

Volume 15 Issue 13

April 13, 2007







End of an Era Kurt Vonnegut, RIP

Made in CanadaExchange Program Set For Fall Launch

Ban the Trans

Reader Responds

Plus: The Good Life Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan Music to Eat Lunch To From Where I Sit

and much more...



Welcome To The Voice PDF

The Voice interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom-right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.



EDITORIAL Tamra Ross



MUSIC TO EAT LUNCH TO
THE GOOD LIFE
FROM WHERE I SIT
CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN
LOST AND FOUND

Mandy Gardner

Janice Behrens

Hazel Anaka

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Bill Pollett



news and events

EDUCATION NEWS
INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK
CLICK ON THIS

Mandy Gardner Lonita Fraser



from the readers

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR CLASSIFIEDS



We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@ausu.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.

Re: "Ban the Trans: These Sorry Lipids Should Go Away" by Rob Fursiewicz, v15 i03 (2007-01-19)

In his article, Rob Fursiewicz calls the trans fat regulation critics' Big Brother slippery-slope argument "fallacious." What part of the argument is fallacious? Although I tend to agree with Mr. Fursiewicz's point of view on this issue, I fail to see how the slippery-slope argument is fallacious i.e. contains logical missteps. Perhaps Mr. Fursiewicz is using a new, improved, Canadian definition of fallacy of which we boorish Yanks are unaware? I'd appreciate any response.

Thanks,

Chris Nuckols New York, NY

We could all use a reminder to ensure that we are using language precisely and thoughtfully. An argument could be made for a fallacy in this case, but the statement was not fully supported. I appreciate that readers are taking the time to read critically and share their comments with us.

Tamra Ross, Editor In Chief

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Editorial Tamra Ross



K. Vonnegut, RIP

Mutiny. The mid-nineties, killing time in the faded cafeteria of Calgary's Viscount Bennett Centre for another excruciatingly dull 90-minute time-wasting lunch break. Usually, between classes, we go our separate ways but today we share a table and huddle in conspiracy.

"If we all ask her to change the book, she'll have to," is the consensus.

"I couldn't get through the first 20 pages," moans the single mother

who always wears the same ragged tweed suit.

"It's slut literature! I'm not having this in my house with my children," rails the skinny Jehovah's Witness who hasn't read a single page, and won't. He's scaring me a little.

"It's awful—how can anyone read this!" echoes around the table.

Ten classmates, adult upgraders, not much in common, but united in mutual revulsion for the slim novel assigned for our first theme. All except one. Me. I'm lazy and a quick reader, so I haven't bothered to crack the book yet. Now, though, I can't wait. Can it be that bad?

In the end they chicken out. All but the Witness, who stands up in class and berates our teacher about her poor choice of literature—a book that he's *heard* is immoral and damaging to children (no, he's not going to read it. He won't expose himself to blasphemy. Besides, his congregation has condemned this novel to the fires of censorship). Whatever.

The teacher, no older than most of her students and younger than a few, wavers. She's intimidated and a little scared. She capitulates. The angry man won't be subjected to disturbing thoughts. He'll be permitted to write his theme on *Lord of the Flies*—that ubiquitous tale of an adolescent utopia where individuality and creativity are freely explored on a verdant isle without adult intervention. Angry man is pleased to be reading about children and morality.

On the other end of the spectrum, I too stand alone. The book has enthralled me and begun a lifelong enchantment with the works of Kurt Vonnegut, though that first novel, *Cat's Cradle*, will remain my favourite and shape me in immeasurable ways.

Vonnegut was best known for his unconventional style. His novels progress as a series of literary scraps joined in a network of unconventional timelines, his narrative incessantly sidetracked as it meanders with abandon through Vonnegut's id, a network of asides, reflections, and self-indulgent snippets and snipes aimed at anyone from the leader of the free world to one of Vonnegut's grade school chums.

Many have emulated his unconventional style, but few do it well. Often it's an excuse to avoid learning the rules of writing: the tedious drills of syntax, grammar, punctuation, and citation. But Vonnegut knew what my 12th-grade English teacher always emphasized: that you can't begin to break the rules until you become a master of them. Vonnegut knew how to write, and he wrote very well. His kaleidoscopic style was deliberate, skilful, and effective. He was one of the last true literary craftsmen.

Today, political and social commentary is delivered fresh daily, with the immediacy imperative of our information generation. There is no time to collate or compare, to study or synthesize. Those who write about the state of the world or man prefer immediate formats: blogs or radio, television or IMs. You too can have the news of the world beamed to your cellphone the moment it happens. The key is to broadcast right-

now-without-thought-or-hesitation. It is a job for the fearless. Vonnegut was anything but fearless. He *considered* what he wrote. He anguished and suffered and became bewildered and discouraged, then returned to the page and struggled to find a greater truth and express his anguish over what man was capable of, and how he has expressed that capability.

Vonnegut had a lot to say about man. It was often said that he criticized religion and science, but that's not quite right. He wrote about man's reaction to these things, and his inability to control them or to use them deliberately with consideration or moderation. It's a subtle but significant distinction. Vonnegut did not denigrate religion. He denigrated man's indiscriminate adherence to any system or philosophy and pointed out how the beauty and power of spirituality and higher thought were diminished by blind faith. He knew that our best philosophies stand up to, and are strengthened by, constant examination and challenge.

Ironically, the social response to Vonnegut's work in so many ways demonstrated the very ignorance and hysteria that Vonnegut sought to expose. His books have been burned by schools to protect young minds, prohibited by congregations, and discarded by new readers not prepared for his disarming style and blatant honesty. Yet his books are among the most moral, empowering works written. He saw a potential in man for things greater than we have achieved, and watched our blunders as a loving parent does a wayward child. His disappointment was great, but miraculously never turned to disillusionment.

It is fear of disillusionment that prevents us, I think, from wanting to examine too closely our failures as humans and as societies. Vonnegut, then, showed how optimism can be nurtured in even the bleakest place. He also showed that we cannot progress until we honestly and thoroughly examine where we have gone wrong. It is a lesson few are teaching in this era of spin and late-night satire that serves more to glorify than to expose hypocrisy and treachery.

As I continue my own struggle to complete a senior English thesis on Vonnegut's work, I'm saddened that he won't be here to express what I've always felt, and speak as I've always wanted to speak. He has been my inspiration for a novel I hope to someday write, though my work will be in no way thematically similar to anything Mr. Vonnegut has done. It's his fearlessness and honesty that I admire, and his unfailing willingness to continue to confront what is painful.

What I loved most was his neo-Jungian concept of the connectedness of man, which was never better expressed than through *Cat's Cradle's* holy man Bokonon and his notion of the granfalloon:

. . . a seeming team that was meaningless in terms of the ways God gets things done [such as] the Communist party, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the General Electric Company, the International Order of Odd Fellows—and any nation, anytime, anywhere.

If you wish to study a granfalloon

Just remove the skin of a toy balloon.

Bokonon

What could better exemplify this philosophy than Athabasca University, a community of learners, living everywhere, doing everything, of every faith, connected in learning, yet working in isolation, challenging the notion of artificial boundaries and the oneness of everything. And yes, another granfalloon.

Vonnegut's work speaks to you or it doesn't. I'm glad it spoke to me.

Vonnegut, K. (1988). Cat's Cradle. New York: Laurel.

MUSIC TO EAT LUNCH TO

Mecca Normal - The Observer



Release Date: 2006 Label: Kill Rock Stars

Tracks: 12 Rating: 10

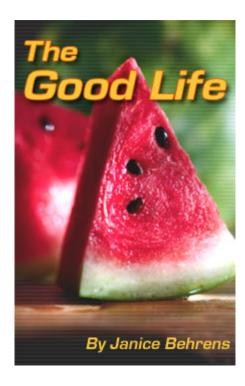
Ever listened to the Velvet Underground, the more psychedelic Jefferson Airplane songs, or Janis Joplin? Mecca Normal is the modern Canadian culmination of that particular sound, known to some as the "riot grrl" genre. It's feminist, political, personal, and everything mundane wrapped up in prolonged and somewhat agonized vocals, backed up with steady support on a quiet electric-acoustic guitar.

Vocalist Jean Smith has filled the album with songs about her failed love life: horrible dates with "Fallen Skier," issues of insecurity in "I'm Not Into Being The Woman You're With While You're Looking For The Woman You Want," and an odd look at love itself in "Attraction is Ephemeral." For added flavour she's thrown in the offbeat track "The Caribou and the Oil Pipeline," with an ensuing explanation of how it's absurd to release an album without mentioning such a pressing issue.

David Lester picks up the guitar to join in on the post-hippy record and does a great job of building up the detached, introspective mood. In fact, as a team the duo comes off awfully close to beat poets. You can picture them spanning several decades: sporting berets and striped white-and-black shirts in the 50s, long hair and headbands in the 60s and 70s, and thin white cotton robes in the 80s. Despite the modern genre label (riot grrl), this is a band that has picked up on an ubiquitous form of music and honestly made it work for them.

What really comes to mind when I listen to these tracks is the fact that Mecca Normal is so transparent in their Canadian nationality. More so than even the Tragically Hip, you can immediately hear that the songwriters are concerned with this country: they're kept busy watching Americans; they tell us about skiers who left school in grade 11 and didn't leave home until they were twenty; and of course they sing about caribou and American oil pipelines. It's not by any means a patriotic band nor a patriotic album; I merely mean that the songs themselves have obviously been constructed within specific borders.

The Observer is a very clever name for the record, because that is exactly the impression it has left on me. Mecca Normal has made a great album that makes you feel like you've just switched on the CBC News after a long vacation away from home. It's unconventional, bright, and entertaining—give it a shot!



Getting Young and Old Together

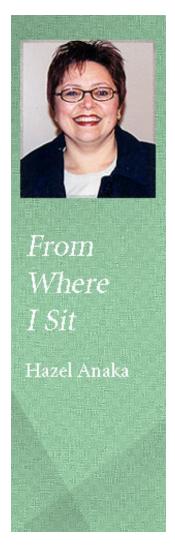
A good friend of mine has, for several years, been involved in teaching storytelling skills to elementary-school-aged children. She comes into classrooms and tells them funny or spooky folk tales and fairy tales from a variety of cultures around the world. Because she has a flair for the dramatic, and a lovely speaking voice, the children are enthralled by her storytelling. She then encourages them to create their own stories, collaboratively as a group, and tell them.

More recently, she has been conducting storytelling and creative-writing workshops for senior citizens. She does this at community centres and at senior citizen residences. This gives the seniors she works with an opportunity to develop and share stories from the rich experiences of their lives. Although I have not had an opportunity to sit in on one of these sessions, she tells me that there have been several times that their stories have been so profound that they have sent shivers up her spine, or so heart-wrenching that she has been in tears.

Her latest project is to develop a joint storytelling experience involving both children and elders. She feels that both groups would benefit from the unique and contrasting forms of energy and experience that each has to offer.

I have often wondered about the way that our society has a tendency of isolating and segregating people by age. It is a strange phenomenon in the Western world that 10-year-olds are mostly in the company of 10-year-olds, teenagers are mostly with teenagers, middle-aged people hang out with other middle-aged people, and senior citizens are shunted off to the margins of society. It seems to me that when this happens, we lose so much of the potential for inter-generational sharing of wisdom and resources. Surely it is important to realize and remember that young children are not just unformed adults. They are fully formed, vibrant entities, complete with a world view that needs to be expressed and heeded by those older than they are. By the same token, senior citizens are not over-the-hill adults. They are conduits of experience, filled with ideas and knowledge that they could not possibly have possessed when they were younger.

By getting young and old together, under the right circumstances, who knows what sorts of magic and synergy might be created, what benefits might come about for all involved. More power to my friend, I say.



It's All About Focus

Have you ever noticed that the moment you buy a red car you see nothing but red cars just like yours everywhere? Or if I said "Don't think about the colour blue," that's all you would see or think about? With millions of sensory stimuli bombarding us daily, we need to be able to ignore most things just to keep from going crazy. The reality is: we see what we focus on or think about.

Maybe this is the year you've begun thinking about your money or your debt or changing your financial life. Before long you'll notice books, articles, seminars, television programs, products, and experts everywhere you turn. You'll talk to your spouse or children or friends about money. You'll catch Suze Orman's PBS special *Women and Money*. If you're a serious student of wealth you'll make notes when Suze outlines the eight qualities of a wealthy woman: harmony, balance, courage, generosity, happiness, cleanliness, beauty, and wisdom. Harmony requires that our thoughts, words, actions, and feelings are all one. Without that, nothing else, including financial independence, is possible.

You'll flip through a copy of David Bach's *Start Late and Finish Rich* and begin to believe it's possible. You will have hope that past neglect, mistakes, ignorance, or indifference can be reversed.

You might even access some of Alberta's free resources, such as *Woman Today: Making it Work!* (1), available through the Alberta Learning Information Service website, or *Stretch Your Dollars: Budgeting Basics* (2) from Credit Counselling Services of Alberta. Both publications are easy to read and grounded in the real world. And the price is right. The budgeting one includes examples, worksheets, tips, and a resource list.

Woman Today offers hope and advice to women returning to or entering the workforce, with all its implications. In addition to the expected chapters on learning, stress management, and creating balance, there's a big one devoted to money matters.

Perhaps the January 20 *Edmonton Journal* headline "'Credit-Card Condom' Makes for Safer Spending" caught your eye. The article explains the strategy of Sheila Walkington, a Vancouver money coach. The sleeve, which slips over the credit card, identifies the client's goal (new home, vacation, whatever) on one side and lists four behaviour-altering questions on the other. The questions are: "Do I need this right now? Can I afford this? Could I get it cheaper/free elsewhere? Will it move me one step closer to my goal?" (3). Walkington believes having a goal eases the pain associated with budgeting and debt reduction and motivates people to stick with it to reach that goal.

The underlying message in all this is that boldly taking inventory of our current financial state, re-examining our money beliefs, and making informed, responsible decisions is the only respectful thing to do. Notice the resources, appreciate the serendipity of things coming together, avail yourself of expert advice. It all starts with focus, from where I sit.

- (1) Alberta Human Resources and Employment, People, Skills and Workplace Resources (2007). *Woman Today, ed. 2.* Retrieved April 10, 2007, from http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/pdf/cshop/WomanToday2.pdf
- (2) Credit Counselling Services of Alberta Ltd. (2007). Stretch Your Dollars: Budgeting Basics. Retrieved April 10, 2007, from https://www.creditcounselling.com/downloads/StretchYourDollars.pdf
- (3) Edmonton Journal (2007). "Credit-card Condom' Makes for Safer Spending." Retrieved April 10, 2007, from http://www.canada.com/edmontonjournal/news/yourmoney/story.html?id=64b72cf1-f961-42df-b1d1-e0a42bf34f13

The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by Wanda Waterman St. Louis





True Given Name

The world wants to give me a name, but I have no name in the sense that you mean. My name, my true name, is the sound of a thousand bats wheeling across the surface of a harvest moon. My true name is the sound of wind blowing through corn, of waves crashing against rocks, of angels singing.

The world wants to take away my true name, my true voice, to hide them away in silicon dungeons, encoded as numbers, encased in walls of glass. This world is the world of men who live inside great palaces of cool, tinted glass. They hide in mirrored labyrinths and press buttons that open trap doors, causing the free spirits of the world to fall from sight.

The world wants to put heavy shoes on my feet, and teach me how to walk in well-worn footsteps. But I have no need of shoes of iron, shoes of wood. On my feet there are silver blades that glide along the frozen river. From

my heels, sparks are flying into the night air. My blades make a singing sound as they cut their patterns into the ice where no one has ever set foot in heavy, heavy shoes.

The world wants to give me a song. It wants to give me a marketing jingle, a game show theme song, a lullaby into endless dreams. But I already have a song. My song is an opera sung by madmen and mermaids. My song is older than glaciers, and invented anew every second, every hour, every day. My song is terrible to hear because its beauty can lure you out of the safety of your bed in the middle of the night, and you may find yourself walking across deserts, across mountain ranges, through neighbourhoods you could never have imagined.

The world wants to buy me a drink. It wants to fill my cup with coffee, with whisky, with bottled water, with poison. But I don't need a drink from the world. I drink from clear mountain streams. I drink face down in public fountains. I drink the blood of all the monsters that hide beneath my bed, in the shadows at the back of my mind. I drink the blood of the monsters of the world, the monsters that come searching for me in the darkest hours of the day and night; the monsters that come to take away my true, given name.

CLICK ON THIS: Music Mania

Lonita Fraser

TuneFind - http://www.tunefind.com/

Find songs you've heard on television or in movies.

The Vinyl Villain - http://thevinylvillain.blogspot.com/
Dust off those old platters and share them with the world.

Pink Floyd - Echoes - http://www.pinkfloyd.co.uk/echoes/

Listen to Floyd online; just click a square!

Worst Lyrics of All Time - http://www.thephoenix.com/article_ektid14634.aspx

While I have seen worse than some of what's here, some of these are truly, incredibly painful to look at.

Mixotheque - http://mixotheque.com/blog/wordpress/

"Compilations of the classic and obscure. Every month, two 80-minute mixes catering to the cognoscenti and the newcomer."

More Click On This

Education News: New 'Maple Leaf Major'



In Toronto, Ryerson University students have a rich array of resources to enhance their education: a world-class city as an example for urban-planning studies; arts facilities to enrich art and design studies.

In Charlottetown, students at the University of Prince Edward Island enjoy the perfect setting to study environmental sciences, and have access to small class sizes and the distinguished Atlantic Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

Each university has its own unique attributes, and an upcoming fall pilot project will allow students to enjoy the best of both worlds.

In September, up to 16 undergraduate students from Ryerson and UPEI will exchange campuses in a new program that, it is hoped, will expand and become a "full Maple Leaf Major" (1).

The EDGE (Experiences Diversity Growth Exchange) program is an "in-Canada exchange" (1) that was developed by Ryerson President Sheldon Levy and Wade MacLauchlan, the president of UPEI.

For the pilot, eight third-year students from each school will swap campuses for one semester. They will be earning credits in arts, biology, chemistry, business, and computer science.

Tuition is paid at the students' home university, and the credits they earn while on exchange are fully transferable.

The EDGE program will expand students' education through contact with new people and communities, and allow them to "appreciate the diversity of education in Canada" (2).

In future, the program may see students from all across Canada taking part. Levy's hope is to create a distinctively Canadian degree, a cooperative program "where students would spend semesters on many campuses" (1).

Along with distance education, traditional classroom settings, and new technology-based learning, the EDGE program offers students still another way to enrich their education.

- (1) *Toronto Star* (March 24, 2007). "Six Degrees of Education." Retrieved April 10, 2007, from http://www.thestar.com/article/195636
- (2) Ryerson University (2007). *EDGE Student Exchange*. Retrieved April 10, 2007, from http://www.ryerson.ca/oia/students/ryerson/exchange/EDGE_information2.pdf



At Home: Ottawa Seeks Ethical Code To Keep Councillors Faithful To The Post

The Ottawa watchdog organization Eye on Ottawa is actively seeking to implement a code of ethics onto municipal government. Luc Lapointe, interim chairman, wants elected municipal councillors to commit themselves to delivering campaign promises instead of using the elections as leverage to further their political careers into federal office.

Michel Bellemare and Diane Deans, both elected into Ottawa office in last year's election, are pursuing federal Liberal seats in the next election (Deans has yet to officially announce this decision), and as a consequence their constituents will be left to another round at the ballot box. While it's understandable that Eye on Ottawa wants its councillors to stick around for the full four-year term, opponents say that it's very unlikely that any such legally binding act can be adopted in government. "People can step down for a number of reasons, and I think it

would be very difficult to have a binding kind of legislation or municipal ruling that prevented people from leaving office in the middle of their term," says Caroline Andrew of the University of Ottawa (1).

Regardless of this criticism, Lapointe and his group of defeated municipal candidates in Ottawa want to push for the legislation simply to let municipal councillors know the effect their departure has on local communities. As Lapointe says, "For that [councillor] to actually come out six months or a year or two into their term and say, 'Listen, I've changed my mind. I don't think I'm going to deliver on that commitment I said I would give to you,' there's a little bit of a lack of ethics" (1). Caroline Andrew maintains that while Eye on Ottawa has the right idea, it's really a case of municipal politicians perceiving local office as a stepping stone to better things.

(1) CBC News (2007). "Civic watchdog wants new rules for ambitious politicians." Retrieved April 12, 2007, from http://www.cbc.ca/canada/ottawa/story/2007/04/09/ot-eyeonottawa20070409.html

Internationally: U.K. Woman Loses Fight For The Right To Use Fertilized Embryos From Her Ex

A British woman has lost her final court appeal for the right to use frozen fertilized embryos created with her ex-partner. Natallie Evans and her ex, Howard Johnston, froze six embryos following Evans's diagnosis with ovarian cancer. She had hoped to use the embryos as a contingency plan when she was treated for the cancer and unable to conceive; unfortunately, in 2002 the pair split up and Johnston asked that the embryos not be used.

According to U.K. law, frozen embryos can only be used if both partners give their consent; because of this, Evans's case failed in the courts and she was told that she could not take it to the House of Lords. Distraught at losing her last chance to have a baby, Evans decided to take her case to the European Court of Human Rights. That court ruled against her, and she also lost her final appeal to the Grand Chamber of the European Court.

Johnston maintains that his joint agreement to freeze the embryos was purely so that he would be able to "choose when, if and with whom [he] would have a child" (1).

While Dr Allan Pacey, secretary of the British Fertility Society, said that his society feels "dreadfully for Natallie" (1), he added that "it was the only sensible decision which the Grand Chamber could come to" (1).

The court ruled that the embryos themselves held no right to life and as such were at the mercy of dual consent when it came to implantation.

Dr Tony Calland, chairman of the British Medical Association's medical ethics committee, agreed with the decision. "Having a child," he said, "is a life-long undertaking to which both partners should be fully committed" (1).

(1) BBC News (2007). "Woman loses final embryo appeal." Retrieved April 12, 2007, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/6530295.stm

CLICK ON THIS: Bizzartery

Lonita Fraser

9 to 5 Art - http://ni9e.com/9to5paintings.php

Turn your workday into something a lot more pleasant than a spreadsheet . . . or just make art out of the spreadsheet.

Deidre Scherer - http://www.dscherer.com/

Some absolutely fabulous life-sized works in fabrics and threads.

Ice Sculpture - http://iasos.com/news/ice.html

See? Winter's not so bad after all. Every time I see things like this, I am stunned in the same way I'm stunned when I stand before Niagara Falls.

Bathtub Art Museum - http://www.bathtubmuseum.org/

Sometimes we forget to step back and truly appreciate things we tend to relegate to being functionally decorative, and forget that those things are valid art too.

Matchstick Man - http://www.catfish1952.com/MatchstickMan.html

Making music out of matches, one tiny wooden stick at a time.



Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@ausu.org for more information.

Research Subjects Wanted - Distance and Open Education Effects on Accessibility for First Generation Learners

Participants must be:

- first generation post-secondary distance education students or alumni
- fluent in English
- · at least 18 years old

Respondents who complete our survey will be entered to win \$150.

To participate or for information, email survey@leximortis.com

Study performed and funded by AU students L. Priebe, MA; T. Ross; and K. Low.

THE VOICE

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