

Our Own Destiny ...

By Mike Trippitt

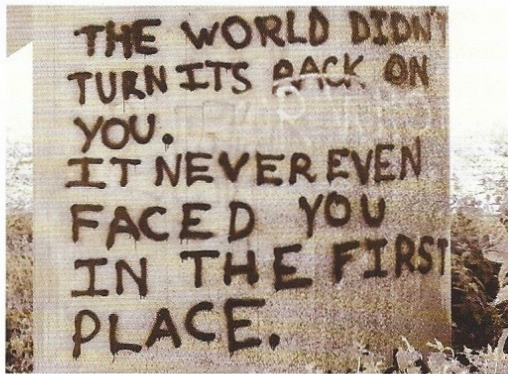
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THIS SUMMER I noticed some new graffiti on the St Ives bypass bridge. I stopped in my tracks and my upbeat mood drained as if being washed away by the passing waters of the Great Ouse:

*"The world didn't turn its back on you.
It never even faced you in the first place."*

For a moment I was shocked. The words on the concrete pillar were speaking directly to me. Not only was the vandal saying the world was against me, but that it has always been so. The world is a bad place; always was, always will be.

The message is a corruption of Timon's words to Simba in *The Lion King*: "When the world turns its back on you, you turn your back on the world", where the solution is put the past behind, have a problem-free philosophy and to live life with no worries – Hakuna Matata.

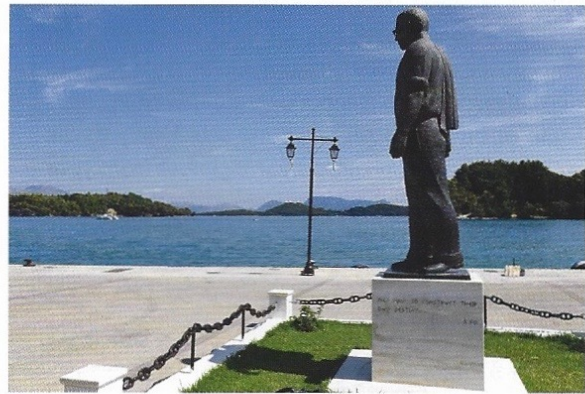


Each time I went past the graffiti on my regular walk I became angry. Not angry that the bridge was defaced again, but by the attitude behind the statement. That the world, or more personally, the people within it, were responsible for every misfortune that befalls us, that in some way they are out to get us, and that nothing is our fault.

A few weeks later I visited the Greek island of Lefkas. There in the town of Nidri, looking out over his private island Skorpios, stands a statue of the late Aristotle Onassis.

Up until his death in 1975, the Greek shipping magnate made billions of dollars by identifying opportunities, working them to his advantage and using his own skill and judgment to build a global business empire.

Love him or loath him, he did not sit around with a fake paranoia believing that the world had its back



to him, nor did he defile the bridges of Greece or St Ives. Instead, he believed that life was what we make it, and though we all start with nothing, we have the power to take ourselves where we want to go.

So were his spirit to join me on my walk under the bridge perhaps together we would scrub out the fatalistic nonsense that adorns it now and write the same words inscribed on the plinth of Onassis's statue in Greece:

"Men have to construct their own destiny."

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