

Issue 1: Goodbye Seattle

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Publishing Remarks

This zine was created with love in the late summer and early fall of 2024. This print is one of a limited release, which shall never be distributed again.

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This zine belongs to:

Grace Chen

Forward, on Bildungsroman

The birth of the bildungsroman is usually dated to the publication of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1796, or, sometimes, to Christoph Martin Wieland's *Geschichte des Agathon* of 1767. However, the popularization of the coming-of-age story at such biological delay (teenage-hood at 12-18 years) is actually a 20th century concept, being that in earlier farming based societies, adulthood was reached as soon as one was able to work the field and earn his keep (oh, to be a grown woman in the 16th century peasant class at the ripe age of 10 years old). Now, the human life expectancy is at a new all-time high every year, and in response, modern societies are lengthening the childhood all the time. They keep us in school for longer; they keep us innocent until they can't. My little brother will be able to legally drink by November. My dad laughed when he heard this, saying he had his first drink at 13.

But at 23, I still feel I am coming of age. What do our ancestors think of our late bloom? Do they see us from up there (or down there, depending on how good they've been), toddling through our overgrown, yet under-developed 20s-hood, rolling their eyes at us? We, who do not work the field or earn our keep, we who wear clothes of uncertain selves, we who know almost nothing besides our own names...how small we must seem to them. At my age, my grandma was married with her first child. She had already been forced to learn a new way of life under Japanese occupation, and she did not yet know that in a few years, she would need to move from her village to Seoul in order to escape the warpath.

Then again, it seems like just yesterday I got to Earth through the portal of my mother, and already, my mother is my own daughter, who wanders through the world, so vulnerable to its dangers. (In June she fell for another internet identity theft scam, this time releasing her SSN...) I made her watch a video about phishing, but I can't bring myself to blame her for her innocence, which has somehow survived sweetly through all this persistent madness. There is a powerful

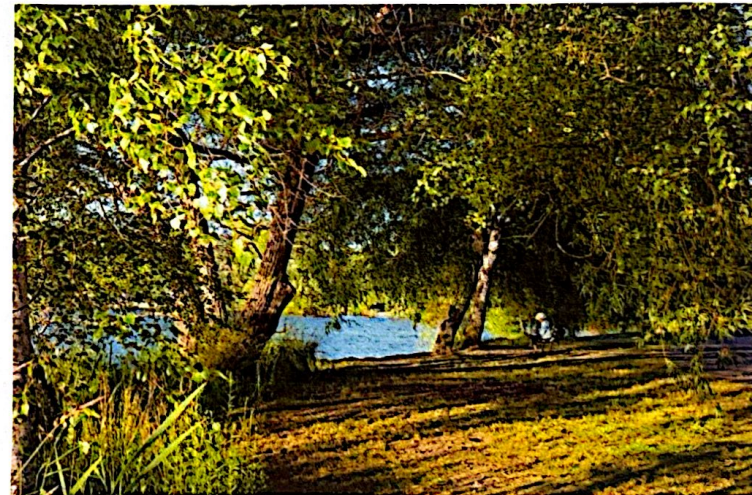
satisfaction in protecting my own protector, but it makes me feel both too young and too old. I should be used to it by now: I was a child the first time I filed her taxes, and when I was seventeen I taught her the words white people use against us, so that she would know how they play their games before I left for college. I am not big enough to protect her, but I am her only option. I already feel underqualified for my ever-mounting responsibilities, and yet I also feel falsely cloistered in the manufactured longevity of modern childhood — this paradox has been on my mind the last three years. It has been the constant refrain: Shouldn't I know how to be by now?

Nobody seems to know when we are supposed to stop feeling this way, but sometimes there is light that cracks through in bits and pieces. Seattle is the beloved site of my first adult years (the second childhood): from my first day at my big-girl job to that last summer. As such, my coming of age is soaked through with the liquid of this place. I finally feel like I might even be figuring stuff out now: how to be, who to be, what we owe each other, and what we owe ourselves. What follows is a reflection on my Seattle Bildungsroman, an homage to all the wonderful things that only exist here, and how they have changed me — How they have filled me up, and sewn me in. I couldn't leave without a proper retrospection. Thanks for reading my Goodbye Seattle Issue. I hope you like it! I really hope you like it.

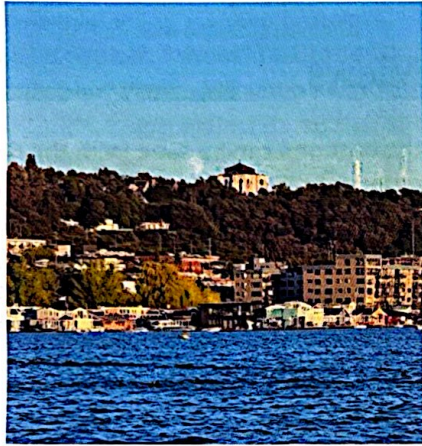
Classic Seattle Views

The tragedy of it is that the best one can be seen from the 520 bridge on a clear day (looking to the right if traveling east, and to the left if traveling west), which means I never got to take a picture since I'm always the one driving. Photo 1 is the Mountain over Lake Washington (which looms elegantly over the water like a forgiving guardian, a new testament God). That is my favorite view, here are some other ones I like:

1. Woman at Greenlake, reading



2) Capitol hill, as seen from the Burke-Gilman near Gasworks, the moon just cresting above the horizon:



3) The view from Golden Gardens: in the distance, the Olympic Mountains. At night, the seals here bark like they are mobsters and I have serious debts...and they get so close to shore.



Lessons from Corporate

Of all places, the office is the site of my first encounter with functional self-compassion. I'm not sure why there is heart in such a heartless place, but as I sip the corporate kool-aid, I notice that it is tasting pretty good sometimes.

Corporate has taught me that shame is irrelevant. When you write a bug in the code, you feel horrible for waking up Karel who handles it perfectly at 2AM, and who does not blame you at all. You apologize profusely, but then you simply get to work.

You figure out what was wrong, and you pull out the shiny nugget of knowledge that teaches you something: a new edge case, how to design resiliency etc. Karel asks you to solve the systemic fragility which allowed this bug to pass validation, so you do. Insanely, he thanks you for your hard work. *He thanks you!*

He already knows the truth at the bottom of the mistake, which is that you can only learn what you have not known before, and he is trying to show you this. The next time you are woken up by someone else's bug, you forgive them just like Karel forgave you. Just like you forgave yourself. You are shocked to learn how easy it is.

Of course, you knew these things to be true before you worked in corporate (you've heard about it from books and your friends with Nice Families), but you grew up in a house where, if you spilled the cereal milk, you had to kneel in it. So when you have lost your keys all these 23 years before you met Karel, you were so disgusted with your own carelessness. Your flaws so obvious, and so deep, not like the flaws of others which seem charming and easy to love. Instead, every mistake became a lump in the throat which grew and grew and never went down.

Karel never actually tells you to forgive; He simply chews and swallows. He does it so easily, it looks natural. You ape him until you believe him, and eventually, you do.

They will try to tell you that the shame and anger and humiliation is didactic. They will try for decades to sell you this lie because they don't know how else to explain how cruel they have been to you, how cruel their fathers have been to them, and their fathers and their fathers and on and on. It's just not true. They have never worked at Microsoft, I guess.

A Modest Room (San Jose in October)

In my mother's backyard
in the Californian October,
there is only one spot of shade that is protected all day.

We put a desk there to make a little room.
Some chairs,
The dog,
A peach, she cuts into seven
imperfect slices.

From here, we can see the hummingbirds dancing
in the dome of rain shower blooming up from the garden hose.

From here, the lemons are hard
and green.
And nothing bad has happened yet.

So little is needed
in the light.



A Long Season of Color (Seattle in June)

This year, the summer has arrived early.

The light, for example, is burning my cheeks at midday already.
And the fig tree's fruit are swelling fecund with sun-milk,
pregnant with it, so that nectar drips
sweetly through the skin of each perfect berry.

Also, the dogwoods are in peak bloom.
The branches: wide, wedding cake tiers, frosted thickly
with brilliant white flowers.
The blooms last about six weeks and gradually fade
to pink, giving a long season of color.
I think they look just like paper.
The ocean is warmer too,
so that the children at the beach can sit in the lapping tides,

inspecting the sand for unnatural glimmers:
Shells, glass, the like,
and you. Your eyes also are beginning to glimmer
unnaturally at this time.
Thus nature conspires to please me.

Yet this year, the summer has deepened me
so that when a wind blows east, my toes
root stubbornly into the coolness of deep sand
and they resist. They are resisting
in that futile but spirited way
a young willow on a soft embankment leans
and leans before it falls. The same way
you comfort a fussy baby when you are not her mother,
the same way
you hold yourself.

This year, I find myself wishing the season would delay a bit longer —
wishing the ocean a bit colder, and the figs, a bit greener,
so that I might believe that time is not so dispassionate to me.

Only in the summer, it seems possible to appeal to Time like this:
"Won't you just make a small exception for me? I have never asked
before. I have been very good! Just once."

For only one moment she holds me in her sympathy...And then she
forges on.

She does not look back at me a single time. I am left watching the
dogwood blossoms gradually fade to pink.

On Gentrification

I don't have anything smart to say about this. I love Seattle, and it completely flattens me to know that I'm part of what's hurting it. None of us knows how to accept the way love changes what it's drawn to.

But helplessness is also a cop out. What makes me a gentrifier? I have the social and economic power to move with freedom through this world which means I am going where the going is good (to the cities). This power, its unequal distribution, is what ejects the living residents, raises the cost of living, and pools water around the island of urban elitism that Seattle is becoming. I am the wind moving the sand, and I am making the pool deep enough to drown in.

But! The nice thing about being a gentrifier is that I have more leverage to bend forces toward fairness. We can use this power. Advocate for higher income taxes on the tech-money. Vote for the socialist candidate who funds affordable housing. Spend money at the farmer's market, and tip well. I can act like it's a privilege to be here, because it is. I am taking up space and I won't forget how grateful I am supposed to be. I am paying back my debt to the city and her people.

It's about caring, and acting on that care. Getting involved in my new community is first on my laundry list. This year, I'm going to know my mayor's name (Eric Adams? Will he step down for God's sake???) I didn't know Bruce Harrell's name for the three years I lived in Seattle, but I'm being better this year! That's the thing about years, they just keep coming; Time forgives you every day. She always believes you can be better. I won't disappoint her!

Bathroom codes in the city because the toilets belong to the people!!!

- Lost Lake Diner in Capitol Hill: 1218
- Retreat Cafe in Greenlake: 0138
- Tea Republik in the University District: 3838
- Pointdexter Cafe/Graduate by Hilton Hotel in the University District: 9472, the bathroom is through the lobby, and down the stairs, turn when you see the enormous basketball cardboard cutout
- Come buy tea in Capitol Hill: 888999#
- Mighty-o donuts/Sweet alchemy on NW Market street in Ballard: 2110
- Elliot Bay Books in Capitol Hill: 8364 but they change this one sometimes because they have caught onto our schemes

Acknowledgments

Heartfelt thanks to all those who I have had the immense privilege of loving. I would be nothing without that love. That being said, I feel that I also owe some gratitude to my enemies:

Thank you, to my awful high school economics teacher, Gregory Sandmeyer, who never stopped trying to convince me that climate change is leftist propaganda and who clearly hated his wife. He did more to radicalize me than any other singular person. I'm so glad he's retired now.

Thanks, also, to my work nemesis [Name redacted because we actually might be becoming friends], for giving me the confidence I needed to disregard the opinions of unqualified men.

Finally, to William Kim, the second worst roommate I've ever had; thank you. Your three hour shit-and-shower nightly bathroom routine drove me to discover a base and feral animal inside of myself, which I have never met hitherto, or indeed since. Ultimately, I needed access to that rage to be my most authentic self. You made me pee in the bushes behind our apartment and I will never forgive you for that.

And finally...a little something for you. (It's like a reward)



I'm so happy
we are in New York
together 4/10