



DEREK
BEAULIEU

DEREK
BEAULIEU



Layout & Design: Erica Smith

Publisher: Jim Johnstone

Anstruther Press

Printed in Canada

First Edition – 50 copies

ISBN 978-1-988774-21-0

In 2015, NASA and ESA scientists, when examining the results transmitted from the Hubble Space Telescope, met the gaze of something unexpected. Albert Einstein proposed a century ago, as part of his theory of relativity, that gravity could bend light. He continued to theorize that an optical illusion would result when a massive object acts like a lens, bending light to curve in a partial or full circle. Galaxy clusters SDSS J1038+4849 glow orange, perched over a curve caused by gravitational lensing, the process where light is bent and distorted into what is known as an *Einstein Ring*. This illusion creates an arc under the two orange galaxial glimmers. Two dots and an arc—an intergalactic smiley-face 3 billion light years in the making. Two dots and a line. Dit. Dit. Dah.

In Morse Code two dits and a dah encodes the letter “U”—and SDSS J1038+4849, with their two dots and a line—two dits and a dah—arranged in a smiley face, reaches across the galaxies to send a message calling to “you”, “you”, “you”.

In the summer of 1963 astronaut Gordon Cooper was working to answer that call. He was on board the Mercury Atlas 9 rocket, the final manned space mission of the US Mercury program, circling the Earth 22 times before splashing down in the Pacific Ocean. That same season 26-year-old Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to travel in space aboard Vostok 6 while Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc immolated himself on a street in Saigon and mourners passed Medgar Evers' open casket in Jackson, Mississippi. In the faces of these crises and in response to plummeting employee morale, State Mutual Life Assurance Company commissioned designer Harvey Ball to design an image which might distract disgruntled employees from the pressures of contemporary life.

Ball, who served in the US Army at the Battle of Okinawa, 27 years in the National Guard, and eventually retired as a full colonel, was no doubt fluent in the use of Morse Code and all too aware of the challenges of improving morale. He drew two off-centre dots and an arc and created the "smiley face" on a bright yellow background. Ball created the design in ten minutes and was paid \$45. He did not copyright his design. By mid-November President Kennedy was dead.

In 1970, as Apollo 11 astronauts transmit "Okay, Houston, we've had a problem here" and as US troops expand their hostilities by invading Cambodia, Philadelphia brothers Bernard and Murray Spain expand upon Colonel Ball's image by adding the mollifying soporific "Have a nice day." In 1972, the year that Nixon opens dialogue with China, the Spain brothers sell over 50 million yellow smiley face buttons and badges.

As Eugene Cernan becomes the last man to ever walk on the surface of the moon, France's Franklin Loufrani asserts copyright on Ball's smiley face design for his work in the "good news" section of the *France Soir* newspaper. Once again the sunflower-hued face of tranquilizing calm is capitalised in support of subduing citizens. Loufrani's "Smiley World" becomes an international business, marketing to the masses overseas.

Prez—the comic book teenage nominee for US President, written and drawn by Jerry Grandenetti, who served in the US Navy and Joe Simon who served in the US Coast Guard and created Captain America—struggled in the pages of his short-lived comic to convince the establishment that a teenage president would be good for the country. He was consistently thwarted by Boss Smiley, the head of the ultra right-wing militia who literally had a giant yellow smiley button for a head and a permanent empty smile plastered on his face.

The Comedian, the gun-totting, masochistic vigilante of Alan Moore's *The Watchmen*, plummets to his death during the apocalyptic vision of Nixon's never-ending presidency. His blood smears against his smiley face button, one of the 50 million buttons pinned on 50 million chests.

In 1977, as New York City is engulfed in darkness, and SETI receives the "Wow signal" from deep space, the smiley face appears as sleeve illustration for the UK vinyl release of the Talking Heads' "Psycho Killer." Two years later, as a Soviet biowarfare laboratory accidentally releases airborne anthrax spores killing 66 people and unknown herds of livestock, the smiley face illustrates the Nuremberg-style rallies for the Dead Kennedys as they yelled the lyrics "You will jog for the master race / And always wear the happy face."

Anonymous graffiti artist Banksy creates a series of murals which appear over night without witnesses or evidence. His murals feature a depiction of the Grim Reaper whose hooded visage has been replaced by the vacuous yellow disk of a smiley face.

New York city detectives Kevin Gannon and Anthony Duarte allege that the deaths of 45 young men across 11 states were the victims of the Smiley Face Gang. They claim the gang's existence after it was made public that the police had discovered smiley face graffiti near locations where the bodies were found. The response of law enforcement investigators and other experts have been largely skeptical.

Grunge band Nirvana swerves the smiley face for their "Corporate Rock Whores" t-shirt. There are two suggestions as to origins of their design. Perhaps it was stolen from the signage and "Have an erotic day!" slogan of the now-defunct Seattle strip club *The Lusty Lady*. Perhaps it was based on a sketch by Kurt Cobain of Axl Rose, trolling the Guns n' Roses frontman. The slogan on the back of the t-shirt, "Flower sniffin, kitty pettin, baby kissin corporate rock whores", could be a jibe at Rose's expense, although it may also have been Nirvana taking ownership of their own status as corporate sell-outs.

As personal computers and programmers expand their vocabulary to include non-alphabetic characters, they strive to include a typeable smiley face. They encode the smiley face's dit-dit-dah as U+263A. The galaxial greeting continues to transmit through the keys that we type.

In 1994 Nirvana's Kurt Cobain commits suicide days after sharing an airplane flight with Guns n' Roses' Duff McKagan. The same year, the film *Forrest Gump* depicts a clueless moron who sleepwalks through the coincidence of presence at many of key moments of American history and creates the smiley face logo when he wipes mud from his face onto a yellow t-shirt.

American corporate giant Walmart, one of the biggest employers in the world, incorporated the smiley face into its marketing scheme, using Colonel Ball's soporific to sell discount goods to suburbanites. As NASA launches the New Horizons space probe mission to Pluto, Walmart sues to wrest control of the copyright of the smiley face away from the Loufrani's Smiley World Corporation.

Walmart lost.

Have a nice day.

About the Author

Derek Beaulieu is the author/editor of over twenty-five collections of poetry, prose, and criticism. His most recent volume of fiction, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, was published by Sweden's Timglasen Editions, his most recent volume of poetry, *Surface Tension*, was published by Toronto's Coach House Books. Beaulieu has won multiple local and national awards for his teaching and dedication to students, the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal for this dedication to Albertan literature, and is the only graduate from the University of Calgary's Department of English to receive the Faculty of Arts 'Celebrated Alumni Award.' Beaulieu holds a PhD in Creative Writing from Roehampton University, has served as poet laureate of both Calgary and Banff, and the Director of Literary Arts at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

A

A