 77 caught the eye of one of my fellow travelers:

ADULT TOYS, ARCADE, NOVELTIES; and so if we're out here already, I mean, we might as well check it out, see what flavor it is.

Then, out of the car, past the two beef-headed men leaning against a yellow Hummer in the parking lot—glaring us down—and into the purple and chrome interior of the sex shop where there was everything you would expect—*Attack of the MILFs 2* and *Girls Gone Wild*—I stopped not five feet past the entrance, quickly resolved to distract myself by talking with the clerk, a 30ish year old man with a mid-length, red beard hanging down from under his mask.

He told us the history of the place, that it'd been around for 35 + years and that a mother and son were the original owners, the mother withering into a wheelchair in her later years, letting dust cover the shelves, and subtracting from the sex-appeal of the place in general. He told us that it wasn't a bad gig and that since COVID started the "arcade" had been closed so he didn't have to listen to whatever noises emanated from that backroom in which there is a row of stalls, every other taped with a note: LEAVE A MESS,

LEAVE A TIP (: So that was one good thing.

He told us that a lot of old people come in the store—one guy he remembered wearing a F--- INSLEE mask, for example—and they will come in there and end up saying something along the lines of "Your generation" to him, and he, one imagines with his hands in the air, is like hey, I'm just here to sell you some adult items. This followed by equitable laughter throughout the small space where my roommates and I were the only customers present.

Subtly and of its own accord, the conversation begins to take on a somewhat more serious tone as we start talking politics, insofar as that is polite with a stranger—protests and inauguration, too much violence, it's childish, broad picture stuff. He is saying that it's hard to believe how much political activity there has recently been in a small town like Chehalis—the protest at Spiffy's, the one at the courthouse, both in the last month. He is saying that everybody is just trying to get by, whatever that means for them, but some people have some confused approaches for doing

so. He is saying that freedom is the ability to act without constraint of resentment or fear, and I am nodding along to his fair-mindedness, somehow unperturbed by the plethora of lurid temptations that surround me. Soft-rock crackles through some speaker in some upper corner of the room. This, and the clerk's round voice, closed off from all exterior sound and influence. Later we will eat farm-fresh hamburgers in the parking lot of Jeremy's, covered in a darkness that will carry us home. Now we speak with this pleasant man, in the brightly lit, windowless sex shop. The intimidating men in the parking lot, just beyond the door, somehow lightyears away. The words spoken by the former president the day before—*The movement we started is only just beginning. There's never been anything like it.*—no longer ringing in my head. OK, for now, without answers.

If there are any Trump supporters reading this who would like to set the record straight or offer any kind of explanatory comments, please feel free to contact me at strjac01@evergreen.edu.

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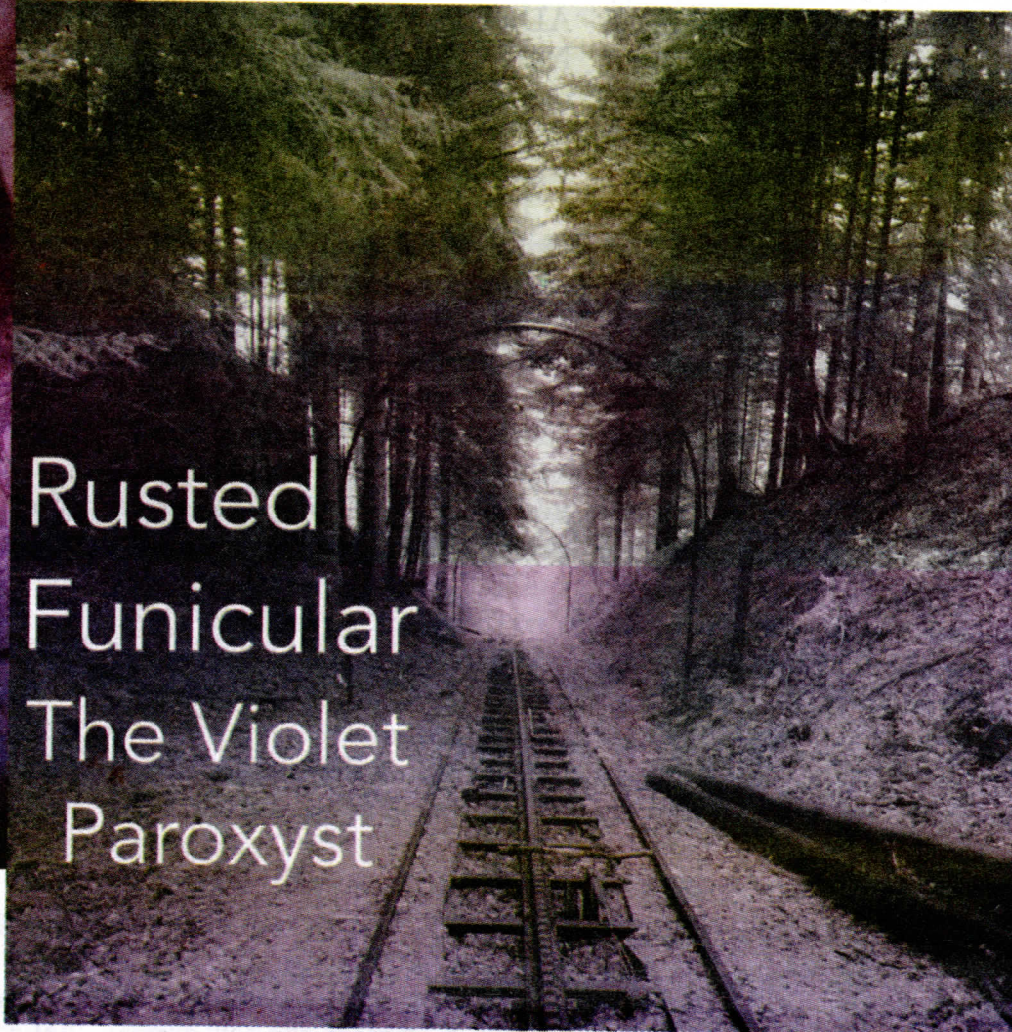
Artist Feature



Terrors

The Violet Paroxyst

Forgotten

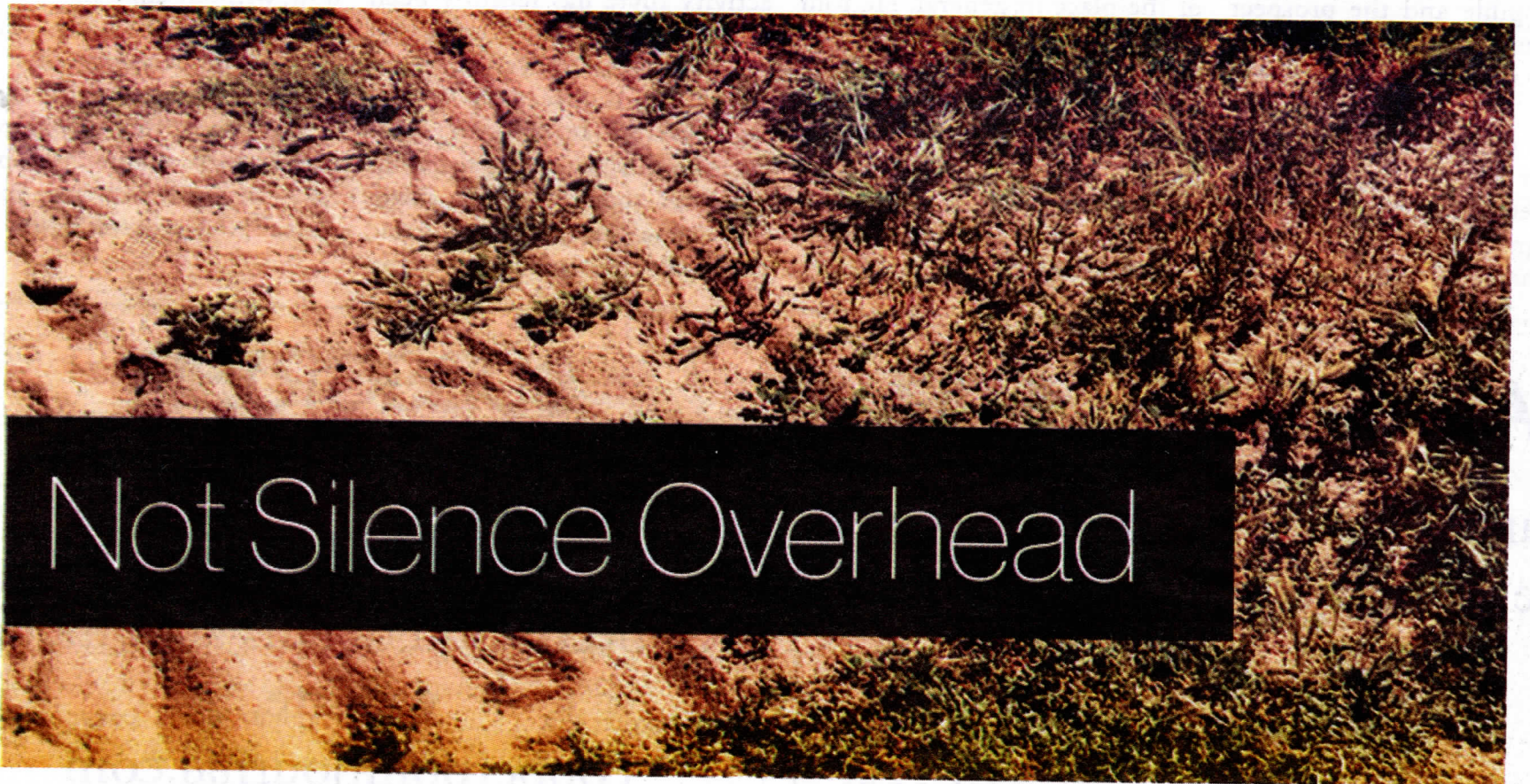


Rusted

Funicular

The Violet

Paroxyst



Not Silence Overhead

Artist Interview with Milo Balczunas, 'The Violet Paroxyst'

by Avery Quinn

The Violet Paroxyst is 20 year-old experimental music-maker Milo Balczunas. Their music combines spacious melodies with a deeply evocative intensity to create what they call "hidden galaxies of sound." Within these galaxies I am soothed and disturbed, made whole as well as fragmented, pulled into a world created by The Violet Paroxyst. I reached out recently to find out more about Milo and their music, which is available on Bandcamp as well as Soundcloud.

Are you currently a student? If so, what are you studying and what are your hopes for this quarter?

Yes, I'm an Evergreen student, a sophomore. I'm here studying electronic music production techniques and the history of electronic music. I hope to make the most of having classes on Zoom, because I won't be able to work in the studios on campus as I expected to originally. That's pandemic related.

How do you balance your artistic practice with the energy you invest in school? Do you feel that your academic work compliments your musical development?

I had some difficulty getting into music classes last year so I had low motivation to do classwork and also little energy or time to work on music. I didn't imagine writing essays when choosing Evergreen, which is how it started. I took an audio production program over the summer and two out of

three music classes fall quarter of 2020, but now I'm taking three music classes. I definitely have a better, more fulfilling balance between the two now than before. I guess I choose classes based on whether I think I'll feel motivated and content working in them. For me it comes down to avoiding letting other activities like video games and social things get in the way, but I need to plan my time efficiently and not get burnt out cranking out assignments when I could approach it more thoughtfully.

Who is The Violet Paroxyst? Can you explain how you got into music-making?

Wayback in the 3rd grade I had this old Mac desktop computer from one of my parents' work and I can't remember when, but I discovered and started messing around using GarageBand (the Apple music-making software). I started out just hitting random keys on my computer keyboard and I just made lots and lots of weird synthesizer music that way. I was going by the name Tomb of the Fluffies for years, which is just a funny name my sibling made up. I changed my musical style a few times so I changed to just my full name for a few years, but I came up with the name The Violet Paroxyst two years or so ago. I basically searched the internet for archaic terms no one uses, which I do a lot to name tracks. I came across the word paroxysm, which means a violent or forceful

release of energy. I was getting into more heavy and loud rock-infused music, so I thought it fit really well. I'm the one who makes the music, so I made up the word 'paroxyst' to mean 'one who makes forceful releases of energy happen'. I like both the sound of the word and the color violet. I've added a lot of harmonic guitars into my music so I had to put some sort of color in there to convey the sort of moodiness and rich timbre (texture) I find harmonic minor scales and music have.

What are your influences, stylistically and thematically? What experiences or identities are most influential to your process?

I really like the sound of contemporary avant-garde synth and symphonic music, which isn't really a defined category, so I'll list a few names; Philip Glass and Arvo Pärt. Philip Glass is well known for composing mathematically derived piano and synth music. And Arvo Pärt writes contemporary choral music inspired by Gregorian chanting. Both of them have written very interesting and different music. I also in the past year got really inspired by various metal styles, including death metal and melodic death metal. I really enjoy listening to the band Fleshgod Apocalypse, which combines Italian opera with death metal. I'm also a fan of Brian Eno. I listen to different musical styles and if there's certain elements I like I

just absorb into my own style, which right now includes a ton of different categories: synth suite, metal, punk, symphonic chamber music, doom (metal), and a bunch of other ones. I really like having a Wild West sort of sense of mystery and adventure (and danger), as well as the aesthetic of wide open spaces and venturing out into this unexplored frontier of sound. I like communicating an emotional sort of investment in my art.

I use a wheelchair and because of my condition I don't have the ability to use much musical equipment outside of my computer and my phone, so I focus more on the software side of music-making. I've never recorded a live instrument myself in my life.

What would you like people to know?

My primary method of making music is experimentation, to an extreme degree, and I like my music to turn out sounding raw yet complete. I'm thinking of working with live vocals sometime in the future so if anyone at Evergreen wants to do something like recording live vocals (no particular talent needed, doesn't even have to be intelligible) or anything musical virtually they can email me at thevioletparoxystmusic@gmail.com and I'll consider it. I haven't done much collaboration but I'm very open to it.



Videodrome Retrospective

by Alice McIntyre

Videodrome (1983), directed by David Cronenberg and starring James Woods, is a sci-fi horror classic. It chronicles the descent of TV executive Max Renn (Woods) into a derealized nightmare by way of the ultraviolent program known as, well, "Videodrome." The film is well and truly terrifying—not only by way of its incredible special effects and the atmosphere of dread it cultivates, but for the questions it raises about the future of mankind.

Over the course of the film it is made apparent that Videodrome is no ordinary piece of snuff television. Exposure to Videodrome causes Max to develop vivid hallucinations, involving everything from slapping a coworker to being swallowed by a speaking, breathing television screen. The worlds of flesh, mind, and representation merge as one—and this is the essential subject of the film.

"The television screen is the

retina of the mind's eye" and "long live the new flesh," these two mantras express a core recognition of the increased inseparability of human mind and being from the tools of its expression. To the martyred Dr. Brian O'blivion (Jack Creley), such a connection was a tool which could be used to open a new frontier for humanity. Those in control of Videodrome, Spectacular Optical (a manufacturer of eyeglasses and missile guidance systems), thought similarly—but with a much different end in mind. Videodrome, which causes the development of an undefined tumor-organ in the viewer's brain, would be used to purge Western society of undesirable elements that would be attracted to its graphic content.

The name "Spectacular Optical" recalls the notion of the *spectacle* in critical theory, a generalized detachment of image from reality and mediation of social relations

through these images, essentially an advanced form of what Karl Marx referred to as "commodity fetishism," where the products of human labor become autonomous beings, bearing their own characteristics and identities beyond their basic function. Shoes cease to simply be shoes—now they connote slogans, "just do it," feelings of adventure and urgency. In the age of omnipotent media, individuals are increasingly reduced to cultivated images, representations of what we wish ourselves to be and for others to perceive us as. Further, in a period where interactions beyond the constraints of social media are difficult and even dangerous, the lines of demarcation between the worlds of image and reality are increasingly blurred.

The utopian Dr. O'blivion and the shadowy goons of Spectacular Optical represent the dual nature of mediated interactions. In the vision of O'blivion one may imagine the

anonymity of the early internet, the camaraderie of tight-knit niche communities, the flexible modes of expression enabled by avatars and profiles, the deluge of creative content from the past two decades, unprecedented access to information, and the ability to communicate near-instantaneously from across the planet. In Spectacular Optical the flipside manifests: cyberwarfare, disinformation campaigns, inescapable advertising, breeding grounds for far-right violence, expanded routes for (genuine) criminal activity, and new methods of mass surveillance.

Long live the new flesh?

Verdict: VHS Tape/10. Tried and true.

Have a movie or other piece of media you'd like to see reviewed? Email us with your suggestions at cooperpointjournal@gmail.com!

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WA Climate Assembly Offers New Path

by Jacob Anderson-Kester

On January 12th, 80 Washington residents gathered virtually for the inaugural meeting of the United States' first Climate Assembly. The Washington Climate Assembly presents a unique angle to paths towards direct democracy by utilizing community conversation and action, mirroring similar pursuits in countries around the world that request input for policy from members of local communities. After gathering and discussing over the course of several months, the Assembly will present their findings and opinions to the Washington State Legislature and the general public. By asking participants to think honestly and critically about climate concerns, participants are unfettered by the political ties and funding interests that might make conversations about climate more difficult in the halls of our Capitol.

These Washingtonians were selected randomly, with some benchmarks in mind to represent the various identities and geographic regions making up the diverse interests of the state. After some opening statements, the meeting began by grounding the conversation by asking participants to consider their feelings on statements such as, "We can't all get what we need," and, "It's important that we all look out for each other, so nobody struggles on their own." Then, members split off into Zoom breakout rooms to discuss questions such as, "What preferred future do you envision 50 years from now?"

The approach used in these meetings to encourage frank and open conversation bear a striking resemblance to The Evergreen State College's own variation of the Socratic seminar, a sort of group conversation guided by questions. Assembly members hear presentations given by various qualified scientists, researchers, and community leaders, then are given spaces to listen to each other and present their own commentary on the issues at hand. This method is both educational and action-oriented, and participants are granted a platform that many would otherwise not get the

opportunity to have.

Besides being informative to the public and policymakers, the Washington Climate Assembly stands to serve as an example for the rest of the nation. Ron, a member of the Assembly from Moses Lake, had this to say: "Washington State seems to be in a prime location and have the ability to be the example for the rest of the nation if we choose to be...and I see that as why this opportunity to get together and think as one, collectively, can be so powerful, because we can then be the example for the nation if we come up with ideas and share our knowledge and can harness it."

In a country plagued by misinformation and legislative gridlock, alternative ideas for communication offer a path forward. The climate crisis has a global scientific consensus of being absolutely necessary to mitigate and handle, as determined by treaties such as the Paris Agreement. Inaction stares in the face of an impending global disaster. Ed Chadd, a volunteer helping organize the Assembly, seemed to have a similar outlook, telling me, "I got involved out of a sense of despair that our 'green state' with a 'climate governor' has only taken baby steps toward mitigating climate change, and that despair was reinforced during the 2020 legislative session." Indeed, we seem to only be walking inches at a time when great leaps need to be taken to, at the very least, be prepared for what is to come, and try to do our best to change our ways in order to prevent the very worst.

Policy change can happen immediately, but conversations about the climate need to find new ways to reach people. Scientists and experts have done their absolute best to inform the public on their findings, but America remains divided on the issue; a Pew Research poll conducted in 2020 found that 40% of Americans disagree that climate change is a major threat. These numbers are considerably better than a decade prior, but still remain as a major obstacle, especially when noting that the debate remains largely partisan,



with the same poll tallying 88% of Democrats believing that climate change is a major threat versus 31% of Republicans. The slow spread of recognition of the problem at hand is concerning, since acknowledging an issue is only the first step towards finding solutions to it. The clock is ticking, and the way in which we access our news and information only seems to be getting more problematic. A study conducted by Statista found that over half of respondents felt that online news websites regularly publish fake news stories, with the overwhelming majority of them believing that online news is at least occasionally fake. The public belief that there is a problem with misinformation is telling of an atmosphere where deception is a key force in the ever-evolving ways we learn things through the internet.

To that end, the Washington Climate Assembly stands as a shining example of breaking through the confusion of what is fake and true and the murky waters of 'alternative facts'. By placing a focus on group conversation and close listening, the Assembly is encouraging candid confrontation with beliefs and opinions, creating a method for differing world views to engage with one another in a place that is not a Facebook comment section or a holiday dinner. Assembly member Barry from Bellevue notes, "There are going to be a lot of different factions of people, which I think is going to be really important, because something that I wouldn't think about, somebody else would think about." Members have an opportunity to show their

preconceptions and place them alongside others, forming new conclusions and allowing stronger, more developed ideas to generate.

Doug Schuler, former Evergreen professor and founder of the Public Sphere Project, which helped locate funding for the Washington Climate Assembly, told the CPJ that "climate assemblies are ways to try to bring people back in, because they are so detached." Detached is the key word here, as social media algorithms and certain narratives have disillusioned people from engaging with the communities that surround them for the belief that their particular ideological box is the only true representation of reality. People ought to utilize technology in creative ways in order to reattach to conversations about the various issues the United States and the world faces, where they feel their voice is heard and also accept that their opinions might change when presented with new information. The Washington Climate Assembly promotes a similar perspective, and hope can be had that processes such as these can serve as an example for other places around the country that could also benefit from original approaches to confounding problems.

The Washington Climate Assembly is still ongoing, with the eventual report & recommendations of the Assembly to be released in March. You can view the previous and upcoming Assembly meetings and read more about the project on their website, waclimateassembly.org.

Getting Started with Sustainable Living:

An Interview with Forest Ember, an Evergreen Student

by Natalie "Lee" Arneson

What first started you with sustainable living—why'd you first decide to start that kind of lifestyle?

There were a lot of rolling blackouts in California maybe 15 years ago, and it turned out that it was people trading on the stock market. They were all messing with the electricity and basically turning it off and on to drive up the prices of the stocks. People were on ventilators and in hospitals, and dying, and it was really hot. Elderly people and sick people couldn't have air conditioning and people were dying of that. It was really, really insane. Originally it started that I just wanted to be in control of having my own power and electricity and not have to count on whoever it is that's trading our stuff and the stock market people—just not rely on them to take care of me. So that kind of planted the seed.

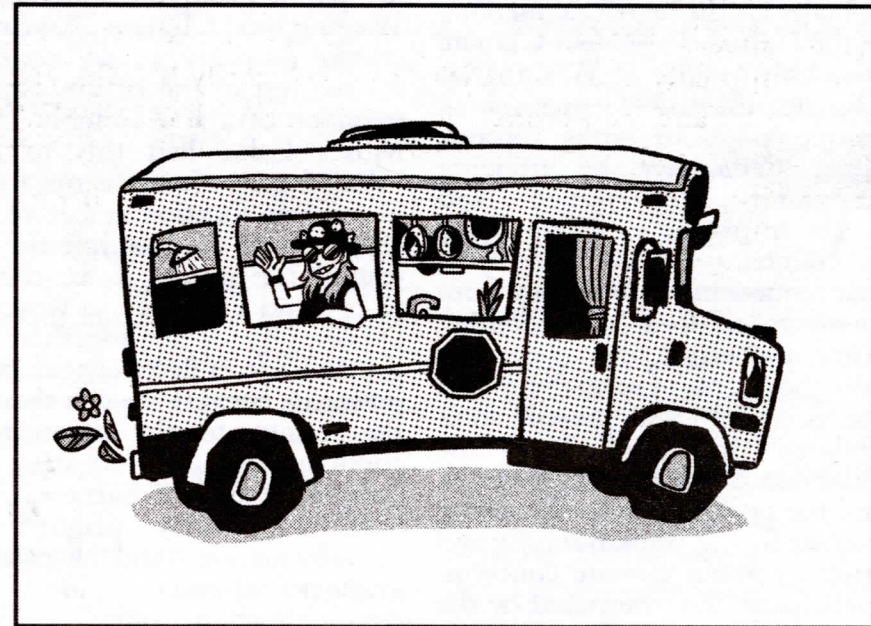
What would you say was one of the first steps you took towards sustainable living—whether it be a small step or a big shift in how you lived previously?

I think, probably the first little easy step would be shutting off lights when I left the room and being mindful of not leaving the water running if I'm brushing my teeth or washing dishes. Not using air conditioning.

If you don't mind me asking, what is your current living situation?

I moved into the bus on the Fourth of July—my independence from living in a house with a bunch of people—and it's been really interesting. I live on the Key Peninsula in the woods and turns out the solar [panels] was really tricky to figure out. I just got it figured out at the end of the summer, so I don't have it hooked up yet. I really focused on the water system right away. I have four 55 gallon barrels, like those big blue ones that you see, and the plan is to set up a way to catch the water in there. It'll be like gutters running on the side of the bus that go down into the barrels and there'll have to be a series of strainers on it. It'll have a screen-type strainer on the top layer so that stuff doesn't fall into it, and inside it'll have another filter that filters any potential algae or grimy stuff in there, and then likely I'll have a third filter before it hits the water pump, just to be safe. 'Cause there's different filters; some of them filter out chemical stuff, and some of them do more like live bacteria and giardia stuff. So from everything I've seen, it's good to have both of those on there.

For now I have it hooked up where I use the neighbors' water from outside of their house, and I hook up this three or four hose situation, and then I hook those up to me and I fill the barrels up with the hose. I put together this tub that you stick in the barrel, and this accordion



thing with a little knob on the top that you pump, and there's a little hose where the water comes out. I got a water pump now, and so the water pump pumps it into the bus so I can get water out of my faucet. And then I have a water heater that runs on propane so I can have hot water too. So it just pumps it from the outside barrel, and when I turn it to hot it activates the propane heater, and this loud woosh sound goes on and there's flames in there. Every now and again I'm like 'is it exploding?!' 'what's going on?' It's a really different lifestyle to get used to—all these open flames and containers of propane, and they make weird hissing sounds and sometimes it feels like it's maybe leaking. Yeah, a lot of things I didn't think of. Y'know, you just turn your sink on at home and there's the water, and it never crossed my mind 'how did it get to my sink?' It has really opened my eyes. I'm very appreciative of things a lot more now.

So living in the bus—setting all that up and getting it going to a place where you're happy with it and it's livable—is expensive?

It has been a lot more expensive than I had planned on. But there's some reasons why, and if you wanna buy a sustainable materials, it costs like three or four times the regular price. Like insulation you can buy that cheap pink foam insulation and it works well, but it's not decomposable and it's not recyclable, and there's chemicals in it. I went with the sustainable material which are wool and it was like four times more expensive to do it that way. And sometimes the sustainable way needs more. I can take more of the sustainable insulation to insulate than it would the crappy foam insulation. I was also expecting there to be more stuff I could get at salvage yards and from the resale stores, but everything is real expensive at those places.

Sustainable Living, cont.

now because everybody is doing art projects or home projects with that stuff. Before, people didn't want it, but now—especially since COVID happened and everyone is home—everybody is doing all the projects and so the prices have all gone up. Like at the junk yard, it's stupid high. Also the bus was pretty expensive. I made a mistake and just bought the first one I looked at, which after doing a lot of research that's like the number one no-no. If I could go back, I'd definitely take at least a year to research what I'm looking for in a bus because there's so many different things. Like, do you want it to be gasoline or diesel? Do you want it to have a front engine or a back engine? What year do you want it to be? How many miles? There's so many different things, but I wasn't actually planning on buying a bus. It kind of just happened. I had a truck that I totalled, so I was on Craigslist looking for a truck/van/bus, that category. I set an alert for Craigslist to email me if anything came up, and so I get this message and it's like 'there's this bus' and I was like 'why are they sending me this?' And it was way out of my price range, I don't know why it came through, but I was like 'yeah, actually that looks awesome!' That month, I hosted two events so I made some money from that, and I had just gotten my tax return, and I had just gotten my financial aid—like that was the only month in the entire world of my life that it would've worked out.

It's been such a learning experience because my Josh and

I have no experience and have never even been in a renovated school bus and we just tackled it. He's the woodworker, so that was really helpful, and I'm a 'visionary.' Basically I'm like 'this is what I want' and Josh is just like 'that's impossible' and I'm like 'no it's not, let's do this!' and then we kinda just talk until something happens in the middle of impossible and practical. Oh! Craigslist free section is the bomb. I highly recommend using that, especially if you're down to drive. It took me to a lot of places in Washington I'd never been, like cool, little old towns and fun, windy roads. Just weird, in the middle of nowhere places, or cute little downtown areas, or people's big fancy houses. It's really neat, and then you get the backstory to the thing, and you get to see where it's coming from, and you get to tell them what you're doing with it. That was awesome when that was working out.

Is there anything you feel is most pertinent about starting to live more sustainably, or just any last remarks?

I would definitely say when thinking about sustainability, this was a lesson that I learned, it also needs to mean a lifestyle that you can sustain. An example would be, 'I'm just going to go live in the woods, and I'm not going to have electricity or water, and everything's just going to be just fine!' And then it was like, 'well, actually that sucks, and that's not working, and now I'm buying jugs of water that are made of plastic from the grocery store 'cause

I'm not hooked up to a water source.' That's not sustainable—it wasn't sustainable for me. I couldn't sustain living that way without having to go buy jugs of water, and so it's really doing a lot of self-reflection of what do I need? Okay, yeah, I do need running water, and that's okay. Because I need to be healthy. Like, I was trying not to drink water and getting dehydrated and sick, and it's like 'okay, no. That's not going to work for me.' So yeah, thinking of sustainability in a way that's not just good for the Earth, but in a way that you can actually sustain. Otherwise it doesn't matter anyways if you're good to the Earth for a couple weeks or months and then you're like 'I can't live this way' and then you stop. That's not good for anyone.

Before I moved into the bus, I started noticing everything I did, like 'oh, I leave the water on when I wash dishes, what would it look like if I had limited water?' I might get a little bucket and put everything in there, and use that water, get it all soapy, wipe everything down, and then pour that water out, fill it up again, and rinse it and pour it out. And then I used hardly any water. Also, if you're going to move into a tiny home or a bus or a van, it's really important to have several sources of heat and ways to cook. Right now, I have a propane stove and I also have an electric hot plate. So, if I run out of propane and I have electricity, I can plug that in and that can work. Or, if I'm somewhere that doesn't have electricity and I only have propane, then that

works. And it's for heat too. I have electric heat, so when I'm plugged in that works. And I also have a diesel heater that runs off a 12 volt battery so that I can use it without electricity. And if for some reason I don't have diesel, I'm also installing a wood-burning stove. So, ideally, I'll have either access to wood or diesel or electricity at any given point in my journey so I wouldn't freeze and would be able to make food. That was a really good thing to learn.

Lastly, I guess would be, for me, when I was working on this project—I mean I'm always going to be working on it, I'm still working on it—but, doing the research, and physically doing the work on it, and figuring it out, gets really overwhelming and exhausting because it's never going to be done. The second you do a thing you find out a better way to do it or you're just always learning, and it's just never done. So, it's been really helpful for me to also be doing other small projects that can get finished while I'm also doing this big one. Because I wasn't doing that, and it's just really taxing and really frustrating and sad. I was getting mad at the bus, so doing smaller projects that you can see to the end in a shorter amount of time is really helpful. It's a huge undertaking, and it can be very stressful, and ideally it should be kind of fun. And, yeah, I guess that's it.

