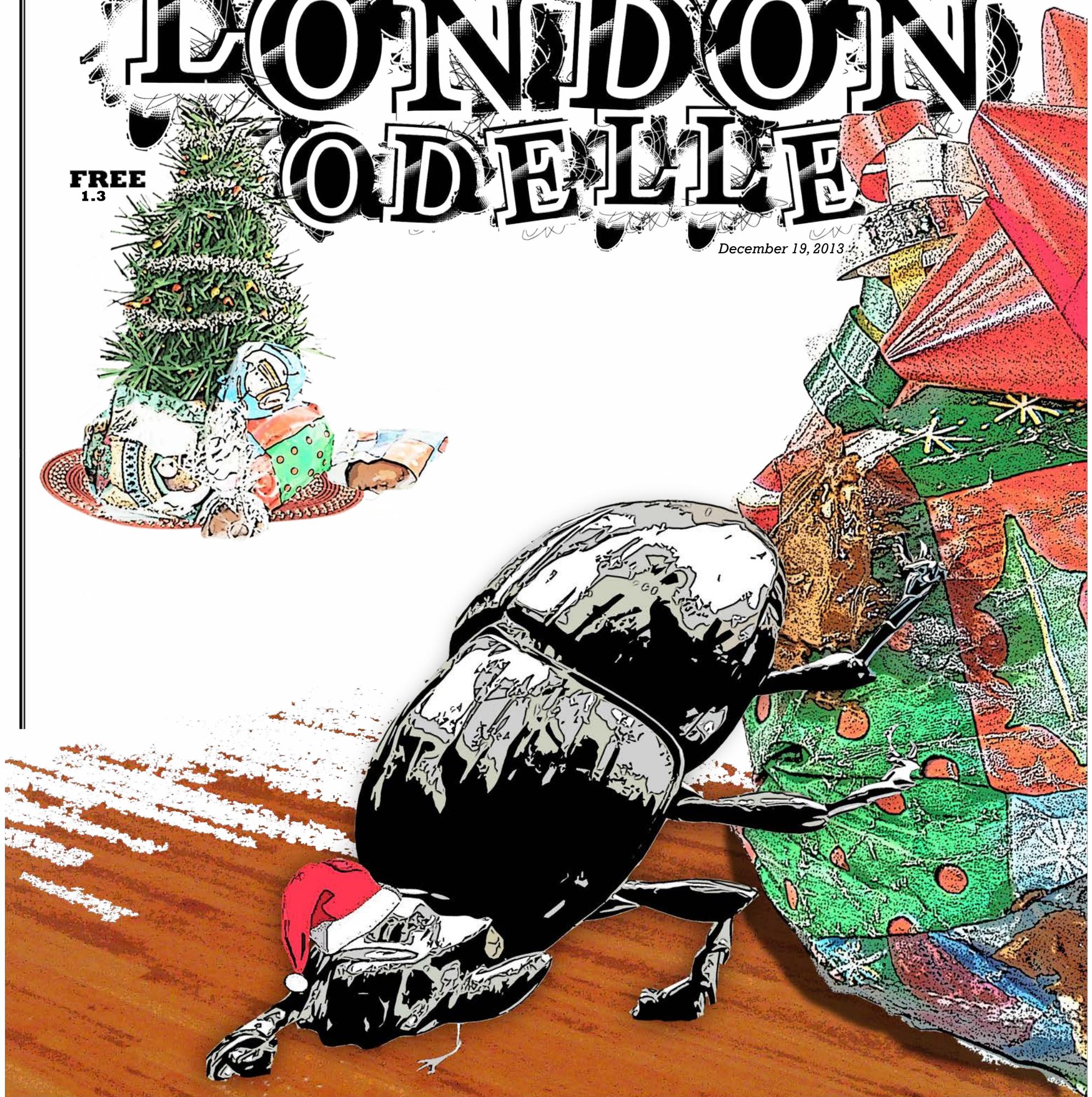


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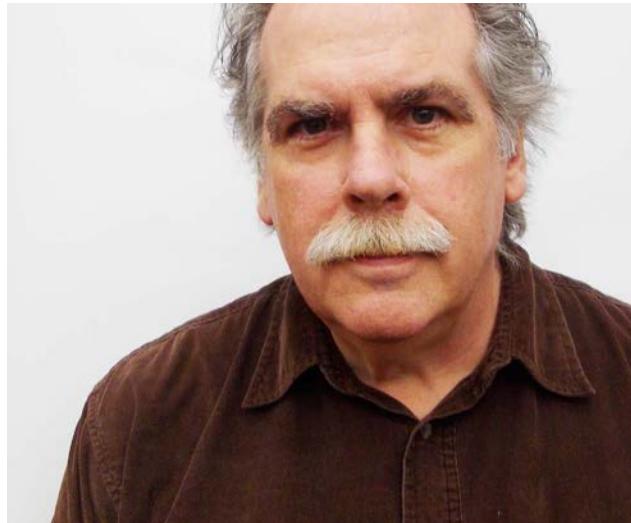
Herman Goodden

HERMENEUTICS

I was fascinated to read Vanessa Brown's column in the last Yodeller in which she discussed the heavy-handed and censorious tactics employed by liberals and lefties when they take to social media to criticize or smear some opinion or artistic act with which they disagree. I admit that my interest in her piece was somewhat heightened due to the fact that I was one of the subjects whose Facebook smiting she was examining. I trust it isn't a mark of pronounced vanity on my part to take a rather lively interest in an article in which I was characterized by people who've never met me as a 'jerk-off,' a 'wife-beater,' a 'homophobe,' a 'Rob Ford fan' and an 'anti-Semite'.

And what had I done to call down such an avalanche of calumny on my head? On November 16th I'd had a column published in The London Free Press decrying the stilted 'Shine the Light on Woman Abuse' campaign which is a month-long fund-raising campaign for the London Abused Women's Centre of which ex-City Councillor and London's foremost feminist scold, Megan Walker, is the executive director. I did not write that column because I approve of woman abuse and wish to see the practice of it flourish in an unencumbered way. (For what it's worth – not much, I know – I wish it would stop.) Rather, I wrote it out of my conviction that it is unfair and unhelpful to construe domestic violence in this absolutist, one-sided manner (in a nutshell: men bad/women good) that is so ceaselessly promoted by Walker's and other feminist organizations.

I might still think they were boring and naïve utopians but most of my objections to the Shine the Light on Woman Abuse campaigners would evaporate if they re-tagged it as something along the lines of Shine the Light on Domestic Abuse. See the difference there? It's subtle but trust me, it would make an enormous difference to a huge swath of the population - to men and to the women who care about the men in their lives – if men were not prejudged and maligned in this way without any consideration given to the two-way dynamic that often pertains when a relationship turns rotten. Re-named like that, Walker's campaign would



come with a built-in admission of the fact - evident to anyone with eyeballs to see - that men do not have the market cornered on meanness and bullying.

Granted, men will usually have the upper hand in an all-out physical showdown between a man and a woman, though a weapon of some kind can more than even out those odds as we have seen in such notorious cases as those of the willy-hacking Lorena Bobbitt and London's own Police Inspector and one-time Domestic Violence Co-ordinator for the London force, Kelly Johnson, when she shot and killed her lover and fellow officer (just after he announced that he wanted to return to his wife and children) and then turned the gun on herself.

The one-sided blindness of a campaign to end just the abuse of women becomes particularly obvious when you factor in some of the acts that are classified as acts of violence by feminist groups, such as, 'pushing', 'grabbing', 'threatening', 'slapping', 'throwing something', 'kicking' and 'biting.' Of course it isn't pleasant to be on the receiving or giving end of any of that stuff and we'd all like everyone to behave at all times with perfect decorum. But is anyone really surprised that such acts might erupt from time to time in the heat and tumult of our most intimate relationships? And can anyone cast their eyes down such a list and claim that those are acts that only evil, smelly men ever inflict on utterly innocent and blameless women? Heck, show that list to any kid and ask what's

being itemized there and I'll bet they might answer, 'Ways that girls fight?'

And speaking of fighting like a girl, I must say that the last few weeks have been a real education for me into the nature of what we rather vaingloriously call social media. I actually signed onto Facebook in the most minimal way possible five years ago (no picture, no lists of favourite books or movies or music) just to get access to a stash of photographs of a family gathering that had been posted there and was appalled at what a hollow festival of posing and preening and boasting it all was. When my son discovered that his girlfriend had added me to her Facebook list of friends, he announced, "That does it. I'm quitting."

"Please, not on my account," I said. "I've got my pictures. Let me quit. You're young. You're supposed to like this form of communication. I hate it."

He quit anyway, saying the superficiality of it all was getting to him. I instantly knew what he meant. Sorting through the 100 or so congratulatory missives from people who contacted me after I joined, I checked out the profile of a poet I barely knew who had added me to her list of 3,482 'Facebook friends'. Heck, she had 153 'friends' whose last names started with 'A'; all of them doubtless awaiting her every breathless announcement about what she'd eaten for lunch that day or the wild and crazy tricks that her cat got up to with a discarded wad of Christmas wrapping paper.

I knew Facebook was a trivial timewaster beyond compare but until this month when I sought out some of the conversational threads about moi that Vanessa quoted in her column, I hadn't fully appreciated its darker side as a casual conduit of witless misinformation and slander; one absurd claim leading to another and another while considerations about anything so jejune as evidence or citation or truth are blithely chucked out the window. It's a chilling representation of what we might call the 'hive mind' in action. In its un-reflectiveness and personal irresponsibility, it bears more than a little resemblance to a campaign that seeks to draw attention to a universal human ill by positing it as being entirely the fault of males.

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It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period.

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

It was only a year ago that the much ballyhooed predictions of a Mayan apocalypse failed to materialize. Yes, the doomsday rumours – that December 21 would bring either a new era of peace and understanding or end the world with a bang – failed to deliver. In other words, the conflagration the world had been promised was a dead bust.

Or was it? Did the dire predictions for 2012 foreshadow a year – 2013 – that, for many, would turn out to be an *annus horribilis* – a horrible year – from the Boston bombings and the unravelling of Syria, Egypt and the Arab Spring to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines?

Many first heard that arcane phrase in late 1992 when The Queen gave a speech marking the 40th anniversary of her accession to the throne. For her, 1992 was not a good year. Among other momentous British events that year, which included a sterling crisis, were a fire that ravaged Windsor Castle and the formal separation of Prince Charles and his wife, Diana.

“1992 is not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure,” Elizabeth said. “In the words of one of my more sympathetic correspondents, it has turned out to be an ‘*Annus Horribilis*’. I suspect that I am not alone in thinking it so. Indeed, I suspect that there are very few people or institutions unaffected by these last months of worldwide turmoil and uncertainty.”

Two decades on, it felt like that in Canada where, for many, 2013 was a difficult year, a year they can’t wait to end. It was also a year where, more than ever before, Canadians found themselves losing trust and confidence in their traditional institutions – from the banks and the government to media.

The reason? A growing sense they’re being manipulated by the very institutions on which they have so long depended. Part of their disillusionment can be laid at the feet of politicians and the media that advocate for them but only as long as their conduct is in lockstep with the reigning liberal pieties – from wealth redistribution to eco-chondria.

Which is why the Senate scandal — wherein four senators, one Liberal and three Conservative became the focus of claims they misused taxpayer dollars — continues to run and run. And why questions continue to be raised about who knew what and how high up in the government the scandal has reached. This, despite the relatively small amounts involved — amounts that would qualify as lunch money in Washington.

This is also why Premier Kathleen Wynne could yet be unseated for her Liberal Party’s wasting at least \$1.1 billion in taxpayers’ money by cancelling two gas power plants and closing down Ontario’s last coal plant. All for ‘green’ and politically expedient reasons, though she told a justice committee in early December that she wasn’t directly involved in her party’s decision to scrap the plants prior to the 2011 elections (even though she was the party’s campaign co-chair). Oh, and she recently paid Al Gore big bucks to give a global-warming-now-climate-change speech in Toronto, providing the latest example for why today’s financial-political complex – wherein clueless politicians spend your money on ‘progressive’ projects encouraged by cost-oblivious ‘experts’ with impunity – should be dismantled.

And why voters should beware Justin Trudeau, the new federal Liberal leader, whose policies invariably defer to such ‘experts’ on a wide range of topics from the ownership of the North Pole to marijuana use – with potentially disastrous consequences.

Take, for example, Eastern and Western Canada where the debate over the environmental impact of Canada’s resource development is threatening Canadian prosperity via the staunch opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline that would carry heavy crude from Alberta’s oilsands to the U.S. Gulf Coast. And in New Brunswick, a fight over fracking reached a tipping point as protesters clashed with the government and RCMP officers to prevent shale gas exploration. All these debates and protests are based on now discredited ‘science’ and the myth that the earth is fragile and can only be ‘saved’ by Al Gore’s carbon credits.

Preposterous!

Then there’s Rob Ford, the Toronto mayor who, despite admitting to out-of-control drinking and drug use, remains popular with 40% of Greater Toronto Area voters. While his supporters may not approve of his private habits, they sense

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a media persecution based on Ford’s politically incorrect (read illiberal) politics which favour lower city taxes and balanced budgets.

How will it end? For Ford, and for his counterpart, London mayor Joe Fontana, it remains to be seen how their fortunes will play out in the new year.

Ditto for the severity of the Canadian winter of 2013 and 2014 — a year already marked by unprecedented floods in southern Alberta, flash-flooding in Toronto and a typhoon that recently devastated the Philippines. Will Kathleen Wynne pay the price for the decisions that will cause our energy costs to skyrocket amidst increasingly arctic winters?

Meanwhile, as many Canadians were suffering personally from the private deaths of family and friends, and many others were suffering financial hardship due to job losses, plant closures and rising food prices, 47 Quebecers were killed in the town of Lac-Mégantic when an unmanned train carrying highly volatile crude derailed, exploded and incinerated the town.

Other casualties that made headlines were Nova Scotia teenager Rehtaeh Parsons, prompting a rallying cry against bullying. The death of Canadian actor and Glee star, Corey Monteith of a heroin and alcohol overdose also moved fans.

As did the death of Nelson Mandela which, in turn, prompted the lowering of flags to half-mast all over Canada and puzzled many Canadians. Why? For the simple reason that whatever their personal feelings for the South African icon were, he was not Canadian. Nor was his impact on Canada anything as great as the media insisted. while smiling and schmoozing world leaders gathered in Johannesburg to give speeches and take pictures of themselves.

All this signals what, in retrospect, may be further evidence of a general disconnect between the political-media-financial establishment and their voter/audience.

“I sometimes wonder how future generations will judge the events of this tumultuous year,” the Queen said of her *annus horribilis*. “I dare say that history will take a slightly more moderate view than that of some contemporary commentators. Distance is well-known to lend enchantment, even to the less attractive views. After all, it has the inestimable advantage of hindsight.”

Her majesty was correct, even sanguine. As ever.

Will 2014 be a better year?

Perhaps, particularly if a friend’s explanation for the travails of 2013 is accurate: “Y’know,” he said. “The hell of this year – and it’s really been hell from start to finish – may all be down to the number 13!”

How does London compare to other cities when it comes to profligacy?

Mary Lou Ambrogio

political heat



As we head into budget season, (or "Christmas", as some who are anxiously awaiting the delivery of goodies from City Hall might call it) perhaps we should look at some numbers. During the "giving season", a time when politicians are positively giddy with visions of sugarplums dancing in their heads, (too much egg nog?) maybe we should remind the would-be Santas on Council who they are "taking" from, when they "give" so generously.

Ah, budget time. A mere 3% you say? The price of a cup of coffee a day you say? Just one more wafer thin mint you say?

Don't believe for a moment that automatically raising taxes at budget time is a victimless crime. Unlike the toys that magically come together in Santa's workshop at no cost to anyone, the money needed to run the affairs of state does in fact have to come from real people. When politicians undertake feel-good wealth distribution schemes, completely detached from economic reality, their generosity disproportionately affects the working poor and those on fixed incomes who will struggle to keep up amidst the constant barrage of demands on their shrinking pay cheques.

As previously observed, analysis and metrics can leave people cold and unmoved while the emotional arguments employed by craven politicians tend to win hearts and votes. But, unless you want that draft you're feeling to get worse as your skyrocketing energy bills remain unpaid, it's time to get serious about the numbers. Fiscal conservatives who are concerned about current and future generations must insist that decisions at City Hall be made based on rational analysis, devoid of emotion.

To that end, perhaps we should look at an organizational report that was prepared for the City of Waterloo by KPMG, brought to my attention recently by Dr. Kim Ainslie, President of Nordex Research. It is worth looking at. Unlike the City of London which rather uselessly tends to compare itself to itself, this report looked at data from five comparator communities; Kingston, Kitchener, London, Newmarket and St. Catharines.

As Waterloo has been transforming from an agrarian community to a city that has become the "technological hub for much of Canada's major knowledge economy employers", the City of Waterloo felt a responsibility to ensure that the municipal services they were delivering were matching that pace of transformation.

"Council and its leadership team [in Waterloo] recognized a need for a review of the City's organizational structure to determine whether department functions and resources are suitably aligned with service demands in accordance with the City's strategic priorities."

How responsible and forward thinking! And how lucky for Londoners that the report contains information that may be useful for us to know during upcoming budget deliberations, as Dr. Ainslie points out.

The report is available on-line and among other interesting data to be found therein, you'll see that staffing levels at London City Hall are very high compared to those in other municipalities. In addition to that, it seems London has a very high full time to part time ratio. Is this yet another area where some prudent pruning could be employed in the Forest City?

When it comes to debt, it seems London carries the second highest debt load among the cities compared in the report with just under \$2,500.00 per household, while Kingston leads the pack with approximately \$4,000 per household.

So as not to appear too Scrooge-like (Bah, humbug!) and in an effort to spread some good cheer, London's residential taxes per household are the lowest. Yippee! But, before we allow ourselves to get too excited, it should be noted that this is due to the fulfillment of two years of the promised four year tax freeze we enjoyed in 2010 and 2011 before council abandoned their promise and went for the 1.2% increase in 2012. Alas and alack, hold onto your stockings for more bad news if you are prepared to leave the question of tax breaks in future years up to councillors of the Paul Hubert ilk. No doubt you will be losing your socks completely as they are already contemplating increases of up to 3%. Talk about blowing the tax freeze mandate; a mandate that received thousands more votes in 2010 for Mayor Fontana than the big spending plans of Joni Baechler, Nancy Branscombe or Matt Brown on the left wing.

On page 26 of the report, you will find a matrix called the "Issue of Affordability". On this question which looks at "income per household" relative to "residential taxes per household", we can visibly see where London sits relative to the comparator cities. London finds itself quite firmly in the quadrant that indicates that residential taxation is NOT affordable as compared to average household incomes. Merry Christmas!

As the report notes about the value of such a measure, while a municipality may have little control over household income levels (just ask Joel!) such a result should cause decision makers to look at service level adjustments as a way for London to potentially shift along the residential taxation axis towards a more hopeful place.

Oh, and London has the second highest level of reserve fund dependence at more than \$2,000 per household in reserve funds. Some people have a notion that socking funds into reserve funds is a good thing. In theory, perhaps, until you look at how councils have historically used these funds. In that light they appear more like current taxation without future accountability. From Section 4 of the Municipal Councillor's Guide provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs under "Reserves and Reserve Funds": "Usually, the use to which these discretionary reserve funds may be put is specified when the reserve or reserve fund is established. They generally may not be converted to other uses without council's approval." I rest my case.

In looking ahead to the upcoming election, let's hope we elect a majority of councillors who will be as careful with Londoners' pennies as Ebenezer Scrooge was with his own.

And, if it is true that we can change the future by revisiting our past, then the value of peering backwards at Ghosts of Council's Past will be in knowing how to avoid electing councillors who will deliver the status quo and instead elect those who will remain committed to a new way that will help us break with our over-spending ways.

Get thee hence Ghosts of Councils' past!

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The Yodeller Interview with Paul Hubert, Councillor for Ward 8

Vanessa Brown

You are one of the councillors I see downtown quite often. How does being downtown all the time change your perspective as a councillor?

First of all, I'm elected from Ward 8, but my title is City Councillor. I'm interested in the whole city, not just the little area of London that I'm elected from. Our downtown is so important to our identity and who we are as a city. Pretty much the whole time that I've lived in London, since I moved back here in 1999, I've been downtown. I've walked Dundas Street every day for fourteen years. This is where people work. This is where more and more people are living. This is the pulse of our city.

This is where people come to play as well, with our various arts organizations and restaurants. I have to say our restaurants are fantastic. You've got some really good restaurants downtown. It also gives me a perspective on some of the social issues. Because all our busses come to Richmond and Dundas, it is interesting. I'm a people watcher, so you see them coming and going. My office overlooks Dundas Street so it really gives me an interesting perspective on who is London and where London's going.

So when you're dealing with issues in Ward 8, does downtown come into play?

I represent my constituents, and many of them work downtown, many of them partake in various activities downtown. I do not believe that we should be as councillors - particularly without a Board of Control - that we can be ward-centric. I want to be a city builder and sometimes that means that we're investing in the infrastructure of Ward 8, which we're doing a great deal of. But at the end of the day, if we're going to attract businesses, if we're going to keep young people in the city of London, if there's going to be a buzz in the city, it's downtown. My twenty-something kids are downtown all the time going to this thing or that thing or this event or whatnot, which is cool. They really are not consumers of entertainment in the area where they live. They consume their entertainment downtown.

I am actually shocked when I hear of people from various parts of the city who say, "I haven't been downtown in 20 years." I'm kinda wondering where they've been to? Even my own history, growing up in Toronto by the airport, we went downtown every week. Our church was downtown. My father worked downtown. We went to the Toronto Symphony downtown. We went to other events downtown. We went to the CNE. It wasn't just that we were in the 'burbs. We went downtown. In a broader sense, when there are issues in Ward 3, I vote on those issues at council. So, in a sense, I have as much say as the Ward Councillor does in what happens there or doesn't happen there. He gives voice to those concerns, as he should, or she should. But I need to go out and look at them and feel them and sense what they are and really understand them, because at the end of the day, my vote counts.

If there's one thing you could do downtown, what would it be?

Do I only get one? Well, I think the discussion around a performing arts facility is a significant one. I think it is a good idea. I think we need to figure out how and at what cost. But I do think it is a good idea. Centennial Hall is not adequate. It's one of those decisions that's going to be about where are we going to be ten years from now? Is there ever a good time to do it?

I think a vibrant arts culture is important. I think orchestra is important. I think theatre is important. I'm a huge supporter of the Aeolian. I've gotten to know Clark [Bryan] over the years, because I'm on the Old East Village Board of Directors as well, and so I'm glad Clark was able to secure the money from council to put the elevator in, which enables him to be an accessible building, and enables him to attract more acts and more dollars.

Just from a purely economic development point of view, the arts is an industry that generates GDP. And I hate to sound really mechanical about it, but it does, and people come because of it, and I want them spending their arts dollars in London. Because we get some really good stuff. Our theatre is really good. The stuff at the Palace is really good. The unique stuff that's happening at the Arts Project is really good. We've got those venues, so I think the performing arts thing is a significant thing. It has to be done right.

In relation to some mayors that we won't mention, how do you feel that your personal life, your personal morals, the way you conduct yourself outside of work, how does that relate to your position as a councillor? How should voters look at that?

Integrity really defines who you are, and if you've got multiple definitions of that in multiple spheres of your life, you will get into trouble. So, for me, integrity is about character. And it's also about how you look at problems. You look at them from an integrated perspective. It's the same word. If you have a silo approach when it comes to character, you're going to have a problem. That means speaking truth. Sometimes that's not a popular thing.

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So if someone's personal integrity is not meeting the standard their office merits, do you think it's their responsibility to step down? What would you do?

When the mayor's issue came forward here, I was on the record. It's still on my blog. Because of my view of a C.E.O. and if I was ever charged in my day job, I would be asked to step down immediately. It is different in the political realm, but we had the debate about it, and he is the mayor, so I support him so that we as a city can go forward. At the end of the day, I have to look at myself in the mirror, and I cannot be the moral judge of every other person. As a council, it's our responsibility to hold each other accountable and also to speak [out]. One of the hardest things to do in any context is to speak truth to power and that's always challenging.

What I don't want to do at this juncture is waste any more time on ombudsmen and mayors' private dealings and that sort of thing. We have way too much work to do. So I want to stay on task. We've had our say on that matter, and now we move forward. I have a very good working relationship with our mayor. I respect him and I respect his office. In light of that, I'll do whatever I can to move the city forward. The city takes precedent over him.

Do you want to speak to your place as the centrist on council, and your position as often being the swing vote? Do you like that place?

You know what? I do. And I didn't even have a really prescribed political philosophy about that. This council shifted, with our mayor, to the right significantly, which has pushed me in a sense to seem like I'm more to the left. But I'm still trying to make those decisions, planning decisions, in the broad scope of things, down the centre. We approve far more planning applications than we deny. I think Londoners have a higher standard of what they're expecting, as well, for planning applications. I am fiscally conservative. I'm not a tax and spend person. I don't like paying any more than anyone else does. Also, we need to invest. It's not about spending. It's about what are the critical investments we need to make to ensure that we have the quality of life and the prosperity that we want; that we build for the future, and that we don't saddle our kids with a debt load that's beyond their capacity to pay.

Even in our world of polarized politics, it's still possible to be fiscally conservative and socially progressive?

Absolutely. As a matter of fact, Joe Clark's just come out with a new book, and I heard him interviewed a week ago. The interviewer, Jian Ghomeshi, asked him, "So, where does a Red Tory go?" It's really difficult, because you're not way over here, and you're not way over there with Mister You-Know-Who and Sussex Drive. So, you're kind of in a No-Man's Land. Sometimes you're aligning with a Blue Liberal. But at council we don't carry those labels. [For example] it's easy for me to support cycling, and there's a business case to support cycling. The more people who cycle, the healthier we are. The more people who cycle, the less cars there are on the road. It's not a left agenda. There's an economic development equation to that. To support helping people getting back into the work force is an economic development agenda as much as it's a social agenda. As is the case of affordable housing because if we can help people get into homes we know that they're far more stable, there are fewer social problems - all of those things, that their kids are healthier, which means the next generation isn't repeating some cycle of poverty.

I think the whole dialogue has been, at other levels of government, so skewed because of partisan polarization, that we're not really getting to the nub of it. As a fiscal conservative, I can stand up and support affordable housing, because as we build affordable housing, we're putting people to work in the construction trades. As we build affordable housing, those people are either buying it or renting it. It's better than them being in shelters. As we help people, they're more likely to be able to go to work, which means they're going to take that money and buy goods and services in our community, which is going to create employment for other people. So it's really not a stretch of an argument, it's just how you frame it.

Top 10 London Predictions for 2014

Barry Wells

With a lifetime-psychic-batting-average of .947, here's my Top 10 Predictions for our burgeoning metropolis in the new year.

World-Class Destination Attractions?

1. Despite Coun. Dale Henderson's persuasive arguments, city council will not approve "dancing lights" for the broken Springbank Dam nor a mini-replica of the Eiffel Tower at the forks of the Thames. Similarly, planning staff's brain wave of an urban beach at the forks will be permanently shelved, although moving the Grand Bend sunset to London will remain a distinct possibility. Progress, however, will be made on the knotted litigation surrounding the Springbank Dam's design flaws. After all, it's been six long years in the legal hopper.

Whose idea was this anyway?

2. The misguided proposal to re-develop the London Hydro land at 111 Horton Street (southeast corner of Ridout and Horton) for a commercial-residential complex will be shot down for two reasons: The costs of the clean-up of the contaminated property and its floodplain designation. Executives of Labatt's Brewery in corner offices to the immediate east will be relieved and recommit to keeping the plant in London. Consider the \$200,000 council spent for the environmental study, flushed down the toilet. The upside is we won't be stiffed for the costs of a new London Hydro building and works yard, estimated to cost \$50-million.

No Din-Din with Whomever You Want

3. The 'Fontana Ate,' now reduced to seven all-star members, will not convene their annual sit-down at a local restaurant in February, prior to council's final budget meeting. Coun. Steve Orser will push for the gathering of the minds but cooler heads will prevail during this election year, noting the Fontana Gang was found in "clear violation of section 238 of the Municipal Act" by Ontario's Ombudsman last October.

Thanks, but No Thanks

4. London city council will opt to keep city hall at 300 Dufferin, rejecting Mayor Fontana's brain cramp of giving our civic complex to Western University for \$2. Not only is the idea too rich for council's blood since it would necessitate a new building or lease of same; Western wants nothing to do with the idea.

Chicken statue idea won't fly

5. Similarly, council will reject my proposal to erect a bronze statue commemorating The Famous San Diego Chicken® on the berm near the gates of historic Labatt Park (it's the home park of the Chicken, Ted Giannoulas, who grew up in London in the 1960s). Orser will support my idea but it will gain no traction with council's anti-chicken crowd.

Yodelling Knights of the Round Table

6. The London Knights will win their second MasterCard Memorial Cup at Budweiser Gardens on May 25, 2014, after which over-refreshed Londoners will erupt with spontaneous yodelling in the streets of downtown London. No charges will be laid, but Police Chief Brad Duncan's officers will be standing by with Tasers.

Battle of the Band Box

7. Council will make no progress on a new performing arts centre due to infighting on the new task force, comprised of battle-hardened soldiers from the Orchestra London and Grand Theatre enemy camps. A truce will eventually be declared and everyone will go back to sleep.

Three Decades of Futility

8. Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne will call an election in the new year and the Freedom Party of Ontario will celebrate its 30th year of existence by maintaining its perfect record of never electing a single candidate to Queen's Park in Toronto.

Out with the Old, In with the New

9. In 2005, the McGuinty Liberals tinkered with perfection. They foolishly extended the terms of Ontario's municipal councils from three years to four. That extra year is a pain, particularly when voters are stuck with a slew of political duds. On Oct. 27, 2014 ~ our next chance to perform ballot-box surgery ~ the following members of council will not be re-elected: Mayor Joe Fontana, Ward 3 Coun. Joe Swan, Ward 4 Coun. Steve Orser, Ward 9 Coun. Dale Henderson and Ward 14 Coun. Sandy White. A few more deserve the heave-ho, but you can't always get what you want.

Brown gets a Brand New Bag

10. London's current Ward 7 Coun. Matt Brown, an educator by profession, will be sworn in as our new mayor, chief magistrate and budget chief during the inaugural meeting of the new city council in early December 2014. With only one council term under his belt, Brown's proven to be a quick study and an intelligent problem solver. It's a blessing he's not involved with any sham charities.

I was going to speculate on the outcome of Mayor Joe's upcoming criminal trial but was advised "Don't answer that!" by my lawyer, Dunstan P. Shrapnell, QC.



yodelling in the canyon

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CALL THE OFFICE - RUSTY DECEMBER 20th

"Fluke", the initial full length release from Toronto's Rusty earned them a Juno nomination for best alternative album, as well as chart success with the singles "Misogyny" and "California" in 1995. Vocalist Ken MacNeil, and bassist Jim Moore from the recently defunct band, One Free Fall, were joined by ex Doughboys' guitarist Scott McCollough, and Mitch Perkins on drums. More hits followed from their second release "Sophomoric" in 1997 followed by 1998's "Out of their Heads", their final release, the band playing their last concert in 2000. Reuniting for the 2011 NXNE festival, the band has continued to tour and will be returning to the stage of Call the Office on December 20th.

Promoter Tony Lima told me last year's appearance was the best show he had ever seen them perform.

Opening acts will include reunited femme power punkers Tuuli and Four Square. Tickets are \$15.00, doors at 9pm.

VARIOUS VENUES - OUT OF SOUND PRESENTS A WINTER SPECTACULAR DECEMBER 18th - 22nd

Even though it is well underway, there are still lots of fine events to take in as part of Out of Sound's Winter Spectacular, a festival spotlighting music and the arts. Admission to each event is \$5.00 plus a non-perishable food donation which will go to Atlohsa Native Family Healing Service. Highlights of the festival include Coverstock, Friday December 20th, featuring local bands covering not so local hits, with S.M., Single Mothers, So Young, Amity Beach, Undertow, Tundra and the Blackwood Honeybees.

It will be held at London Indie Underground, 538 Adelaide St N. on Saturday December 21st The Forest City Gallery hosts a concert with Say Domino, The Whipping Wind and A Person Disguised as People. This show runs from 8pm till 11pm.

Sunday December 22nd it's the Hive, 581 Talbot St at 4pm for Olenka as well as Grey Kingdom.

Check Facebook for more events and info.

CALL THE OFFICE - TOOLSHED PRESENTS 9th ANNUAL XMAS WRAP DECEMBER 23rd

It's a Hip Hoppy Christmas as Call the Office hosts the Xmas Wrap - a nine year tradition, that features the cream of London's urban scene, including Thesis Sahib, Moore and Exit Only, Soundminds, The Nicest, and D.J. Hullewud. It will also act as the CD release party for Swamp Thing's newest effort, "Firedogs". Swamp Thing is the new side project/supercrew, that features Toolshed's Timbuktu and Chokeules, with Savion. Get there at 9pm to take in the whole show. Admission is \$10.00

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THE MUSIC HALL - BILL DURST DECEMBER 21st

Bill Durst is the best rock guitarist in Canada, says Mario Circelli, former station manager of CHRW Radio Western. Durst will be showcasing his new CD, Hard and Heavy, at the Music Hall on Dec. 21. Cheryl Lescom and the Tucson Choir Boys will open the show.

Durst spoke on the telephone from the French River area of northern Ontario. "We just played 22 gigs in five weeks. I'm pretty loose right now. I'm really lucky." He expects the atmosphere at the Music Hall to be a lot of fun. "We want people to know we'll be holding this gig yearly and the CD is great for Christmas."

Bands Durst has played in over the years include The Soul Agents, Pink Orange, The Testament, The Brains, the ZZ Top tribute band Tres Hombres, and Thundermug who released three albums in their original incarnation (Strikes ('72), Orbit ('73) and Ta Da ('74) and a fourth in the 90s, Who's Running My World? Strikes was released to wide acclaim in the early '70s and was glowingly reviewed in Rolling Stone magazine. It was recently reissued as a CD by Greg Hambleton of Axe Records in Hamilton.

Durst is unhappy with the release. "The tunes are in a different order and two tunes were added that were originally rejected. We were horrified at all the songs. They didn't tell us they would be in."

One would assume a rock guitar god would be obsessively playing guitar day and night."I never practice," he says. "I just play. Sometimes if I'm writing something I want to memorize, I play a lot but I'm not compulsively practicing."

Durst was born in Wingham and moved to London when he was nine and wrote his first song at the age of ten. Durst was recently nominated for Electric Act of the Year by Maple Blues and is a Jimi Hendrix and Jeff Beck-inspired guitarist (his take on Hendrix's Little Wing is always a concert highlight) who plays a Gibson SG Standard that he picked up in 1978. When Durst played at the Music Hall last year it was to an appreciative crowd. He is very loud and is an expert at using feedback to his advantage.

Randy Fisher

The Rant *I know that the music business is all about making money and there is mega bucks in the licensing of classic and contemporary songs by various products and services. I actually thought it was cool when Nick Drake's "Pink Moon" showed up in the background of a Volkswagen commercial, until I had to hear it 10,000 times. Then there was the brainwashing effect, that caused me to want a Wendy's burger everytime I heard the Violent Femmes "Blister in the Sun". Often the licensing isn't even well thought out, giving us "Sweet Home Alabama" in the background of a KFC commercial. You don't have to be a geography scholar to know that perhaps my "Old Kentucky Home" might have been a better choice or at least something with the right state. And what brainiac came up with the idea of using the Buzzcocks "Everybody's Happy Nowadays" for an ad for the American Association of Retired Persons. Swiffer - you've destroyed Devo's "Whip it" and I won't even tell you the number of products that have ruined Iggy Pop's (and for that matter my) "Lust for Life".*

*Paul Revere and the Raiders
A Christmas Present.....And Past
Columbia 1967*



RE-REVIEWED

Formed in 1958 under the name, The Downbeats, they had a local Pacific Northwest instrumental hit, "Like Long Hair," in 1961 under the much catchier name of Paul Revere and the Raiders. They recorded a cover of Richard Berry's R&B tune, "Louie Louie," but another Northwest band, the Kingsmen, who were recording in the same studio released their version first and it's their version that became a rock n roll classic. Fortunately the Raiders version got them a contract with Columbia records that led to a string of hits including "Kicks", "Hungry", and "Just Like Me" - all fantastic garage pop songs - and a job hosting the daily after school show, "Where the Action Is". As one of the most popular American bands of the mid to late 60's, a Christmas album seemed like a good idea. Instead of doing their versions of a bunch of Christmas classics, other than "Jingle Bells" (which they absolutely murder), all the songs are originals written by lead vocalist Mark Lindsay and their long time producer, Terry Melcher, (son of Doris Day and target of Charles Manson). It's a pretty iconoclastic slab of Christmas joy played more for comedy than reverence, including the very cynical "Brotherly Love" sung to the tune of "Greensleeves". They lampoon the commercial aspects of Christmas on "Dear Mr Claus" and "Christmas Spirit". On the more entertaining side, there is the pop fluff of "Wear a Smile for Christmas" and they rock out on the heavy, "Rain Sleet and Snow", and get nostalgic on the track, "Macy's Window". The Beach Boys' Christmas Album and the Phil Spector Christmas Album both concluded with painfully sincere spoken messages imparting seasonal gems of wisdom, so the Raiders also conclude their album with something called "A Heavy Christmas Message", which it turns out has no message at all but is a ragtime kazoo instrumental.

A Record Collector's Odyssey

Chapter One: An Old Beginning

With a record collection of some 15,000 plus at its most unwieldy, it's surprising that my initial record purchase didn't happen until I was well into my teenage years. A new innovation called a transistor radio was my main conduit to the wonders of modern music. Mine was a beauty, a bright turquoise plastic case housed in a supposedly leather cover complete with ear plug for late night listening. Here in town the radio station to listen to, was 980, home of the Lively Guys and particularly to one Dick Williams aka "The Tall One". Mr. Williams was a local radio god, boasting his own fan club, alas my dayglo orange Tall One Club card has gone the way of my massive bubble gum card collection; a victim of my mother's penchant for throwing out so called "old junk". Even though 980 had the high profile jockeys and the weekly top 40 charts that you could pick up at your local record shop, my favourite station was 30 miles south of here, CHLO in St Thomas, whose programming just seemed cooler. I'm not sure why it was at the ripe old age of 15 that it dawned on me that I could actually own music, and not have to wait to hear a favourite song. Up to this time my meagre allowance had been squandered on licorice and comic books, so with some cash in hand I wandered into the Bluebird Record Shop and after scanning the titles on the shelf behind the counter picked "Words of Love" by the Mamas and Papas, and "We Ain't Got Nothin' Yet" by the Blues Magoos.

*Next Issue:
Chapter Two.....12 Top Hits for just 99 cents*



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Gatsby – Great Stuff for New Years Eve ...

Robert Pegg

pegg's world

You may recall old sport, a film called *The Great Gatsby* back in 1974 starring Robert Redford and Mia Farrow. It was a lavish adaptation of the F. Scott Fitzgerald novel of the same name which has become synonymous with The Jazz Age. It was a simple romantic telling of the doomed love of 'Jay Gatsby' and his obsessive love for 'Daisy Buchanan.' A fine movie suited for Valentines Day and such occasions.

Not so with this year's model *Gatsby*, the Baz Luhrmann-directed spectacle starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Carey Mulligan as the romantic leads. In typical Luhrmann fashion, it's bold and brash, LOUD and all flash and dance. The story may take place between spring and fall but this baby has New Years Eve written all over it. And is best viewed on December 31st. Luhrmann even throws in some gratuitous CGI snowflakes in the opening scene. As such, it's a DVD primer for hosting your own Gatsby-themed fancy-dress party.

Flappers and jazz boyz. Champagne and cocktails. Black backless dresses. Tuxedo and tails. Feather boas and smokes in long cigarette-holders. Slicked-back hair and Louise Brooks bangs. Glitter and glam. Gershwin and fireworks. All tres New Years Eve elegant. Add an atmosphere of wild abandon and anything-goes and you have a typical party at Jay Gatsby's uber-mansion. Every party at Gatsby's was like New Years Eve. Madcap and mayhem. Hijinks and hilarity. And that same air of desperation of people trying way too hard to have a good time. Luhrmann captures all of this in all its eye-popping lurid splendor in his movie. And like many New Years Eve parties, you just know it's going to end badly.

Even better, the story is set in Manhattan and Long Island. N.Y. Eve and NYC – they're intrinsically linked, both larger than life in the flesh and the imagination. Considering Luhrmann's penchant for going over-the-top as a stylistic device, I'm surprised he didn't throw in some old black & white television footage of Dick Clark hosting a live broadcast of the 1922 countdown to the Big Apple descending in Times Square from one of his *Jazzin'* New Years Eve specials live from New York.

All of that is your first impression of *Gatsby* – that it is another Baz Luhrmann cinematic spectacle. Mind-blowingly superficial. Not unlike his *Moulin Rouge!* And it is a bit much at times but overall he makes it work. It truly is beautiful to behold. Manhattan is vibrant and pumping with adrenalin. Daytime scenes at stately Gatsby mansion are burnished with a warm golden hue. Nick Carraway's cottage next door looks like a set from *A Midsummers' Night Dream*. The stretch of industrial wasteland between West Egg and The City is an ugly and brutal commute through hell. It looks like Mordor.

But then there is the matter of Leonardo DiCaprio. Apparently he's no longer the kid I remember who stole the movie away from Johnny Depp in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?* From the moment we first see him, it is DiCaprio who holds this movie together. Scenes without him are kinda flat regardless of any visual flair Luhrmann brings to the proceedings.

The first time we see 'Gatsby' it is at one of his parties as amusement-park ride. It's an iconic moment. One of Luhrmann's shamelessly over-the-top signature pieces. DiCaprio turns to face the camera – to a backdrop of fireworks accompanied by the crescendo from Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' – and gives one of those dazzling reassuring smiles that narrator 'Nick Carraway' is always going on about. And you realize, 'Hot damn – he IS Robert Redford! Even better.'

Presumably, to compensate for the power of the visuals, you get the impression that Luhrmann encourages his actors to underplay scenes involving dialogue and characterization. As 'Daisy', Carey Mulligan does it almost to the point of being comatose. As 'Nick Carraway,' Tobey Maguire's long familiar monotone is only relieved by his occasional impish grin. In fact, he often looks like a straw-hatted, bow-tied Pee Wee Herman. Ohh, how I would have loved to have seen P.W. cast in this role if only for the scene near the end where he can give Gatsby that knowing smirk of his and tell him, "They're a rotten crowd, Jay. You're worth the whole damn bunch put together."

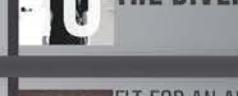
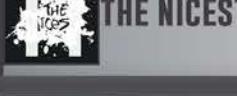
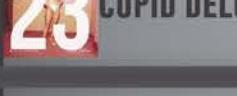
What would ol' F. Scott Fitzgerald think about this latest adaptation of his most famous novel? I think he would have appreciated Luhrmann's efforts in trying to retain the lyricism of his prose. He would have been disappointed that like the other adaptations there was next to none of the humour which makes the book so funny. My favorite scene in the book is the one where Gatsby is telling Nick his blatantly bogus life story. "After that I lived like a young raja in all the capitals of Europe – Paris, Venice, Rome. Collecting jewels, chiefly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little, things for myself only – and trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me long ago." In the book, Nick can barely restrain himself from laughing out loud. But in the movie, the dialogue is shouted during a wild car ride into the city.

Frankly, I think Fitzgerald would likely be horrified at *Gatsby*. Probably no more so than he was at the original 1949 version which saw the movie open with Alan Ladd as the title-character shooting a machine gun out the window of a speeding car.

However, snob that he was, he would have highly approved of the fact that the movie was a 'prestige' project. Even more so, the hefty pay-day involved. Fitzgerald made a career writing about morally-bankrupt but financially-loaded high-society types but he also idolized them. As he was fond of saying, "The rich are different from you and I." Legend has it that he was crestfallen when one wild wag once replied, "Yeah, they got more money."

94.9 CHRW TOP 30

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	LITTLE DAYLIGHT TUNNEL VISION		SOEN SOEN
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	BEST COAST FADE AWAY		SLEIGH BELLS BITTER RIVALS
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	SKY FERREIRA NIGHT TIME, MY TIME		DAN-E-O INEVITABLE
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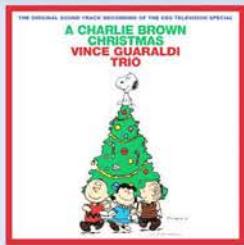
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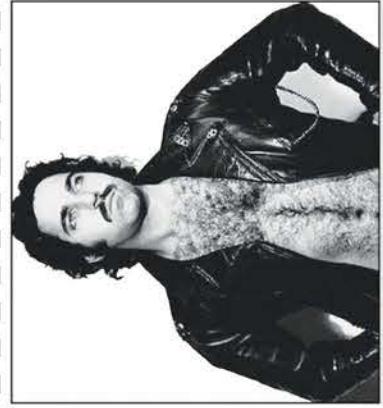
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A Walk in the Rain with Lear

Jeff Culbert

theatre space

The show was called *Lear*. It was really *King Lear*, but they didn't want to use the original name, because there was a woman playing the lead, and *Queen Lear*, perhaps, didn't sound right.

But it was Shakespeare, the full version, with the gender of some of the characters changed for practical reasons. This was the 2014 graduating class from the Fanshawe College theatre program, and there are nine women and five men in the class, so Lear, Gloucester, Kent, Albany, the gentleman and the fool were all played by women. Remember, though, that in Shakespeare's time, all of the characters were played by men, so this gender stuff is nothing new.

For this production, the director was Brad Rudy, a 23-year Stratford veteran and Shakespeare instructor. The Fanshawe program has a great tradition of bringing in seasoned working actors to direct some of their in-school shows. These guests get to try out or keep up their directing chops and the students get first-hand training from somebody in the business.

Now to the script. The big question for me is always, what's with Lear in the first scene? He's officially and ceremonially dividing his kingdom between his three daughters, and he makes them say, one by one, how much they love him. A tawdry display, for sure. When Cordelia won't play along, Lear flips out and disowns her, and then banishes the poor Earl of Kent, who'd stepped in as a peacemaker. Third man in the fight and he gets the game. If Lear and Cordelia really love each other, then how did this happen?

I've always suspected that Lear is drunk. Drunk people like to hear emotionally stimulating things like praise or love or music or forgiveness. Daughters, in this case Cordelia, can get tired of playing along with drunk dads, and drunk dads can get angry very quickly. It all makes sense if he's drunk.

Or maybe Lear is just like that, even without booze. (The fool tells him to his face, "Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise.") Lear is in a public, ceremonial setting, so maybe his embarrassment overload switch got thrown, and he just lost it. First, Cordelia was mortally embarrassed at how he was behaving and then Cordelia's behaviour mortally embarrassed him. There you go - it's a play about the dangers of embarrassment.

In this production, the opening scene was formal to a fault. I felt like someone's date at a wedding where I didn't know anyone very well, and everyone was acting uncomfortable and weird. Suddenly somebody made a scene, but I couldn't tell why it was happening. I found Lear pretty hard to read, and the whole mood felt stilted. What was happening was clear enough, but why – not so much.

Things really took off for me in the second scene, when Gloucester and her bastard son Edmund took over (Vanessa Woodford and Taylor Bogaert - son of London actor David Bogaert). Both had strong performances throughout the show.

A comprehensive list of current and upcoming productions by Fanshawe College Theatre can be found by navigating www.theatreinlondon.ca



Minnifia Campbell as Lear

Then we have the bad sisters, Goneril and Regan. They tell Lear that they love her, but they sure don't treat her very well, stripping her of all respect and dignity as soon as their inheritances are in the bag. So granted, they're not very nice, but I'm always looking for them to be more conflicted. Are they just mean and shallow? Or are they mean and shallow, but in their own minds, nice? Really quite nice people dealing with a very difficult situation? That would make them less like straight-up villains and more like the mean, shallow, nice people we meet out there in the world, which to me would be more interesting. However, that said, Ariana Dalton and Alaina Walker were solid as the fancy, well-groomed, ambitious power-sister villains.

Then there's the storm scene – Lear, with her fool, turned away by her daughters to teach her lessons in how to behave and who's in charge now. That's when we see a new Lear, terrified and struggling with madness, and Minnifia Campbell as Lear changed channels entirely, with all of the coldness and hardness of her first scene cracked open and the primal emotions exposed. Campbell had some really touching moments as the broken-hearted, confused, betrayed mother over the rest of the play, and whenever I get some of that in a show, I go away happy.

That said, the storm was more of a spectacle than a scene at times, because the sound was too loud for the actors, and a lot of the dialogue was just lost. Annoying when that happens. Good to go for the spectacle though, and the sound design and light projections were really effective.

I'm also happy if I get a few laughs, and I did. Taylor Bogaert was particularly funny as Edmund. They say that Shakespearean actors should relish their roles, particularly the villains; Bogaert did, and the fun he had with the role was contagious.

Then there was the gross-out, eye-plucking scene, which was suitably gross. "Out, vile jelly!" Say no more.

I love that the works of Shakespeare, our most popular playwright by far, have so much sadness and melancholy in them. Sadness and melancholy are not supposed to be big draws, but there you have them.

When he is out in the storm, Lear says that we enter the world sad: "When we are born, we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools." Just after Lear dies, at the very end of the play, Kent puts a stop to the attempt to revive him: "Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass! He hates him who would upon the rack of this tough world stretch him out longer."

Shakespeare could be harsh.

Congratulations to all the Fanshawe people in and behind this production. It's such a great play, and you came up with something that was at different times moving, funny, gross, spectacular and melancholic. That's five of the main Shakespeare food groups, and I salute you.

DAVID CRONENBERG: EVOLUTION

Jeremy Hobbs

cinephilia

There I was, just staring at the computer screen. I had intercepted the signal from a pirate Internet site, coming from somewhere in Pittsburgh. The first couple months it was just static and random artifacting. However about a week ago it finally morphed into something recognizable. I found myself face to face with the splash page of *David Cronenberg: Evolution* – the multimedia exhibit/retrospective currently at Toronto's TIFF Bell Lightbox, celebrating the life and work of the idiosyncratic Canadian filmmaker, who rose from the ashes of the late 1970s Ontario tax-shelter funding program, to emerge as one of the world's most challenging and provocative auteurs. Cronenberg's darkly cerebral examinations of the clash between the physical body and ever-changing technology around it have succeeded in creeping out an entire generation of cinephiles, winning him myriad awards and commendations in the process. I couldn't peel my eyes from the monitor. It was as if some strange new organ was forming in my brain, throbbing with the desire to penetrate further into the legacy of this homegrown prodigy, this mad scientist of celluloid. The next day I was standing at the bus station, with a ridiculously overpriced ticket in my hand. It wasn't nearly as fast as a telepod, yet considerably safer.

When I entered the Lightbox I was greeted by a massive portrait of the silver-haired, steely-eyed mastermind, which slowly morphed into a Burroughsian mugwump when I moved to either side of it. After obtaining my ticket, me and the other test subjects were rounded into a group by a mysterious woman in a white lab coat. When the hour was nigh she led us into a labyrinthine, darkly lit room, where a triptych of tour guides walked us through the various stages of Crony's career. It began with a series of vintage posters and polaroids from his first features *Shivers* (1975) and *Rabid* (1977), the latter featuring a surprisingly decent performance from legendary adult film star Marilyn Chambers. Next some production stills and storyboards from *The Brood* (1979) and his little-known drag racing picture *Fast Company* (1979). We then marveled at a wall-mounted monitor, which featured a never-ending loop of the infamous 'exploding head' scene from sci-fi shocker *Scanners* (1981), an effect that was apparently achieved by blasting a sculpted latex head full of chicken guts with a real shotgun. We moved on to the H.R. Gigeresque helmet from the mind-bending *Videodrome* (1983), the original cover art from Stephen King's 1979 novel (which spawned Cronenberg's adaptation of) *The Dead Zone* (1983), and then finally stood in front of the dauntingly large telepod from the director's most commercially successful film *The Fly* (1986), a remake of the 1958 film of the same name. Next up was a glass case displaying the metallic, faux-skeletal 'Gynecological Instruments for Operating on Mutant Women' from the medical horror chiller *Dead Ringers* (1988). Strangely enough, *M. Butterfly* (1993), one of the director's (pardon the pun) straightest films, was barely given a mention. We then drooled over Rosanna Arquette's molded leather BDSM-inspired bodysuit from Cronenberg's most controversial film *Crash* (1996), a stark, nearly pornographic adaptation of J.G. Ballard's sexually dystopian novel, which earned him the special 'Jury Prize' for audacity at the Cannes Film festival, followed by the organic, erotic-looking videogame pods from *eXistenZ* (1999). Following this, a small model of the web-laden house from *Spider* (2002), a large photograph of Ed Harris' blown-out ribcage from *A History of Violence* (2005), and a detailing of Viggo Mortensen's Russian mafia tattoos from *Eastern Promises* (2007). After being shown some gorgeously detailed period costumes from *A Dangerous Method* (2011) and the high-tech limo design from *Cosmopolis* (2012), we were taken to our final destination: The Interzone Room.

Entering The Interzone Room was like stepping into one of those hallucinatory Tangier sequences from *Naked Lunch* (1991), Cronenberg's ingeniously visceral



Jeremy Hobbs runs the Black Room Theatre company, hosts Retro-Mania at Hyland Cinema, performs with musical groups Exit 2012 and Audioforge, and dissects cult cinema in Rue Morgue Magazine. He spends his remaining time gazing into a never-ending chasm of existential dread.

adaptation of William S. Burroughs' controversial (and allegedly unfilmable) 1959 novel. In addition to an array of Moroccan-inspired tapestries and pottery, this intellectual opium den also contained a collection of insect typewriters, the amorphous 'sex blob', and various other bizarrely eroticized phantasmagoria. I was even able to sit down and have a drink with a real live mugwump before I left. It recommended I attend that night's screening of *Naked Lunch*, to which I graciously obliged. As part of the *Evolution* retrospective, TIFF Bell Lightbox has been showcasing each of the director's films, often featuring related cast or crew members introducing the screenings (Jeremy Irons on *Dead Ringers*, Howard Shore on *Naked Lunch*, and a Guillermo del Toro master class on *Eastern Promises*). Watching a lavishly saturated 35mm print of the surrealist literary nightmare on the big screen was quite incredible, as I was too young to do so upon its initial release, and consider it to be the director's most impressive work.

Before leaving the building, one of the sentient typewriters sent me up to the fourth floor. When the elevator doors opened, I found myself in the retro-styled lobby of Videodrome's CIVIC TV. The receptionist directed me toward a futuristic hall of mirrors, which was home to *Body/Mind/Change* – an interactive laboratory where Cronenberg (in conjunction with CFC Media Lab) has been conducting his strangest experiment yet. The lab-coated technicians led me through a Technicolor tunnel of fluid-filled jars, each containing a bizarre-looking organism. After extracting my most guarded personal information, they sat me down in front of a console and had me navigate through three different phases of interactive media, explaining that the specific way I reacted to certain images or stimuli would define the parameters of my own organism, or 'POD' (Personal On-Demand), which, upon my completion of the sequences, would be birthed into existence. They told me I was to return to the lab in January, where my fully-grown pod would be surgically affixed to my brainstem, and I could begin my new life as a genetically modified being. Admittedly, the prospect of this hybrid identity filled me with a nameless joy. Humanity has lived in opposition to technology for far too long, and who better than Captain Cronenberg to navigate this deep, penetrating dive into the plasma pool.

This is Agent Hobbs reporting from Interzone. Long live the new flesh.

David Cronenberg: Evolution runs from November 1 to January 19 at TIFF Bell Lightbox in Toronto, Ontario.

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THE LONDON YODELLER

The Snow Show

Vince Cherniak
LOOK AT THIS!

Images Courtesy Michael Gibson Gallery

No shovelling required

Alas, that season is upon us again. There's no sense in denying what we have in store for us for the next few months – a whole lotta shoveling. But, if you can't beat it, join it, so let's take a deep frosty breath, and ponder the aesthetics of winter's gift of snow.

There's no question that the northern psyche is affected by the long stretch of an altered landscape and economy that is winter. It's on our mind constantly at this time of year, and in some parts of the country, most of the year. In a perfectly Canadian sardonic take recently on CBC's *This Is That*, a somewhat distraught man goes out to clear his driveway, and decides to keep going, snow-blowing his way across the country. Snow can do that to a guy.

Survival, endurance in a tough clime is at one end of its cultural and psychological impact. We face nature in all its brutality straight on, and the solitude that entails. At the other end is a "we're all in this together" sort of romanticism in which we embrace our communal strength to overcome nature's hardships. There's a poignant shot of Glenn Gould walking across a field of snow in *Thirty Two Short Films about Glenn Gould* that perfectly alludes to the former. Cornelius Krieghoff made a career of illustrating the latter.

And then there's the sense that, in winter's clutch, we are privy to something primordial in nature, that the metaphysics of the universe are displayed before us, broken down into constituent parts. There's the mystic north allure in Lawren Harris's iceberg paintings. But if you zoom in, you can see it all in a snowflake, and the Fibonacci sequence of their growth and structure. Secrets of the universe are revealed. Just take a look at the recently published macro photography of Russian photographer Alexey Kljatov's snowflakes. The images are startling, and the notion that he took these with a hodge-podge assembly of an old 35mm Russian lens and a point-and-shoot Canon camera make them almost unbelievable. He may have doctored them a bit in PhotoShop, but whatever their provenance, there is wonder in the power of symmetries and form present in the building blocks of crystals that we experience on the macro level in a blanket of snow.

Earlier this summer Michael Gibson acquired a painting with snow as a central element, and this led to the brainstorm of an idea for the snow storm of paintings that has just fallen at his Michael Gibson Gallery called - what else? - The Snow Show, on until the end of the month. It is a thorough homage to the theme as caught by local and national artists in various media, and well worth stepping out of - or is that into? - the cold for.

What's impressive in a group show like this is just how snow manifests so many variations of white, without being boring. It's really about the play of light on snow, as the incidence of light from the sun, or lack of it, near winter's solstice brings out a range of shades, from murky grays to pale blues in the shadows. Murray Favro's projection on wood, *Window, Winter* from 2005, highlights the tonal qualities of a snow laden windowsill on a yellow brick home. This piece sets the mood for the show, and



Clark McDougall, *Road in Winter (K4)*



Doris McCarthy, *Grise Fiord with Snow in the Air*



Diana Thorneycroft, *Group of Seven Awkward Moments (In Algonquin Park)*



(<http://www.demilked.com/macro-snowflakes-diy-camera-alexey-kljatov>)

is a knockout. Where the painted wood panel on its own establishes an everyday winter scene, it's the projected light, imitating the winter's low-angle sun, that brings out the blues and vibrancy in the snow that is startling at this time of year.

Equally masterful at capturing this blue-tinged play of light is Clark McDougall in some early rural works on display. The St. Thomas native is best renowned for his black enamel style that emerged later in his career. You can see a bit of the evolution in his style, as he moves from a Group of Seven-ish rendering in *Afternoon In a Little Maple Bush* from 1945, to the 1962 watercolour *Barn and Field in Winter*. But these snow themed works here, ranging over a few decades, are magnificent at capturing the palettes of winter as it moves from December into March, and various intensities of light on the landscape. McDougall captures the remnants of winter alongside a country lane in *Road in Winter*, where you can almost smell the mud of tire tracks, and feel the oncoming warmth of the land as snow diminishes on the fringes.

If you're keen to embrace the pure frost bitten bitterness of winter, there are works by Doris McCarthy that capture life at the extremes: *Grise Fiord With Snow in the Air* captures the deep cold of one the most northerly human settlements. Apparently, she had to keep her paint under her bra while working in this landscape, and the finished work reveals why.

There are a few interesting pieces of white-on-white works – see Wanda Koop's *Interweave* and Ron Martin's *Untitled #34* that, while not explicitly representative of snow, nonetheless are evocative of the fifty shades of white possible, if not the fifty words, for snow.

Diana Thorneycroft's *In Algonquin Park* reminds us that snow invites play and adventure, delightfully illustrated in this print from her acclaimed 2008 series. And what more fun can be had than a good ole snowball fight? Thankfully there's a pile of "snowballs" in the middle of the gallery, a favourite piece in this group show for curator Jennie Kraehling.

"We have three sculptors in the show, and all of them use their powers of observation, to depict snow in a certain way, and they are all very playful," says Kraehling, "but Gathie Falk's *Arsenal: 14 Snowballs* in particular really epitomizes child's play, even piling them up in a pyramid. It's almost like a monument to the typical Canadian snowball fight. I really like this piece because Gathie in the 60s had an artistic practice of piling apples and oranges which she's very well known for . . . so I really like the fact that at the age of 85 she still has this playful imagination that she does with papier mache, making them look like these gorgeous, luminous snowballs."



Gathie Falk
Arsenal:
14 Snowballs

The Snow Show at Michael Gibson Gallery continues until December 28.

Tracing the Rail Lines with Scott Conarroe

Vince Cherniak

The industrial infrastructure that keeps our society and economy chugging along – highways, rail lines, factories, mining pits --may not be the first place a lot of us would think to find aesthetic inspiration or a reverie, but it's been a rich source of inquiry for many contemporary artists. Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky has been exploring everything from the Alberta tar sands to high tech Chinese assembly plants to wrench a fresh view of what human activity and its impact on the landscape entails. He's brought his polished eye for stills to the moving images of Jennifer Baichwal's films *Watermark* and *Manufactured Landscapes*, and if you've seen either of these, you'll likely have had some cognitive dissonance dealing with the potency of these images: at once, there is the squalor of large scale industrial land use and ravaging of natural resources, and yet, a strange beauty to behold, an attraction and repulsion. I've often tried to square my feelings for heading down a rather truck-clogged, monotonous drive on the 401 with the pastoral charm presented of the same highway in the exquisite eye of Jack Chambers' *401 Towards London No. 1*.

In 2007, acclaimed photographer and former Londoner Scott Conarroe ventured out across the North American continent to document what was the harbinger of the industrial revolution, the rail lines that pushed this nation westward and shaped the economies of nations world wide. The results are on display in Scott Conarroe: *By Rail* at the McIntosh Gallery at Western University, and it's a stellar exhibit.

As curator James Patten aptly notes, photography and railways were 19th century technological innovations that changed the game on many fronts, and here Conarroe brings them together with a conceptual art approach where “the railroad becomes one enormous art installation of interconnected lines that form a skeletal web connecting communities and economies in time and space.”

For the most part, the images on display here cast a favourable light, if not a picturesque take, on how the railroads have left their mark on our geography. In *The Coaster, Southern California*, the cut of tracks alongside the Pacific beach seems neatly in harmony with nature's splendour, as if they were intended to be there all along. Equally, in *Bow River, AB* we see the rail following the natural terrain of the river valley, mimicking the flow through the geography in a human engineered counterpoint. The intervention of technology almost enhances our understanding of how the valley was forged by nature's forces cutting through rock and glacial till over the millennia, and we're piggy backing on all that hard work.

In stark contrast, *Canal, Cleveland OH* shows the opposite of simpatico between the natural and engineered. It's hard to see where the natural landscape remains in this image of flying track and highway bridges that have colonized the Cuyahoga river basin in Cleveland, a river notorious for catching fire back in the 60s. It's an arresting image, yet one that works without preaching about degradation. It's perfectly composed, a visual feast of line and form, with just a smattering of colour. While the first impression is one of chaos in the layers of bridges and rail lines, Conarroe has brought the show's themes together here,



Canal, Cleveland OH, 2008. Courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery

where the rich detail of truss and iron work suggests a technological sublimity, but with ambivalence: there is decay and decline in what presents as the skeletal remains of past technological marvels, a “ruin of rust”, and yet the foreground with new construction material suggests hope for renewal in this marginalized industrial and transportation space.

Perhaps the most interesting revelation in this study is how the rail line, mostly razor-straight by necessity, cuts like a sharp surgeon's knife, taking a cross-section of the social and geographical and exposing it to the eye. You certainly get that feeling onboard the Via on a journey out of London, as layers of industry, housing, agriculture, open pit quarry in Ingersoll, terrain shifts over the Grand River, unfold in a way that can only be appreciated by travelling that laser-like line through space. And this aspect of the rail is well documented here by Conarroe. He presents these serendipitous views of the everyday as in *Patio Set, Thomasville GA*. More than occasionally in this series, the railroad is in a dialogue with highways, automobiles and parking lots, as they verge or vie for our needs for transportation, perfectly captured in *Car Lot, Great Salt Lake UT*.

In *House with Pool, Shrewsbury WV* a humble home that has its front door and yard facing the rail suggests a more welcoming attitude, if not reliance, on the railways in rural culture. Contrast this photo to *Suburb, London ON*, where the neighbourhood rejects the rail's intrusion with large sound-barrier walls, like a NIMBY attitude in denial. This photo from 2006 was taken when Conarroe was working in London, and it became the starting point if not inspiration for the series that followed. *Suburb* is also one of the stronger images here, reminiscent of the subdued winter palette you'd find in a Pieter Bruegel landscape.

There's something afoot in *Prairie Tracks, Saskatchewan*, a mesmerizing print that soothes like a Rothko Colour Field painting. It's mostly the play between field and sky, as your eye is led in from the stationary rigidity of the tracks in the foreground and carried into the infinity of the blossoming hole in the sky. But there's also a delectable tension at play here, where the rail line and horizon line compete to satisfy the Golden Section rule of our perception. Like other works here, there is technical mastery by Conarroe through his long exposure times that softens the grass of the foreground and adds a mystic tinge to the light. This print is pretty much all I want for Christmas. Santa can be directed to Stephen Bulger Gallery, Scott Conarroe's representative in Toronto.

Scott Conarroe: *By Rail* continues at the McIntosh Gallery until February 1, 2014.

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Original elephant image courtesy of Joel Ormsby

THE LONDON YODELLER 17

All Bookstores are Fine but Used Bookstores are Best

Jason Dickson

The good editor of this magazine asked me to write an article about used bookstores, how they differ from other bookstores, what role they play in reading culture.

I've worked in a number of bookstores over the years, both used and new. My first was right out of high school when a friend of mine and her father opened a used bookshop over where Berkana Salon is now. You might remember it - Red Ink Books. I then worked for Marvin Post at Attic Books for nearly ten years before moving up to Bracebridge, Ontario where I opened my own shop, the Muskoka Bookhouse, which I ran for five years.

I know used bookstores. I know the sort of people who visit them. I know the sort of people who don't. Used bookshops occupy a weird little corner of the cultural marketplace. (A bookselling colleague of mine loves to tell the story of a high society woman walking into his main street shop - of 30 years - asking what the place was. "A used bookshop," was her reply. "What a splendid idea!") We are essential, yet mysterious.

Used bookshops are unlike any other store. The closest I'd say is a used record shop. Pawn shops are also a fair comparison. Get a used bookstore clerk and record shop clerk talking and you pretty much hear the same thing from both of them: obsessive-nit-picky customers, stock control, storage problems, etc. Both sell luxury used goods. Both are always, it seems, weeks away from bankruptcy.

But there are significant differences that signify a used bookshop's unique place in the market. Unlike record stores, a used bookshop has potentially 500 years of printed history (more if you want to get into the pre-printing era) to draw from, where record shops basically have only the 20th Century. All of the problems are still the same - where do you store it, how do you appraise it, and who is going to buy it? But this Deep Time adds a lustre to the stock that is unavailable in other used and second-hand markets.

And only by carrying reprints of the objects and texts of the past can a new bookstore achieve it. Whereas at Attic Books, for example, you can actually buy a first edition of *I am Legend*, that awesome and oh-so-creepy book by Richard Matheson (that I love). You're purchasing history, not just a text. And that is special. Though I wouldn't necessarily read that copy (I bought my trade paperback copy at Robert's Holmes way back when), it still is lovely to have the haunted relic on the shelves.

My experience in new bookstores taught me how strong a proprietor's fidelity to the seasonal ebb and flow of the new book market has to be in order to survive. And I found it frustrating. I can completely see how someone could really make a go of it there. And those that do are extraordinary. But having to know what people are looking for *that season* and stocking it . . . ugh. Too much nitpicking for me. I like seeing a box of books come in and thinking this will sell this week, this will sell next week, and this will sell a year from now.

It lets you stretch your arms a bit.

The most exciting thing I can think of about a used bookstore is that it creates a marketplace for

book culture

books that cannot be found anywhere else. This marketplace actively expands our conception of literary history. Learn this history from new bookstores and you will get a very myopic view of our language. Learn it from a university and you'll get . . . well, a less myopic view. Used bookshops challenge this by letting books in that would not be welcome in either the excessively market-driven or strictly academic-driven curricula of those two booky places. They let in the bombs, the doggerel, the slang, the contrary, the blood.

I remember a conversation I had with an ex-girlfriend's father about Tove Jansson. I had said that my job at a used bookstore had introduced me to her. She was an author I had never seen at a new bookstore before. I added that I didn't know anyone who had studied her in university. Without Attic I would not have found her. My ex-girlfriend's dad answered that he couldn't see why any young student would read the fluffy stories of a Swedish children's book author. Exactly, I said. They shouldn't. And that is why they should read her.

Personally (and I am always speaking personally) I can't imagine a life without Tove Jansson. I can't imagine a life without Lord Dunsany's *My Talks with Dean Spanley* either. All of these books (natty paperbacks, plush Folio Society books, even a plumb first edition if I have enough money) floated to my dock through a used bookstore. I'm pretty sure I once saw a reprint of *The Devil Versus Sonny Liston* at Chapters but the others I've never found there.

There is a creepy sequence to the Literary Canon. (I like the canon. Whatever. I'm not interested in having that discussion here.) But it reads like a book when it should not. This happened, then this happened, then this happened and so on, up to the very student studying at its altar. Again, whatever. Used bookshops, although obviously supporting the canon in some ways, also subvert it deeply. In addition to stocking widely acknowledged classics, it also lets in lots of other stuff and thus the used bookshop also serves as a detritus pit, stinking up the conceptual clarity of our hallowed traditions.

At a used bookshop we find out that maybe T.S. Eliot didn't have as much to do with the development of English as we had thought. He's very fine, even great, obviously, but when the slew of contemporaneous books pile into the back room of the store, all owned, many read, tide after tide after tide of them, one by precious enigmatic one - mostly in English, all at one point purchased, digested, and used - you start to see the immense lot as more of a mucky field than some elevated plateau.

Or put another way, a town isn't simply the tip of its steeple.

How else could I have found my own copy of the poems of Robert Elliott, that dear poet of Plover Mills, whose name brandished the awesome Creative Writing award I won in Grade Eight; whose early 20th century pastoral pen wrote some absolutely dreadful verses about the Thames River as well as Plover Mills itself? UGH! I can hardly bear to read them. But, yet . . . but yet. I can't imagine my life without them, sad as that may be.

NEW ARRIVALS

December 19th, 2013

ROSS, Alexander Milton. **The Butterflies and Moths of Canada** \$75.00 Topics include butterflies, moths, instructions for catching and preserving.

WILSON, George R. **Drunkenness**. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1893. \$150.00 Just in time for the holidays!

BURROS; A collection of sixty-four cute, curious and interesting burro pictures. Denver: The H. H. Tammen Curio Co, 1903. \$30.00 Too cute for words.

WIGGINTON, Eliot. **Foxfire 4: water systems, fiddle making, logging, gardening, sassafras tea, wood carving, and further affairs of plain living**. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1977. \$25.00 For the survivalist homesteader on your list.

DEWDNEY, Selwyn and KIDD, Kenneth E. **Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes**. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, (1962). \$60.00 London, Ontario's own artist/anthropologist!

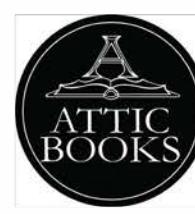
1804 Scottish almanac. [1804]. \$50.00 Self explanatory.

MORRIS, Barbara. **Inspiration for Design: the Influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum**. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1986. \$50.00 Pretty things.

WOLFE, Kym; RADFORD, Cheryl (illus.). **Barhopping into History, London, Ontario**. London, Ontario: ChKs Publishing, 2013. \$13.95 A New local history book!

REANEY, James C. (ed.). **The Donnelly Documents; An Ontario Vendetta**. Toronto: The Champlain Society, 2004. \$39.95 Merry Bloody Christmas!

PICASSO, Pablo et al. **The New Apocalypse: An Anthology of Criticism, Poems and Stories**. London: The Fortune Press, 1940. \$75.00 Creepy title; lovely poems.



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LAST MINUTE CHRISTMAS SHOPPING: A YODELLER CHOOSE YOUR DOOM TEXT ADVENTURE

Sean Twist

So, you've done it again. Left your Christmas shopping to the last minute. To the last afternoon. Because this was the year you were going to shake off the capitalist holiday imperative to bleed out at the mall in the name of the season. You were going to make a stand. Hair blowing back heroically in the windswept beauty of your resolve, you stood defiant.

Until your mom called. Eight minutes later, you have seen the Christmas Future where you don't buy gifts. It is a cold and brutal place, filled with silence and regret. Your tires screech as you head for the mall, scattering carolers.

But no. Defiance runs in your blood. You'll still show them. You won't go to a mall.

You'll go to a bookstore.

1. You enter a local chain bookstore. If you go to the coffee bar first, go to 5. If you decide to take a look at the remainder table, go to 8.

2. A clerk appears. "Depressed Swedish cops are all the rage this year," she says. "That, and that series about that tall sadistic guy played by a short weird guy in a movie." If you choose the first, go to 9. If you choose the latter, go to 7.

3. You are surrounded by teen novel dystopias. You can choose from Post-Apocalyptic Blight Where Hair Gel Still Exists, Suburban Wasteland Because My Parents Are Dumb, NASCAR Young Love, Blatant Battle Royale Rip Off, or Dark Tech World Where Only Our Love Can Save Us, Baby. "Do you have Adrian Mole?" you ask the clerk. "He used to work here" she says, "but I think he was fired for taking skirt shots with his iPhone." Her eyes widen. "Oh, the book!" Go to 17.

4. You are surrounded by books with covers showing snow, fence posts, or people looking wistfully at snow covered fence posts. Canadian sweethearts Tegan and Sara hand you Jeff Lemire's Essex County. "Like the new sound," you say. "Whatever, dweeb," they say in unison. Head to 13.

5. You push past the towering e-reader stalls to grab a coffee. You see a woman in Lululemon yoga pants swinging a befuddled baby in her arms. "It's Baby's first latte!" she shrieks in glee. If you decide to abandon the human race, go to 15. If you give up buying a coffee as people take Instagrams and choose to return to the bookstore, go to 11.

6. As you enter the science fiction section, an equestria of Bronies attack. "Do you accept Applejack as the best pony ever?" they shriek in their Reddit hoodies. "DO YOU?" If you do, go to 15. If you refuse their dogma, go to 14.

7. You pick up the Reacher book, then see Tom Cruise is on the cover. "Is this a collection of short stories?"



you ask the clerk. "Hey," Tom Cruise says behind you. "That's not nice." You turn, knocking him off a stool. You head to the checkout. Go to 13.

8. You see Sammy Hagar's autobiography going for seven dollars. "It's a rockin' read," Sammy Hagar says, standing beside you. He gives you a thumbs up. You give him the devil sign. "Right on," he says. Go to 11.

9. You open the book. A blast of Arctic wind scented with vodka blows into your face. You age ten years, develop a slouch and become an expert at staring at bleak horizons while solving crimes. You head to the checkout. Go to 13.

10. It's Christmas Day. As the family chatters happily during gift giving, it's suddenly your turn. You hand the book to your relative. They tear into it like a jackal. The room falls silent when they see it's a book. With a howl, they fall upon you. A red mist descends. Go to 15.

11. You look upon a sea of words, hopes and blatant attempts to get on the Giller shortlist. If you go to the science fiction section, go to 6. Teen fiction, 3. Mystery, 2. Canadian fiction, 4. Romance, 16.

12. You try to untie the ropes holding Gaiman to the chair while the Bronies stress over updating their Pony wiki on the bookstore's spotty wifi. But the ropes are made of tightly woven Murakami threads and are impenetrable. Yet Gaiman is still signing Sandman comics for sullen goth women with a pen in his mouth. "I'll be fine," he says, around the pen. "I say the word and my fans shall curb-stomp these poor souls into bloody chicklets," he says. "It'll be World Con all over again." He smiles endearingly. Somewhere, Amanda Palmer sighs. You retreat to 4.

13. The clerk is bubbly behind the cash register. "Did you find everything you were looking for?" she asks. "Did you?" you ask. "All I'm looking for is a drink, a couch and a place to burn my B.A," she replies. Go to 10.

14. The clerk throws you a cross made of post mumblecore irony and girl cooties. The Bronies hiss, retreating to write a blog post about why Neil Gaiman should totally write a Twilight Sparkle mini-series. You notice Neil Gaiman tied to a chair behind them. If you try to rescue him, go to 12. If you leave him to his fate and flee, go to 4.

15. You find the happiness you've always been searching for. The peace, the solitude, the quiet, both inside and out. Then, ten minutes later, you wonder if you can turn this into a book.

16. The clerk appears. "This year, it's all Jane Austen!" she says. She points out titles like Pride and Punishment, Sense and Sensory Deprivation, and Well Hung Mansfield Park. "That's not Austen," you say. "It is now," she says. You sigh. Go to 13.

17. You find the book in a dusty part of the store where only 80s music plays. Adrian Mole hands you the book. "Have you seen Pandora?" he asks. "No, I didn't care for Avatar," you say. Go to 13.



Baby its Cold Outside

Fancy Pants on Fashion

the two f words

Having spent the vast majority of my life in London dwelling along the west side of the Thames River I have often felt like Ichabod Crane as I cross the bridges coming home on a Friday or Saturday night. Only I'm not outrunning the Headless Horseman. I am escaping the horrors of Richmond Row and the drunken, underpants-less, spike-heeled, and alleyway-urinating banshee cries of university girls declaring their love for one another, their need for an emergency infusion of poutine and their desperation to find a cab ride home.

The shrieking and gibbering dialogue of these sodden denizens of higher-ed is depressing enough to confront at any time of year yet weighs on the heart a little more heavily at Christmas. They grope around in those absurdly high heels with all the steadiness of Bambi taking his first steps but instead of collapsing into soft pastures of clover, they go careening into plant boxes, knock over newspaper stands, or just plop down onto the Richmond Street curbs with legs spread full eagle; exposing passersby to more cleavage and nether-parts than can be found on the Central Library's internet history feed. Young lads who are unwilling to wear a belt tight enough so that their pants cover their rumps, bend forward and offer their hand – the one not holding a red plastic cup - to lift the drunken damsels out of their squalid dishevelment.

"Fancy Pants", I hear you objecting. "You're being plain old mean here. You know that they aren't all like that."

That's true, they aren't all like this, but frankly the vast majority are.

"How can you cast judgment without opening a dialogue for discussion?"

Alas, I have tried to engage these poor creatures in dialogue. Repeatedly I've asked boys not to urinate on my bicycle when finishing my shifts at a famous Richmond row eatery and hipster bar. I assisted a girl to an ambulance who was the life of the party one New Year's Eve until she overdosed on ecstasy and suddenly no one claimed to know her. One Halloween I found a girl passed out outside my apartment on Albert Street wearing nothing but a hockey jersey and high heels. I asked where she was previous to passing out and if she needed to find her clothes or costume. "This is it," she replied. "I'm fine."

But is this really it? Is this fine? I know I'm not the only one grossed out by the 'sex me now' parades that take over Richmond Row on weekend evenings. I know many people who avoid all the student hubs and won't drive down Richmond after dusk. When we get the seasonal bitch slap from Bonhomme himself of extensive snowfall, I really don't understand why these people can't put on some more clothes, or just turn introspective and get a little kind and thoughtful like the season suggests.

When I set out to write this piece I wanted to find out why these kids don't wear jackets in the winter months. With the ever popular demand of Canada Goose Jackets on both London campuses, I don't know why club hoppers aren't bundled up in them at night. There clearly is no survivalist instinct at play here except when these plastered morons fight for Gatorades at Mac's mart after last call. And why won't they wear shoes more conducive to not getting wobbly when

they drink their wobbly pop? And what determines their outfits for going out at night?

I asked my questions and 'Fashion' was the main response to all of them. I can get behind that. That's one of the main fixations of my existence too. Good. Yes, we were getting somewhere. But wait - Uggs, Canada Goose, Lulu Lemon, Roots, Guess, Marc Jacobs, Levis, TNA, American Apparel, and whatever other garments these kids appropriate to their purpose, yes, taken separately these can be valid fashion components but combining them in the haphazard way they do fails to achieve what true fashion sets out to give the wearer - style.

When Mary Quant revolutionized the miniskirt it was paradoxical in that it portended both vulnerability and empowerment. None of the girls I asked knew who or what Mary Quant was. Ease for drunkenly squatting in the alleyways behind Prince Al's or Stobie's was not what Quant had in mind with the liberation of legs. The continual pulling down of hem so short and tight that the skirt can't even hug or accentuate curves but binds like a sausage-casing even on the most waif-like of figures is not what she had in mind. Nor was sitting down bare-assed because of the lack of fabric allowance on a skirt.

Fashion is at its most abundant and exciting in the fall and winter (hello September Vogue and Elle) when the consumer is offered a dizzying array of garments that feature bold or subtle new fabrics, amazing designs and reinterpretations of classic silhouettes. The best fashions – even swimsuits - don't just expose the bodies that wear them; they augment and complement them in ways that can be dramatic, mysterious or graceful. And in the colder months the discerning woman is able to take advantage of all these possibilities in a way that isn't possible in the summer. But even in the chilly depths of December and January on Richmond Row, fashion-wise at least, it's like summer never ends.

I decided to venture deeper into my work and braved a club to better understand the phenomenon of why college girls refuse to dress for winter. I waited in line to get into one joint for what felt like eternity, all the while muffling the sensible voice inside which insisted I didn't belong here. I had a bag full of books, I was wearing tweed, all my shirt buttons were done up, and I hate dub step. A little dazed upon entering the loud and pulsating room with lights flashing all around me in co-ordination to rhythms that could trigger epileptic fits, I quickly learned I'd better watch my step as the floor was a mess of spilt beer, sticky mixed drinks, and plastic cups - and the mucky areas outside the washrooms were more disgusting yet.

Trying to interview anybody in this hellish chamber was clearly going to be impossible where nothing subtler than an ecstatic shriek or a hollered, 'Yo!' would even register. After waiting another eternity to get a drink from an apathetic bartender, I was ready to check out the dance floor. The mob of people on the floor were not dancing, the DJ was not spinning, and the clothes were not fitting, except in the context of fitting perfectly with this bleak and awful place. Bodies were just limply bouncing, flapping one hand up and down in the air as they all crowded around

the MacBook DJ hooting and hollering over music that sounded like a spaceship suffering from diarrhea; ie: dub step. Ever seen the opening scene of '2001 a Space Odyssey' with the apes? Just like that but without the sticks and these poor monkeys were decked out in shirts half done up and poly-blend body-con skirts. I noticed one girl, mascara smeared atop glazed eyes, dancing on a chair in a red mini-dress that was so tight and ill-fitted that every movement caused it to slide a little further up her torso. Another man - hopefully she had consented or he was her ever-so-classy boyfriend - proceeded to put his hands ... well ... up the orifice that the dress no longer covered.

At this point I decided I'd had enough. The rumours are all true. Lock up your children. The future is dismal. The human race is doomed and we should just keep those cop cars parading Richmond Row and being drunkenly mistaken for cabs: "But look - it has its lights on. Get in!"

Walking home, head hung low like Charlie Brown with the Vince Guaraldi Trio chiming in my head, I tried not to notice yet another half-naked, over-refreshed coed flat on her back in a snowbank and being pelted with snowballs and shrieking, "Stop! Stop! It's not fair." I agreed with her; it wasn't fair to subject myself to anymore of this nonsense. Passing by the Middlesex Health Unit I tried to think happier thoughts about good health, goodwill, merriment, what I'll wear to upcoming Christmas parties and how to make this article kinder.

Around the back of the Unit another hobbling, slurring debutante clung to her equally sozzled boyfriend's arm and yanked on it, causing the stream of urine he was trying to aim into a corner of the Peace Gardens parking lot to splatter over his shoes. "Call the cab back!" she said. "Call him back, call it, call it!"

"It won't come back 'cause you barfed in it," he said.



Convenient Kitsch-en

Chuck Knor on Food

the two f words

Anyone who has spent their fair share of time in downtown London, either passing through or on a visit or finding themselves on a mission to fill the void after last call, knows that one reliable dining option is food stands, which in downtown usually translates to Souvlaki. All three of the stands that currently remain offer similar fast food Greek fare and have taken over previous Sammy's locations - including The Great Greek at the corner of Richmond and York which replaced Sammy's 17 years ago.

This uniform sameness of fare hasn't seemed to curb sales at these stands. Most nights of the week you can't miss the swaying mobs of burping bar revellers awaiting their gyros alongside aloof VIA rail and Greyhound passengers who politely squeeze through the crowd to place their orders. They might seem unlikely dining partners but all are agreed: the food served up is undeniably delicious.

Unless you have a designated driver who will transport you beyond the core or out to the burbs, there are no other fast food options downtown. From the perspective of health consciousness, this probably isn't a bad thing for downtown diners. Aside from ordering a glass of water, I've no doubt that falafel is a healthier choice than anything else to be found on a Taco Bell menu. My only complaint is that it's all Souvlaki all the time and nothing else. As some may remember, this wasn't always the case. The long gone and beloved Hum-Hum, once situated only a block west of The Great Greek served up Egyptian snacks and sandwiches nearly 10 years ago. Egyptian! It sounds almost avant-garde compared to our current wall-to-wall Souvlaki routine.

Things may be about to improve however. As early as next month, a proposal by city council, which will determine the laws surrounding the operation of food trucks in London, may bring some diversity back into the street food genre. What started off as a pilot project became a proposal that was scrapped for further consideration to design a process that will encourage more creative proposals, more exotic menus and most importantly, some healthy competition. If these trucks start offering some attractive alternatives that people are interested in trying, all other restaurants - stationary and mobile - may be inspired to try a little harder.

The original plan which would have limited the number of trucks to three in Victoria Park with restrictions on menu selection was found to be too constricting by Mayor Joe Fontana who stated that the goal here was about, "making sure that we get it right and not



screw it up". Our more common Souvlaki stands which are actually trailers that require business permits to rent commercial space, differ from trucks which are able to drive into a lot, do their business and drive away. There is still going to be some debate regarding the distance a truck should be allowed to operate from a brick and mortar restaurants and if these restrictions become too onerous they may end up defeating the purpose of allowing more in the first place.

Whether food trucks could deter business from nearby restaurants or even offer up something more alluring shouldn't be the concern. Depending on whether people want to sit down or stand up for dinner, they'll soon figure out where they should go and having that choice should be encouraged. Ultimately, we want to entice people to eat somewhere to experience what that establishment uniquely offers, and not just because they happen to be hungry. If all that you're striving to do is to stuff the hungry gut with any old fare that will muffle the pangs and the growls, then who cares whether you take your grub from a food truck, a restaurant or the dumpster out back?

For those who couldn't imagine the idea of food trucks ever topping the quality of our restaurants, the menus on some trucks in more progressive cities in the U.S. such as New York, Miami and Chicago, might have you second guessing that assumption and could also provide a little motivation for London's mobile food purveyors to catch up.

One area in which you might think food trucks and trailers can't compete with bricks-and-mortar restaurants is in providing an atmosphere - old or new, gaudy or chic - for the dining experience. Taken to extremes it can seem that some restaurants are equal parts novelty shop and eatery. But unquestionably atmosphere matters and plays a major part in our decision-making about where to dine. But don't sell these trucks and trailers short - many of them are oozing with atmosphere.

Sammy Cardabakis, who ran the original Sammy Souvlaki, had more than just a good sense of humour when he installed a live-web cam at one of his more lively locations on Richmond Street at the foot of Carling. Thousands upon thousands of people logged on to watch nothing much happen at all as streams of pedestrians walked past and people lined up at the window to place their orders and get their food. Why did so many people watch it?

Particularly in the evening when their blinking year-round Christmas lights are aglow (infinitely more charming and soulful than those energy-sucking eyesores for signs at fast food joints) the food trucks and trailers of London bring some of the magic of the Western Fair midway to zipped up downtown streets.

The Great Greek has an especially peculiar way of doing their burgers in which toppings are evenly distributed among both top and bottom buns, only to be flipped together in a moment of apparently gravity-free conjunction when only a piece or two of lettuce flutter down onto the countertop. Now that's (picnic) table-side cooking. But how does the food add-up?

Amazing.

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The Coercive Sexual Politics of Evangelical Christians

Vanessa Brown

I've been thinking a lot about a wretched poem I read on the internet called "Not Tonight Dear," by Jennifer Flanders.

*I've got a headache.
I'm too tired.
I'm having PMS.
I couldn't think of making love when the house is such a mess.
The baby's sick.
Your mother called.
I've got too much to do.
I think I'd rather cuddle — is that alright with you?*

The poem, an ode to the "excuses" women might give for not having sex (read: reasons) is indicative of truly repulsive attitudes towards sex that exist in Evangelical Christian culture. Her message is summarized in the final stanza:

*When wives won't give their husbands sex,
then everybody loses,
But Heaven's floodgates open when we stop
making excuses!
The rapey floodgates of semen.*

Before I defend my accusations of rape, let me introduce you to Jennifer Flanders. Flanders (no relation to Ned) is a mommy blogger and devout Christian, author of "Love Your Husband, Love Yourself" - because, Lord knows, you can't have one without the other. She has twelve kids, and while I'm not going to judge anyone for procreating (especially since twelve was not that big a number not that long ago), I think we can probably lump her in with the Quiverfulls. Her brood has its own website, presenting their lives like some kind of small business. Flanders is definitely at the helm of this elaborately and impressively organized, home-schooled, money-wise family. I know people who would give their eye-teeth to live out the Christian dream like these upper-middle-class white Americans. The site shows pictures of the kids, their house, their fun activities, and her apparently horny-as-hell husband.

I'll take no issue with Flanders, although her poem is terrible and her website is ripe for mockery from a hardened lesbo-liberal-feminazi like me (just beating her to the punch). I can speak from experience, however, and address some fundamental (tee hee) problems with the politics of Evangelical Christian sex.

I've heard countless sermons about sex addiction, the evils of pornography and how women should be modest so they don't tempt the rabid males around them who have an abject need to copulate. Flanders' poem illustrates this assumption, posing the Christian woman as the avoider of sexual contact, and the man as the insatiable horny toad. I don't need to explain to anyone how this contributes to rape culture, rendering men unaccountable for their behaviour, and asking women—who have been stripped of sexual agency by doctrines of virginity—to take ownership over all sexual conduct.

I once heard a pastor say from the pulpit that he had to quit going to the gym because he got so turned on by the women in their workout gear that he had sinful thoughts about them. Christian men even form "triad groups" to help them take control of their sexual addictions (often involving very banal pornography and late-night blue movies). I'm most definitely oversimplifying my argument but in truth this is all a bunch of overgrown adolescents who need to take ownership of their super-charged libidos. Imagine an eleven year old in the delirious grip of puberty's onset, give him a job, a community of like-minded morons, a subjugated wife and a 4x4 and you have an entire culture of men who believe they have no control over their sexual appetite when the reality is that they are repressed Peter Pans who refuse to grow up and take responsibility for their own feelings and desires.

When do you ever hear a sermon telling women to watch out for sexual addiction or pornography? No one ever cautioned me while I was surfing bulletin board systems in the early 90s gathering erotica about lesbians and their dogs. No one warned me about the perils of masturbation. No one told me that I might actually be hornier than any of the guys I dated, and that I would be way too excited about sex to let me live the kind of chaste life I was told I should.

Christian women are socialized to bury their sex-

uality like a dead dog and never have the chance to develop their own sexual tastes and needs. They're told not to have sex until they get hitched and don't you dare use a vibrator, you hussy! So many women get married without ever having an orgasm. They are tied to a partner for life—under a great deal of social pressure—who may or may not have any sexual compatibility with them.

Once I had a boyfriend that loved looking at porn, and it ticked me off. The best thing I ever did was seek my revenge by discovering my own pornography. Evangelical Christian women need to empower themselves and stop buying into this idea that men are super horny and women are super chaste. Equality through climax!

There's an argument to be made for stepping into foreplay in hopes of getting in the mood. You could also point out that mothers of young children often experience a loss of libido. Christian or not, ladies who raise kids, home-school, work outside of the home or are otherwise super busy, often find themselves wanting sleep instead of sex, and that's their prerogative - including you, Flanders. And you could say that sometimes one partner wants sex more than the other, regardless of gender, and the partner with the lacking libido can benefit from a willingness to try to engage in some sexual activities in hopes of arousal, or as I call it, waking up my lady bits.

But this sort of experimentation is not coerced. And I cannot imagine a stronger coercion than a cultural imperative to fulfill your doctrinally ordained duty as a Christian spouse and wife by having sex and giving birth as many times as God allows your pervy husband to impregnate you.

So, you're supposed to have sex with your husband whenever he wants you to, without birth control, and then be fulfilled and happy about it?

That's whack.

And yeah, in so far as I said I wasn't judging, I am. Because a church culture that advocates theology leading to what is essentially marital rape is not cool.

I'm sure Flanders doesn't feel like she's being raped.

But rape is simply unwanted sex. There's no way around it.

Even if Jesus said so.

red headed snippet

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THE CHRISTMAS SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR PRECIOUS SNOW FLAKES LIKE ME

Sean Twist

sounds razor

I look forward to the holidays about as much as a colonoscopy with a Stinger missile.

Oh, look. You're making a face. You apparently love the holidays. Sorry about that. That would explain the Christmas sweater you're wearing. I'm sure Santa and Rudolph always jitterbug under a disco ball like that. I'm sure that white stuff floating around them is just snow. And is that Christmas music on your iPod? Aww, that's sweet. 'Tis the season, amirite? Now would you mind just handing me to that rather sullen looking person sitting behind you? Yes, that one. Thank you. Merry Christmas!

(Yodeller passed over.)

Hey, how are you? That was a close call. So yeah, I can see you and I are on the same Christmas holiday wavelength. The dead air channel. The 'This Can't Be Over Soon Enough' channel, now playing the despairing hits of the introverted and festive season shellshocked. This is probably the worst time of our year, and there are only so many Dorothy Parker quotations we can hide behind.

But I've been at this awhile. I've learned a few tricks to keeping myself sane, and like a good Frank Oz operated Jedi Master, to pass on what learned I have happy I am to.

Now, the unavoidable truth is you have to endure family holiday get-togethers. You can't douche out and not go. For every cousin or uncle who forgets you graduated university ten years ago, have never had kids or is shocked you don't follow the Leafs, there is that one relative who sees you as a lifeline to survive the day. You will know them by the way they tackle you, hold you down and shout "FOR GOD'S SAKE GET ME OUT OF HERE!" into your face.

Hug them. They've missed you.

But now you have the rest of the day to survive. And this is where I come in.

First of all, you need to armour up. This doesn't include iPods or smartphones. As much you may think these are necessary, they are only traps that will invite further interaction. Flash your phone out to scrawl a 'Save Me' message on Twitter

and in seconds your Auntie Agnes from Forest will appear asking you if you're on the Facebook because she is and it's quite the thing there. Then for the next year you'll have to scroll past pictures of her cat looking pissed off in bonnets and reams of text about footprints in the sand or variations thereof.

Same with an iPod. Maybe you have hours of *Wait Wait Don't Tell Me* on there, an auditory oasis, but your niece will be horrified that you don't listen to *One Direction* and will then tell you for eleven agonizing minutes why they're better than any band ever. Or you'll have to explain what NPR is to your sister, who will then proudly declare she's never heard of it and that she's getting this new chakra tattoo she saw on Pinterest and do you have your smartphone because she can totally show you?

No, here are the two things you need to survive:

1. A placid expression.
2. A book.

Being Canadian, it shouldn't be too hard to manage the first thing. Just imagine the Polka Dot Door Theme sung by Mitsou. Beautiful, isn't it? As for the second, it's important that you choose the right book.

(Now, before we continue, let's clarify: reading at family functions isn't rude. If the television is on, then you can read. This was held up by the World Court. If someone says you're being rude, simply stare at the *Duck Dynasty* marathon. Slowly arch your right eyebrow. Then offer to read your book aloud so everyone can share. This will work wonders in generating solitude.)

As for the book, choosing the right one is vital. Do not bring along *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Imagine the horror if your mother says she's read that. And then giggles. And then wants to show you her favourite part. And then you leap through the front window. And then there are sirens. And then you make new friends also covered in plate glass in *Urgent Care* with similar stories. And then you'll have to explain again why you're not on Facebook, even if their *My Mom Read Fifty Shades* support group sounds cool.

Here, then, are a few book suggestions. Please be sure to display the cover at all times.

1. ROTTERS by Daniel Kraus

This delightful story about a family of grave robbers is the perfect antidote to the sugary treacle of the season. Be sure to visibly highlight the pages that describe the states of corpse decomposition in a coffin, and how best to shovel down to said coffin. Nod knowingly a lot.

2. JOHN DIES AT THE END by David Wong

Get the cover with the severed hand. The story itself is like the best of '70s Marvel horror comics taking a road trip with William Burroughs. It will be your best friend during that desert of loss that are the hours before dinner is served and your drunken family tries to reconnect the Wii.

3. THE TERROR by Dan Simmons

A book about being alone in a frozen emptiness surrounded by unknowable monsters. You may be able to relate.

4. NORWEGIAN WOOD by Haruki Murakami

This one could be dangerous. Someone may see the cover and go 'Hey, is that about that song by that band?' If so, simply reply, "The Rolling Stones?" In the ensuing confusion simply enjoy this beautiful story.

5. RED: MY UNCENSORED LIFE IN ROCK by Sammy Hagar

Hey, you wanted to be alone, right?

So be strong, introverted warrior. Maybe an asteroid will hit the Earth before the next Christmas season. It is the season of hope, after all.

The advertisement features a large yellow title 'NICK BUZZ' with a stylized profile of a man's head in the 'O'. Below the title is a black and white illustration of a dark, crouching figure in a field. A small inset image shows a black monkey sitting on a branch. Text on the right reads: 'A Quiet Evening at Home' (in a yellow box), 'available now on Six Shooter Records' (in a yellow box), and 'or online at iTunes'. At the bottom left, it says 'also check out' with two smaller album covers: 'Arnold Schoenberg and the Berlin Cabarets' and 'Circo NICK BUZZ'. The word '&' is placed between the two covers.

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