

## Publishing and perishing in the Ivory Tower

### What Kentuckians should expect from our land-grant university

By Andrew Battista

*Editor's note: A version of this essay originally appeared at the close of Andrew's recently completed dissertation, Knowing, Seeing, and Transcending Nature. His committee enjoyed reading it, but they insisted that it should not be published in the final version.*

It's been at least a year since I wrote anything for *North of Center*. It's not that I've gotten lazy, contracted writers block, or grown disinterested in Lexington. On the contrary, I've been furiously pecking away at my dissertation—a study of 400-year-old Renaissance literary texts—so I can resume writing about the community I experience daily, or what I like to call “the real world.”

Although I learned a lot about myself and my interactions with culture while writing my dissertation, I often was frustrated when I expended my last bit of emotional energy on a riff about epistemological uncertainty in *The Faerie Queene* when I could have instead joined the Kentucky Rising protests in Frankfort, spear-headed campus sustainability programs, helped to clean up residue from the BP Deepwater Horizon explosion, or simply reserved more time to grow my own vegetables. I

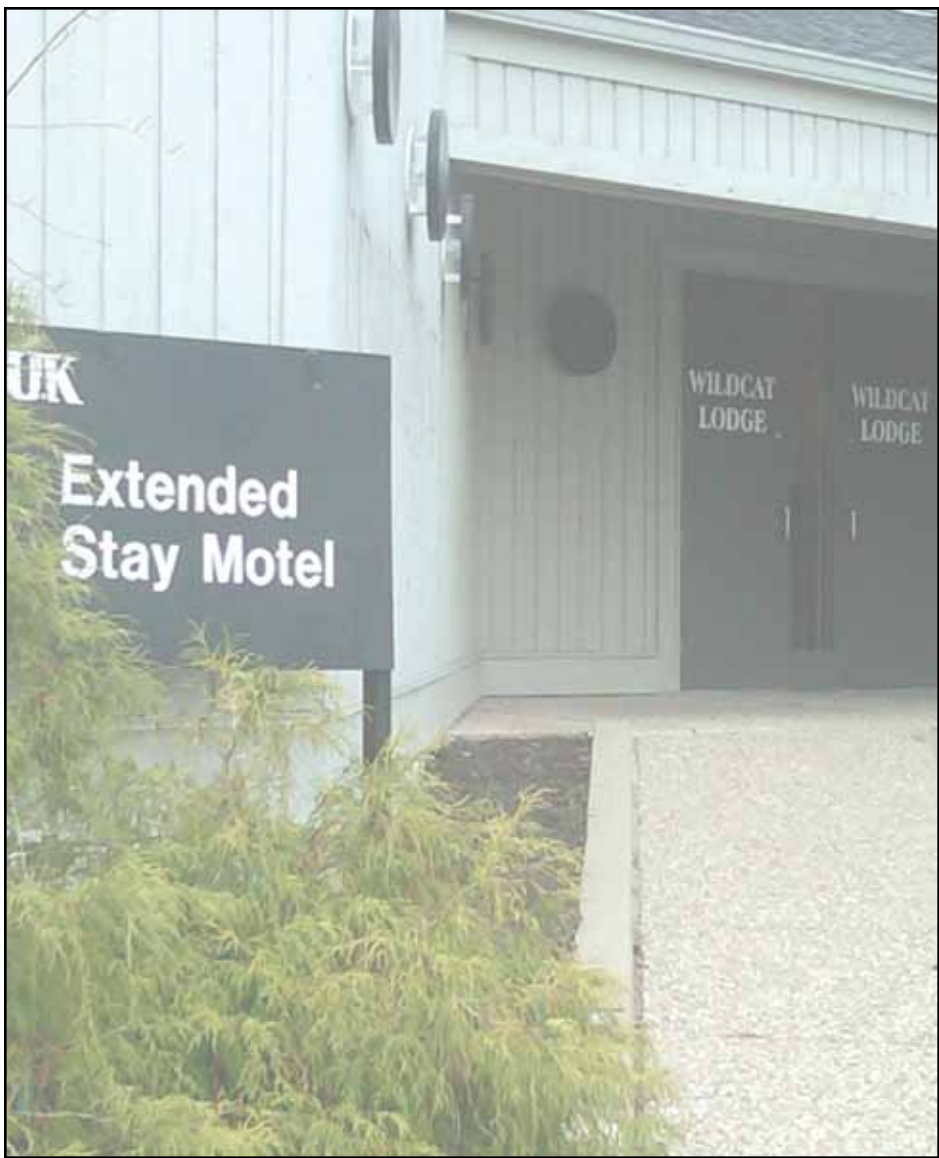
haven't even been inside the remodeled Lyric Theatre yet.

In short, as I've pushed my way through to a Ph.D. I've been flummoxed by the disjuncture between contemplation and action in the world. The time I've spent writing has led me to wonder if literary criticism, my academic field, is an effective response to any of our social problems, like the deteriorating economies we lament, the systemic inequity we tolerate, and the ecological pollution we produce. Robert Watson, a scholar I happened upon while writing my dissertation, expresses a fear that I've had all along: that literary criticism is a kind of professional detachment, “mostly an effort of liberal academics to assuage their student-day consciences.”

Yet at a research university like the University of Kentucky, literary criticism (or other discipline-specific varieties of writing) is not something professors do to make themselves feel better; rather, it's essentially what they get paid to do.

According to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, the Commonwealth spends over \$1.5 billion on public university education each year. Since most professors at a place like UK are charged to expend at

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*Do faculty check out from the world when they check in to the university?*

## War criminals and resistance fighters

By Beth Connors-Manke

In June 1940, George Orwell (of *Animal Farm* and 1984 fame) wrote in “War-time Diary”:

“It is impossible even yet to decide what to do in the case of German conquest of England. The one thing I will not do is to clear out, at any rate not further than Ireland, supposing that to be feasible. If the fleet is intact and it appears that the war is to be continued from America and the Dominions, then one must remain alive if possible, if necessary in the concentration camp. If the U.S.A. is going to submit to conquest as well, there is nothing for it but to die fighting, but one must above all die *fighting* and have the satisfaction of killing somebody first.”

Having served in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma and fought in the Spanish Civil War, Orwell was a thoroughly political writer. During World War II, he was a member of the British Home Guard and wrote for the BBC. His “War-time Diary” shows that he was paying close attention to the war and the information released—or not released—in the daily papers. Like other political thinkers in his circle, he was trying to figure out the war, as it was happening.

And one thing that seemed possible to Orwell, at least in June 1940, was that both England and the U.S. could buckle and accept a German occupation. A startling thought for

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U.S. Coast Guard-manned USS Samuel Chase disembarks troops of the U.S. Army's First Division on the morning of June 6, 1944 (D-Day) at Omaha Beach. Photo by Robert F. Sargent, U.S. Coast Guard.

## Books afoot

### Morris Book Shop moving to Chevy Chase

NoC News

If you hadn't heard, The Morris Book Shop will be leaving its Southland Drive location this fall for new digs in Chevy Chase at 882 E. High Street (next to Rite-Aid and in the spot currently occupied by Hubbuch & Company).

Morris Book Shop owner Wyn Morris and store manager Hap Houlihan are founding members of Local First Lexington, the nonprofit business league whose goal is to promote buying from locally owned, independently operated businesses.

Since its opening in 2008, the book store has partnered with the likes of the Carnegie Center for Literacy & Learning, the University of Kentucky, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth and the north side's Homegrown

Press to host many public events and fundraisers. “There's a new business paradigm that we really like,” said Houlihan in the store's press release, “it's better to see other Lexington businesses and organizations as potential partners, rather than as potential competitors. So far, that's worked remarkably well for us.”

Always willing to dig deeper into the news, the NoC news desk asked Houlihan some hard-hitting questions. Although he surely bristled at the probing nature of the questions, Mr. Houlihan was kind enough to respond.

*The store is moving to Chevy Chase—so what is your favorite Chevy Chase movie? Modern Problems, because it's just so arfing terrible. Beyond bad. I didn't like*

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## Midnight run of '77 horror film House at KY Theatre

By Lucy Jones

For those seasoned enough to remember the giant fold-out calendars that were once inextricably linked with the Kentucky Theatre (if you were a typical UK student it was as likely for there to be one affixed to the outside of your fridge as it was for there to be beer inside it) it's impossible to forget the premium that was placed on the midnight movie. Cult films on Fridays and Saturdays were a cultural ritual that provided an alternative to boozy bar escapades and an opportunity for less mainstream films to have their day—or, rather....really, really late night.

It seems that the midnight movie has gone the way of the newsreel in the

last decade or so. Sure, there's the occasional *Rocky Horror* screening or local horror film debut, but there hasn't been the clockwork reliability of the weekly midnight show.

The Kentucky Theatre is experimenting with the idea of changing all that. Starting on Friday, July 1 and running through Sunday, July 3, the downtown jewel will play the artful 1977 Japanese horror film *House* for three consecutive midnight shows. Described by DVD Talk as “a cross between Dario Argento's *Suspiria* and an episode of *The Monkees*,” *House* features everything you want in a midnight movie including (but certainly

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## Coming soon

DREAM Act report

More rebelly bitch

More pithy cultural views



# The Neighborhood

## Women’s health project in local prison

NoC News

PRESS RELEASE — After discovering that incarcerated females in Kentucky prisons have limited access to adequate feminine supplies, Transylvania University student Lillie Beiting began a drive to outfit one prison with a supply of feminine hygiene products. Working in tandem with campus nurse Laina Smith, Beiting donated 13 cases of feminine supplies to a local women’s prison.

“Most people don’t realize that incarcerated females have to pay for their access to sufficient feminine supplies,” says Beiting. “And when you’re in prison, finding \$5 to pay for a box of tampons can be really difficult. After working with former inmates as a volunteer drug rehabilitation counselor through my work, I discovered this basic lack of hygiene in prisons. Because of the limited budgets prisons receive, many facilities are unable to supply their inmates with sufficient hygiene products.”

Appalled by the lack of access to sufficient feminine supplies, Beiting

used avenues presented to her through one of Transylvania University’s interdisciplinary courses, “Health Studies Seminar.”

Under the guidance of Transylvania professors Jamie Day and Mark Jackson, Beiting contacted campus nurse Laina Smith, who generously donated surplus quantities of feminine supplies on behalf of the university to the prison. With the help of three other girls in her class, Beiting delivered thirteen cases to the Kentucky Correctional Institute for Women in Pewee Valley, Kentucky.

“While I’m really pleased that we could help the prison with this initial donation,” Beiting said, “13 cases isn’t nearly enough to permanently fix this problem. Still, I’m very grateful for all of the help I received from Transylvania University, and for the excellent interactions with the administration at the Kentucky Correctional Institute for Women.”

For more information on how you can help with this women’s health project, contact Lillie Beiting at [embeiting12@transy.edu](mailto:embeiting12@transy.edu).

## House (cont.)

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not limited to) blood spewing demon cats and carnivorous pianos.

Fred Mills, the Kentucky Theatre’s General Manager, hopes that a successful run for the film could mean an increase in the number of future late night screenings. “The midnight movie was as much a social event as it was people coming to see *Soylent Green* or *Death Race 2000*,” says Mills. “I’m hoping that if people will come out, they can suggest other films. Just like we’re letting people vote on the last film in the Classics series, they can give us input for future films. In a sense, they can book the films.”



## Morris Book Shop (cont.)

*continued from page 1*

it even as a less-than-critical preteen, and this despite the fact that it (sort of) contains a sex scene. Now that’s bad.

*The nearest intersection to the new location is High & Sunset—where is your favorite place to watch a sunset?*

US 25 (Old Richmond Road), anywhere between Delong Road and Clay’s Ferry, especially during the summer, and especially on a bike. I should avoid the temptation to suggest that it also helps to be high.

*What’s your favorite book that has a book store as part of the story?*

I think I’m “supposed” to say 84 Charing Cross Road, but I’m gonna say Firmin, about a rat who lives in a bookstore and learns the contents of the books he eats, and inevitably becomes

existentialist & depressed.

*In an ideal world, how would Local First Lexington celebrate 10 years as an organization?*

By disbanding, because everyone in Lexington will by then have come to understand the value of shopping locally.

*What is your favorite song that has some sort of moving theme?*

“Movin’ on up,” by A. DuBois. Better known to some as “Theme from The Jeffersons.” Timeless and poignant, bold yet delicate, this song speaks for generations—nay, eons—of people who have at one point or another in their lives, um, moved.

Hap’s one of the featured speakers at this month’s Holler Poets. Wednesday, June 22, 8:00 P.M. Be there.

# CASTLEWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

# BLOCK PARTY

Come meet your neighbors! Bring a dish for the pot luck, bring the family for kids activities and bring a chair to listen to live music. Learn more about your neighborhood association and ways to be invovled.

July 9, 5pm - 8pm   Idlewild Block   Info <http://castlewoodlex.wordpress.com>

## 1403 Cantrill Court

Max



By Eric Sutherland

throne

yelp and run wild child,

before you tire,  
see it passing by  
in a blur, youth is a fire,  
cannot be held in store.

so sit and enjoy  
the view from the throne,  
soon you will rise  
like a pillar,  
and what was taken

will be returned.

Though Max is sitting for this portrait, the chair had most recently belonged to Paprika, the dog streaking through the background. Given to Paprika after being in the house for one year, the chair had initially belonged to Max’s grandmother. It was set on the curb because it was pronounced too ratty, even for the dog.

When we asked Eric Sutherland to write a poem inspired by the DISCARDED project, he found inspiration within this image of Max sitting in Paprika’s old chair.

Image and text by Kurt Gohde and Kremena Todorova, Discarded project.



War criminals (cont.)

*continued from page 1*

those of us who long ago accepted the story of World War II laid down in the history books: the story of German advancement, European pacification, English determination, and American vengeance. Weren't we always destined to triumph—through great sacrifice—on D-Day, when Allied forces gained Normandy?

Just before the D-Day invasion, General Eisenhower certainly spoke in terms of destiny:

“Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force! You

So, at least in a small way, they *did* make it to American shores.

**“One must remain alive if possible”**

The Demjanjuk story is a long and labored one. In 1942, he was captured by the Germans while serving in the Red Army. From there, Demjanjuk says he spent the rest of the war in a prisoner of war camp. Others, including the U.S., Israel, and Germany, believe that after his capture Demjanjuk served as a guard in Nazi camps, including an extermination camp in Poland.

Between 1977 and 2011, the Red soldier/death camp guard/Ohio auto-

some Nazi atrocities in favor of fighting Soviet totalitarianism. Nazi scientists were willing to work for the U.S.; Demjanjuk was willing to make a life as an autoworker.

In his diary, Orwell is talking himself out of this type of pragmatism. The writer says he won't flee, won't turn-coat, will stay loyal to his reasonably just, although tremendously flawed, England. He will refuse to adapt. This isn't a simplistic loyalty, as Orwell hoped for socio-economic revolution in Britain and firmly opposed fascism.

Orwell is telling himself (and us) don't be a Demjanjuk, a cog doing anything to survive; don't be a Henri Philippe Pétain, the French national hero who collaborated with the Germans in their occupation of France; don't be a government trading away ethics for military expertise. Don't be willing to fit yourself to any ideology just because it may have the upper hand.

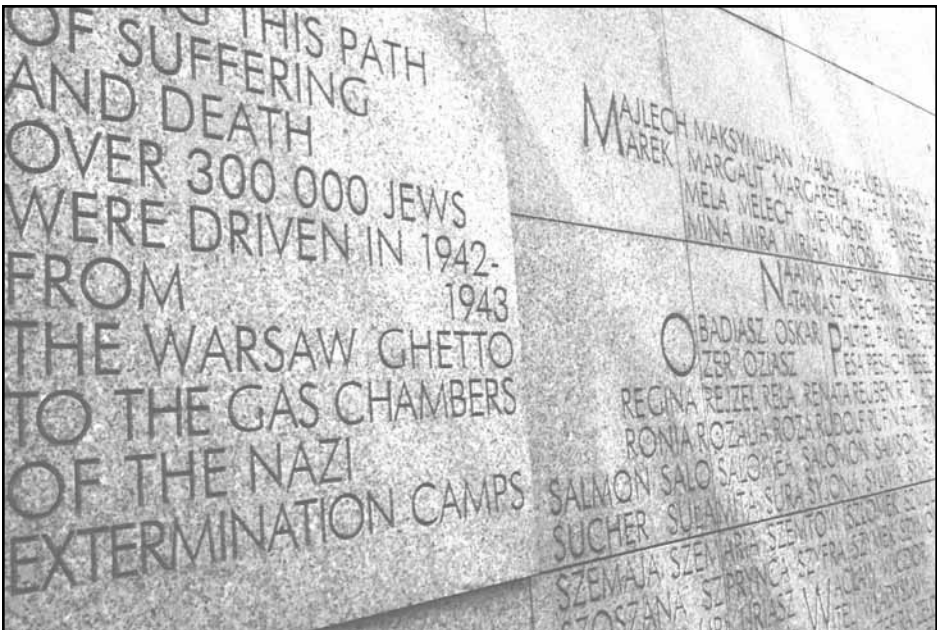
world Orwell was trying to make sense of in his diary.

This led me to think hard about the possibility that the Jewish resistance fighters had committed suicide. What would that choice mean? Would they have been granting themselves dignity by choosing their own deaths? Would they have been simply avoiding the torture that would surely come after their capture? Were they protecting others and their secrets by taking their lives? All of these reasons? None of them?

I asked my husband what he might have done in the situation. His answer: to go down guns blazing, or, in Orwell's words, he'd “have the satisfaction of killing somebody first.” He didn't think he'd commit suicide so much as force the Nazis to kill him first, hoping that he'd take some German soldiers with him.

At first this sounded like American bravado to me. But when I consider my husband's answer in light of Orwell's comments and Demjanjuk's choices, I see it differently. “Kill or be killed,” or “kill *and* be killed,” touted under any political banner, is pragmatic more than anything else. It wouldn't have been noble on Orwell's part and may not have been purely evil on Demjanjuk's.

But if it's true that the Jewish resistance fighters took their own lives in that bunker, what do we make of that decision? They had surely killed Germans during the course of the uprising, but they refused the “be killed” part of the equation. Part of me was drawn to that stand. To die, yes, but to refuse to be murdered. It feels like there's some dignity in that refusal.



Commemorative wall at Warsaw Ghetto.

are about to embark upon a great crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers in arms on other fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.... The free men of the world are marching together to victory!”

And that's how we say it happened. Whatever private worries Orwell may have had, Eisenhower's public rhetoric proclaimed that the Nazis weren't going to get to American shores.

**“The war is to be continued from America”**

My husband grew up in Seven Hills, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland. His high school, which opened in 1968, was christened “Normandy,” its mascot “The Invaders.” The legacy of D-Day and the Allied triumph was a banal part of his education, as they chanted for the Invaders at football games and defended their school's honor in teenage stand-offs. I can't imagine Nazis ever taking over Cleveland, even if New York, Boston, and Miami had given up.

I say this only partially tongue-in-cheek. One of the things Orwell mulled over in his “War-time Diary” was which type of people, which socio-economic classes, were most likely to sell-out during a German occupation. He believed that while the working class might not be paying close enough attention to how the war was unfolding, it would probably, in the end, revolt under German rule. In Orwell's view, it was the British upper classes who would roll over for the Germans, as long as the aristocracy got to keep some of its power.

With a strong immigrant and working class culture, gritty Clevelanders would not have suffered long the yoke of Nazi governance.

Ironically, that Cleveland culture allowed an alleged concentration camp guard to make his home in northeast Ohio. About ten years before Normandy High School opened its doors, Ukrainian-born John Demjanjuk gained U.S. citizenship. He worked in the American auto industry and eventually settled in Seven Hills. So while my husband was imbibing his history lessons about American victory in World War II, he was probably also passing Demjanjuk, that concentration camp guard, on the sunny streets of quiet, suburban Seven Hills.

worker was stripped of his American citizenship twice and brought to trial in Israel, the U.S., and, most recently, Germany. Famously, Demjanjuk was convicted in 1988 by Israel of being Treblinka death camp guard “Ivan the Terrible”; in 1993 the Israeli Supreme Court overturned the conviction.

Now 91, Demjanjuk has been sentenced to five years in a German prison for his war-time activities, although his health is so bad that he is awaiting his trial appeal from a nursing home.

The tragic, if not uncomfortable, truth seems to be that Demjanjuk lived out Orwell's pledge—“one must remain alive if possible, if necessary in the concentration camp”—although not in the way the writer intended. Evidently, Demjanjuk stayed alive in German camps by being “one of them.” The recent German case against him saw the cost of that effort at more than 28,000 lives: the number of people who died at Sobibor camp in Nazi-occupied Poland while Demjanjuk was allegedly a guard there. The Ohio autoworker “stayed alive” in the U.S. by being one of us.

It seems that, since he was a 22-year-old Ukrainian in the Red Army, Demjanjuk has been doing whatever necessary to stay alive — and out of prison stripes.

**How Nazis got here**

Demjanjuk is one of perhaps thousands of post-World War II émigrés tied to the “German war machine,” as Eisenhower called it, who found refuge in America. Although Demjanjuk obscured his past as a low-level death camp guard in order to pass into the U.S., some Nazis made it here on the strength of their World War II credentials. While the Justice Department sometimes worked to deport those with Nazi ties, other arms of the government were recruiting and shielding former Nazis.

In fact, the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) employed some Nazis for American post-war intelligence, harboring them in the U.S. The government also developed “Operation Paperclip,” a program for extricating scientists who had worked in Nazi Germany in order to mine their expertise during the Cold War.

So, one answer to how Nazis got here is that we brought them.

Another answer is human changeability, our aptitude for stepping in line with any power structure encompassing us. We adapt, for better or for worse. When world politics reoriented itself after World War II, the U.S. was willing to look away from

**“Have the satisfaction of killing somebody first”**

Around the time Demjanjuk's German trial was in the news, my husband and I were in Warsaw, Poland. While there, we learned that Poland suffered some of the worst human losses during World War II (remember Demjanjuk served in concentrations camps in Poland), and Warsaw itself was nearly leveled by the Germans before they left. (Sources say upwards of eighty percent of the city was destroyed.)

A few years before they demolished and abandoned the city, the Nazis laid to waste the Jewish Ghetto, an area into which they had crowded between 300,000 and 400,000 Jews. Prior to the war, Warsaw had been home to the largest Jewish population in Europe, and second largest in the world after New York city. In 1940, the Nazis forced Jews from Warsaw and surrounding areas into the ghetto and then sealed it off, creating a separate, horribly unhealthy, and impoverished zone.

In 1943 when the Germans began another stage of “liquidating” the ghetto by deporting ghetto residents, a planned, armed Jewish revolt began. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, as it is now called, continued over several months until the ghetto was razed and the resistance fighters defeated.

The bunker in which resistance leaders are said to have hid is all that remains of the ghetto.

**Resist humiliation**

We shouldn't be so surprised by Demjanjuk's story. As painful as it may be to consider, it could have been my story or yours. We're essentially changeable creatures, who may, when push comes to shove, accept any form of violence that keeps us alive.

Mahatma Gandhi exhorted students of non-violent resistance to oppose humiliation, the process by which individuals or a people is daily degraded, the means by which oppressors refuse to recognize the dignity of others. If the Nazi program was about anything, it was about humiliation.

In some ways, we've cultivated that on our shores, in our pain, anger, and grief since 9/11. When I heard that people cheered the death of bin Laden (even buying t-shirts to celebrate), I see that as a humiliation. That's also



Bunker in Warsaw Ghetto, the only remaining building after Nazis razed the ghetto. Here the last of the Jewish resistance fighters hid.

My husband got to visit the bunker, so he told me about it as we whittled down a large plate of pierogies. He'd read in our tour book that organizers of the uprising had committed suicide in the bunker when the Nazis found them. (Note: I haven't found this information confirmed elsewhere yet.)

Being in Warsaw, surrounded by its profound history, I kept wondering what it had felt like to be alive during the war, how it felt to be in a world both brutal and unpredictable — the

Americans wanting (vicariously) to have the satisfaction of killing. When our own Senator McConnell wants to have terror suspects found in Kentucky tried in Guantanamo rather than state-side, I see that as the war machine working, refusing the values of our democracy. When I consider the federal government's post 9/11 policy on citizens' civil liberties and our treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, I see a country conceding to surveillance and violence, a country changeable.



# Live music to generalize about: 6/30 - 7/5

**Thursday, June 30**  
Warren Byrom  
*Al's Bar; 601 N. Limestone. 7 P.M.*  
Byrom plays selections from his recent release, *The Fabled Canelands*. See the accompanying review.

JJ Grey & Mofro  
*Buster's, 899 Manchester St. 8:39 P.M.*  
*Out of the north Florida swamps rises Mr. Grey, his harp, and a motley squad of southern-rock virtuosi.*

See what I was trying to do with that sentence? Grey hails from north Florida, which has swamps, and which is also the name of a sub-genre of blues and rock and a useful descriptor of Grey's music. He plays harp, which seems important, and he plays with a rotating collective of guys who all kick ass at playing southern rock, which is closely related to swamp music, and also helps describe the music that Grey plays. It's all cliché, sure, but the sentence at least functions.

But are you, reader, any closer to making the decision to attend, or not attend, the show? Is the information the sentence communicates even useful for making such a decision? Creedence played swamp rock, and they're from the San Francisco suburbs; when John Fogerty growled, "born on a bayou ow ow uh," did we not believe him? Band provenance is no reliable guide.

But what about genre? "Swamp music." "Southern rock." But there's swampiness in all sorts of music, from New York jazz to Stax soul to Chicago blues to Texas metal. And southern rock? JJ Grey sounds nothing like .38 Special, yet they're in the same record bin. Labels are as often misleading as they are helpful. By way of proof, here's a thought experiment: name the genre of Genesis's "No Reply at All." I'll wait.

Grey plays a harmonica. He also sings, but that wasn't in the sentence because you expect with a "such-and-such and the somebodies" type of band name: Huey Lewis and the News. Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention. Toots and the Maytals. Now, if it was "The JJ Grey Band," you'd want clarification, because with "the such-and-such band" structure the named guy isn't necessarily the vocalist. Charlie Daniels Band, yes, but not The J. Geils Band. Marshall Tucker isn't even in The Marshall Tucker Band. I digress. Does it matter that Grey plays harmonica? It's sort of a non-standard rock instrument, but it's a mainstay of blues, so it's not like Grey's going out there with a theremin, and you'd read that and think, "dude plays a theremin? I might actually wanna see that." I suppose if you're one of the very few that have strong feelings, one way or the other, about the instrument, you'd either seek it out or aim to avoid it, but what about the rest of us? Eh.

"Virtuosi." In the italicized sentence I use this term carelessly, as it is more meaningful to confine it to the

absolute best of the best, not to extend it to the merely excellent. But in casual usage "virtuoso" is a broad term, and anyway the point is clear: these are not novice instrumentalists, Mofro, but gifted, accomplished players.

So? The only people who go to shows for the musicianship are other musicians. (Classical music and jazz—to an extent—are the exceptions here). The great mass of us don't care much; three sloppy chords and a noisy drummer sells more records than intricate fretwork and nuanced polyrhythms. So does virtuosity matter to you, and the decision you're trying to make?

And "motley" implies a sort of transience, with connotations of debauchery, which goes along with the hellraisin' southern thing established by Skynyrd and Molly Hatchet, and "squad" rather than "crew" just to mix up the idiom a bit. It's a good time, pounding some brews in the front porch with the stereo speakers set up on the windowsills, and, you know, raisin' hell, but that doesn't have anything to do with JJ Grey & Mofro's music. It's not really even hell-raisin' music in that way; it's got more of that slow, contemplative Lowell George feel a lot of the time. Now, where does that leave you, and your decision?

**Friday, July 1**  
Charles Walker Band  
*Cheapside; 131 Cheapside. 9 P.M.*

Most people only know Milwaukee for Laverne and Shirley and inexpensive beer, and that's fair, because quick! Of what U.S. state is Milwaukee the capital?

Ha. Not only could you not remember if Milwaukee is in fact a state capital, but it even took you a couple of seconds to recall in what state Milwaukee resides. Admit it: the word "Minnesota" popped into your head. So what's the capital of Minnesota? No, I have no idea either.

So: Laverne and Shirley, cheap brew, and now the best Milwaukee export yet, the Charles Walker Band, who play fine, tight electric blues, a little bit mean, a little bit nice, and a whole lot funky. This is a two-night stand on their long southeastern run; see 'em Saturday if you miss 'em Friday.

**Tuesday, July 5**  
Jesse Snyder and Maggie Lander  
*Natasha's; 112 Esplanade. 9 P.M.*

Lexington-area fiddle prodigy Maggie Lander teams with Nashville's Jesse Snyder for an evening of all things picked, plucked, strummed, and bowed. Well, not *all* things: you can pick noses, but that's gross, and unlikely to feature in the show; you can pluck chickens, which is also gross in its way; you can strum your pain with his fingers, which might be gross, depending on whose fingers; and you can bow down before the one you serve, which is maybe more scary than gross. Now, before you shooting off angry emails about how the sort of bowing Ms. Lander will be doing is pronounced as rhymes with "Theodor Adorno," not "Curacao," and has an entirely different meaning, you should know that this pair of homographs actually derive from the same Old Icelandic root word, "bjork," which translates loosely as "you're going to get what you deserve."

In fact, I have it on good authority that Maggie Lander can and has plucked chickens, but mostly she's known for her work in the "Woodsongs" house band. On this night she'll be working out some of her own compositions, which may well turn up later on the EP, *Miss Me Moon*, she's looking to record in the next few weeks (search her name on kickstarter.com). The remainder of the evening's selections will draw from Jesse Snyder's growing folk repertoire, and from a range of popular tunes and traditional arrangements.

—Buck Edwards



Maggie Lander and Jesse Snyder.

## The old, weird canelands

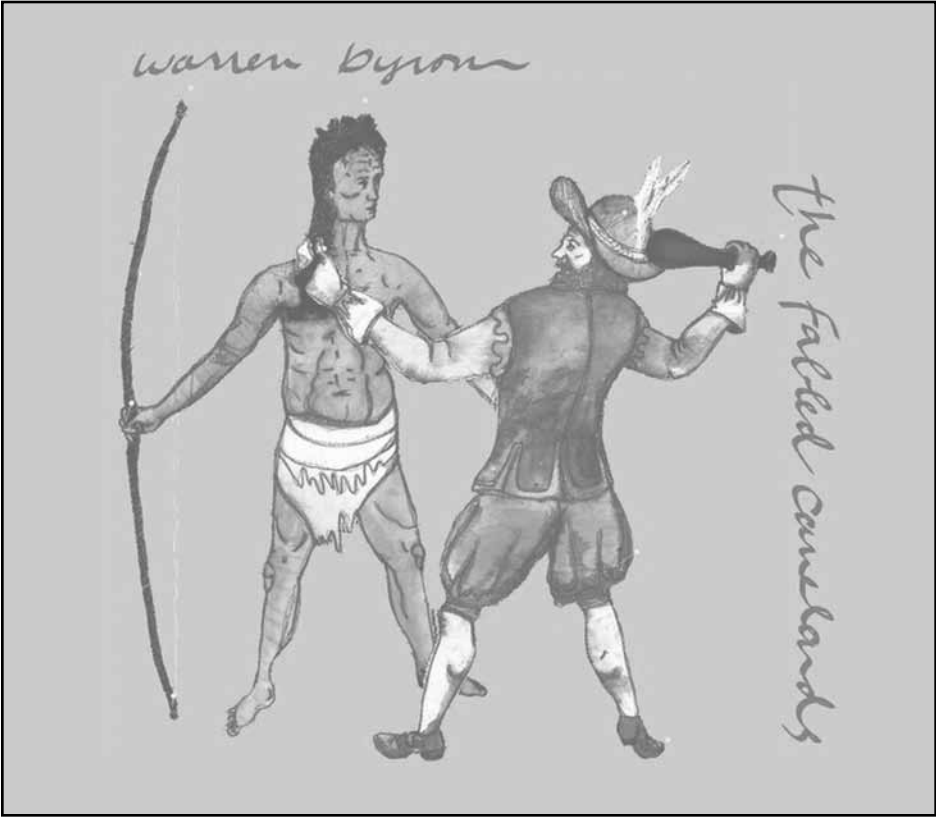
By Danny Mayer

"oh those fabled canelands they come shimmering back through two centuries"  
—Warren Byrom, "Fabled Canelands"

There is a grand tradition within roots music to evoke what Greil Marcus has termed "the old, weird America," a sort of mythical, strange underworld of the pre-modern American republic, a place where the boundaries separating blues, country, folk and mountain music do not yet seem to have taken hold. Musically, think Harry Smith's folkways recordings of the 1920s, Woody Guthrie, Mississippi John Hurt, the Carter Family, John Hartford's *Aereoplane* years, *The Basement Tapes*, Nebraska, and just about anything by Gillian Welch, Uncle Tupelo or Dexter Romweber.

Byrom's debut solo record *The Fabled Canelands* is firmly situated within that old, weird America. The songs span a geographic and musical terrain bordered by the Appalachian mountains, the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and the Louisiana Gulf coast, though the heart of Byrom's old America seems to be set nearby the inner Kentucky bluegrass region of his home, a place once thick with stands of river cane standing over ten feet tall, now long since mostly eradicated, which European settlers encountered when first flooding into the area.

Those familiar with Byrom's work as co-front man of do-everything band the Swells will recognize the musical ("Good Touch") and topical ("Sidewalk Kings of New Orleans") references to New Orleans. But on this solo album Byrom expands his reach. Straight on folk-rock songs like "The Fabled Canelands," "Heavy Dragoons,"



Marcus used the term to describe how roots music connected modern America with its freakish past at risk of complete erasure: Pre-depression era Chicago confidence men like Yellow Kid Wiel selling fake stock options, nineteenth century medicine men traveling the deep south hawk-ing healing tonics, turn of the century Shakespearean acting troupes floating down the Ohio, early republic religious revivalists setting up tents by the tens of thousands in the wilderness of Cane Ridge, KY, for weeks of Jesus, booze and massive orgies. Think of it as our national id, part fantasy and part historical record, old maps reminding new worlds.


Beginning with the album cover—a Gina Phillips tapestry depicting a pre-colonial Englishman in the opening act of clubbing an Indian—Warren

and "Song for Jayce," the latter song being at home on just about any Wilco album, are best played loud and while traveling at high speeds on back country roads. Elsewhere, songs like "That First Kite" (a James Baker Hall poem), "Good Touch," and "Sleep" (aided by James Friley's sparse piano) veer into the sort of dark folk one might encounter on a Dexter Romweber album.

Like that most famous of roots collections, *The Basement Tapes*, *The Fabled Canelands* fits together like a tapestry. Song edges overlap and bleed, offer moments of fulfillment and emptiness, and trace out a past that continues to exist at our own margins. It's new, it's old, it's ambitious, and it just so happens to be quite good.

Head on down to CD Central to buy The Fabled Canelands.

Better access to better bikes for everyone.



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photo by Stacy Borden



# Film & Media

## Review: *Midnight In Paris*

By Colleen Glenn

Fantasy and nostalgia have long been prominent themes in Woody Allen’s work, but perhaps nowhere are the two entwined so tangibly as in his most recent film, *Midnight in Paris*. Released at the Cannes Film Festival in May of 2011, *Midnight in Paris* is a romantic comedy that thrives upon the gap between reality and illusion through which Allen’s protagonists often wander. Not unlike *Alice* (1990) or *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), Allen’s latest work features a “lost” hero who learns lessons not through facing the hard facts of life, but rather the opposite: through surrendering—at least temporarily—to the fantastic. In this case, the fantastic is not accessed via Eastern herbs or by cinematic experiences, but by the hero’s own infatuation with the past. Owen

Wilson, playing the familiar neurotic, endearing Allenesque leading man, stars as Gil, a self-described “hack” movie screenwriter, who has ambitions of becoming a serious novelist. While visiting Paris with his fiancée, Inez (Rachel McAdams), Gil’s love affair with the city becomes the catalyst for the eventual termination of his engagement. The couple’s incompatibility is highlighted by their sharply contrasting reactions to Paris. Gil is all wonder and awe at its charms, while Inez is annoyed and unappreciative—the stereotype of the xenophobic, spoiled American. Gil’s adoration of the city leads him on a series of nightly, magical transports into Paris of the 1920s, where he engages in a series of encounters with the likes of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso, and Gertrude Stein (who

generously reads his novel and offers him feedback). Allen’s film becomes truly magical during Gil’s nightly adventures into the past. Indeed, the film is a sort of English major’s dream where our most revered literary and artistic giants are brought back to life before our eyes. Eventually, Gil learns that the pleasures of living in the past only distract him from living fully in the present. He returns, permanently, to the present day, but he also returns a changed, happier man. Owen Wilson performs remarkably well in the role, harnessing some of Woody Allen’s signature onscreen neuroses, as well as channeling his own previous work in which he so often plays the sweet, child-like goofball. Allen—who can no longer play the leading man in his movies due to age and due to the personal scandal that

marred his image—has found an actor who can credibly embody the qualities Allen desires in his leading men in romantic comedies. What doesn’t work is Rachel McAdams, as well as Kurt Fuller and Mimi Kennedy (who play her parents in the picture). While I suspect the heart of the problem is in the script and not their performances, their characters are so underdeveloped and ugly that their flatness detracts from the film and teeters on caricature. The cinematography itself is responsible for much of the film’s romance. Paris and its attractions are not unlike Allen’s treatment of New York City in so many of his previous films. While *Midnight in Paris* probably will not be included as one of Allen’s most important films, its charm will allow audiences to escape into a delightful summer fantasy.

## Review: *X-Men: First Class* Paco Chaos returns with the Nigel Tufnel Rating System

By Kevin Martinez

Ok, I’m back with the review of this summer’s second big comic book movie, *X-Men: First Class*. This is a prequel to the four other X-Men movies that have already been released, the most recent being 2009’s *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* which was a prequel that takes place after this one. The X-Men movies have always been a mixed bag, with the first two films being decent fun. The third was a slapdash mess that suffered from not having Bryan Singer at the wheel as he had been for the first two. The *Wolverine* prequel was another example of how Hugh Jackman is a talented actor getting stuck with goofy schlock. This time out, FOX enlisted *Kick-Ass* and *Layer Cake* director Matthew Vaughn to take the lead. This seemed to be a step in the right direction, since FOX made the mistake of dropping him from directing *X-Men 3* and used *Rush Hour* director Brett Ratner instead. Bryan Singer is the executive producer and co-writer of this movie, which is one of the reasons it’s an improvement over the last two films. One of the big problems is that the X-Men movies have always played fast and loose with the continuity of the comics since it’s about the most confusing thing ever. As a longtime reader of comic books, I gave up trying to figure out the X-Men twenty years ago. Trying to shoehorn that stuff into a two hour movie is impossible. Trying to retrofit already established film continuity with these characters seems equally hard.

*X-Men: First Class* has the challenge of not having the already mentioned Hugh Jackman in the cast. Jackman’s Wolverine is obviously the most popular character from the previous films, but Vaughn wisely chose to not feature him. This would have caused even more continuity glitches. Instead, the casting of this film is centered around a largely unknown group of character actors. Kevin Bacon is the only name most people recognize. I’m told January Jones (who plays Emma Frost) is from the cast of *Mad Men*, but I don’t watch much TV so I’ll take your word for it. Michael Fassbender (*Inglorious Basterds*) is Erik Lensherr/Magneto and James McAvoy (*Atonement*, *Wanted*) is Charles Xavier. McAvoy is a fair substitute for Patrick Stewart in the role, but at times

he comes off as a less goofy version of Austin Powers. In Matthew Vaughn’s own words, this movie is an attempt at making a James Bond style film. It’s set during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and Vaughn said that he watched Sean Connery’s Bond flicks as inspiration. He cited *You Only Live Twice* in particular, which is also served as the inspiration for the Austin Powers films. Oddly enough, though, this movie is not really campy and pretty much downplays any humor. Well, other than a well placed and foul mouthed cameo, that I have to tell you isn’t from Stan Lee. The plot centers around Fassbender’s Magneto on a revenge mission against Kevin Bacon’s Sebastian Shaw character. Shaw was a scientist at the concentration camp in which Magneto was imprisoned as a child. He murders Magneto’s mother in an attempt to get Magneto to use his newly discovered powers. The film flashes forward to the 1960’s where Shaw is now a behind-the-scenes manipulator during the Cold War who uses the U.S. government and the Soviet Union in an attempt to start a nuclear war. Shaw has the ability to absorb power and become more powerful himself. His plan is to destroy humanity and become the king of the new mutant regime. He would absorb the energy from the nuclear devastation and be the most powerful mutant. Shaw surrounds himself with other mutants, like Emma Frost and Azazel (Jason Flemyng), who use their pow-

ers for personal gain. Magneto ends up crossing paths with Charles Xavier while trying to exact revenge on Shaw. The two men find themselves on opposite sides of the same fence. One wants to peacefully co-exist with humanity (Xavier) and the other wants to show mutant superiority (Magneto). The two recruit various young mutants while collaborating with the C.I.A. to train a strike force against Shaw’s mutants. While training the mutants you begin to see Magneto morph into the familiar character from the earlier films. Shaw is the villain, but Magneto has to make a decision as to whether he’s going to be another Sebastian Shaw by declaring war on humanity, or be one of Xavier’s allies working to improve mutant relations with mankind. The main problem I have with this movie is that Magneto is obviously the character you want to see succeed. He’s wanting to kill his mother’s killer, a Nazi collaborator. Xavier’s platitudes about being the better person fall flat in the face of this. Magneto has been persecuted by the Nazis for being a Jew, and now he sees that mutants are going to be persecuted by humanity for being different. You can’t really fault his logic in this story. McAvoy’s Xavier comes off as a smug little rich kid who has the benefit of being normal looking, unlike his childhood friend Mystique. Mystique struggles with the fact that she has to hide her true appearance in order to fit in with humanity. When she meets other mutants she feels like she still doesn’t fit in, since most of the others look like normal humans. Magneto comes off as more sympathetic to this, which is ironic since Xavier is supposed to be the good guy. The film also suffers from a lack of real big moments. The action isn’t that impressive, and you never really see anything new. I can see better action at (plug alert!) a R.O.C.K. bout (July 2nd), but that’s because I love Roller Derby. Other than the Beast (Nicholas Hoult), I found most of the other mutants kinda dull. Though I enjoyed it, I really wanted more moments like at the end when Magneto is actually wearing the helmet from the original comics. You can’t beat a Jack Kirby design. Also, I can’t hate on a movie that has Michael Ironside in a supporting role. That’s just the geek in me, though. It does set up for a sequel, but then again it’s a prequel, so I guess that’s the idea. Oh, and all you True Believer Marvel Fans, I know it’s become tradition to stay after the credits for some big teaser, but it ain’t there on this one. I guess the cosmic cube is strictly an Avengers thing. On the Nigel Tufnel scale of 1 to 11, I’m gonna give *X-Men: First Class* a 7. It didn’t wow me, but it didn’t bore me either. It’s kind of a let down after seeing Thor, but it’s definitely an improvement in the X-Men series of films after the last two.



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## Local film happenings

**Kentucky Theatre Summer Classics Series Continues**  
If you have not yet made it down to the Kentucky Theatre for one of this summer’s amazing revival screenings, there are still plenty of opportunities! Upcoming films include Robert Altman’s *M\*A\*S\*H* (6/22) and a double feature of Abbott and Costello flicks (6/29). All films in the series are shown at 1:30 P.M. and 7:15 P.M. on their respective dates, and each screening is \$4. If you can make it to the evening screening, you will be rewarded with a “My Old Kentucky Home” organ sing-a-long and an introduction by the always entertaining Bill Widener. For a complete list of films in the series, please visit [kentuckytheater.com](http://kentuckytheater.com).

**Film Classes at The Carnegie Center**  
It’s not too late to sign up for a Summer Semester film course at the Carnegie Center. The esteemed learning center, in partnership with the Lexington Film League, offers a series of film related classes each season. For a complete list of current courses, times, and instructors, please visit [carnegieliteracy.org](http://carnegieliteracy.org) and click on the “Film” link.

**Classic Film at the Downtown Public Library**  
Wanna play a game? The Central Branch of the Lexington Public Library is launching a two day career retrospective of one of America’s most esteemed working directors. While licensing agreements prevent the Library from releasing the names of the films publicly, we can give you some hints! 1) Both films are 1970s classics, 2) The director’s highly acclaimed new film opens at the Kentucky Theatre this month, 3) Both films feature actors with strong Kentucky ties, and 4) You don’t want to miss either of them! Give up? Just swing by the downtown public library for more information. Or you can show up at 7 P.M. on Wednesday, June 29 and Thursday, June 30 to see the films for yourself!

**KET Program Still Seeking Short Films**  
*Reel Visions*, KET’s series dedicated to spotlighting Kentucky filmmakers, continues to seek submissions for its Fall season. The half-hour program features experimental, documentary, and narrative films that are between one and twenty-five minutes in length. The deadline for this submission period is August 1, 2011. If you are interested in sharing your work, please send a preview DVD to:

Sara O’Keefe  
KET/Reel Visions  
600 Cooper Drive  
Lexington, KY 40502

For more information on the show, you can visit the [ReelVisions](http://www.ket.org/arts/reelvisions) website at [www.ket.org/arts/reelvisions](http://www.ket.org/arts/reelvisions).

# My first roller derby

## ROCK bests Vette City on last minute jam

By Sunny Montgomery

*Editor’s note: NoC goes through ROCK writers like Spinal Tap goes through drummers. Here’s our newest ROCK beat reporter, Sunny Montgomery, of Sisters Provocateur fame.*

I sat alone on the far side of the arena. Attendees were beginning to trickle in although it was still a little before six. Roller girls from both teams were getting ready, stretching their legs and inspecting their wheels. M.I.A. played over the loudspeaker. Some of the girls were already skating around the rink—or rather, the track as I learned it was called.

I tried to look natural but I was feeling rather self-conscious. I wiggled around in my seat and worried I was sweating too much after my very hot bike ride to Lexington Convention Center. I tried to display my Staff pass prominently across my legs as evidence I belonged.

I *did* belong here, I reminded myself. When I agreed to start covering the Rollergirls of Central Kentucky (ROCK) for NoC, I knew I had much to learn. I had never attended a game — I mean, a meet, or you know, a match-thingy? Turns out they are called bouts and on Saturday, June 4, I attended my very first ROCK bout against the Vette City Vixens from Bowling Green.

The official ROCK warm-up began at 6:15 and was followed by a bit of audience warm-up. The girls had all sorts of ways to arouse the crowd including birthday spankings for ROCK’s MVP blocker, Sharon Moonshine, free t-shirts to whomever could scream the loudest, and finally a guest appearance by Jim Gray, who introduced ROCK. Warm-ups finished, the girls took their places on the track. The bout was about to begin.

This is what I knew: There are 14 players on each team with 5 players from each on the track at one time. The Pivots, wearing striped helmets, lead the pack. They set the pace for the pack behind them. The Blockers are behind the Pivots. Their job is to block the opposing team’s Jammer. The Jammers, wearing stars on their helmets, begin

20 feet behind the pack. They score points for each opposing Blocker they can maneuver past. The first Jammer through the pack becomes the lead Jammer. But perhaps I was getting ahead of myself. I opened my journal to a fresh page.

“Five seconds!” the Jam timer hollered from the center of the track then gave a short whistle. The Pivots began to move. The Blockers followed. The Jam timer gave two more short whistles and the Jammers were off. It was on. The crowd started to cheer. Bodies were down. Girls were flying into the penalty box. I didn’t know where to look. I scribbled notes as quickly as I could. A referee pointed to ROCK’s Jammer and the crowd hollered louder. I had no idea what was happening. I glanced at the scoreboard. The Vette City Vixens were up three points.

The rest of the first half whirred past. I couldn’t keep up with the scoring or the reasons that penalties were called and at some point, I quit trying. I was fascinated by the actual aggressiveness of the sport. Somehow, it was much more intense than I’d imagined. There were rules, of course: no punching, choking, biting, etc. However the girls could use all their weight to shoulder slam opposing players. I watched one girl take her teammate tightly by the bicep then thrust her emphatically into the opposing Jammer. This technique, I learned, was called the “bullet and the gun.” Girls were skidding on their elbows and their asses across the concrete floor and springing back upright as quickly as they’d been down. These were not just tatted up tough girls in tight clothing, I realized. These were skilled athletes. I was sweating again.

At 8 o’clock, halftime was called and March Madness Marching Band spilled onto the track with their horns and drums and eccentric dress.

“Why don’t we have people like that in Bowling Green?” I heard one of the Vette City Vixen’s say to her teammate. I held my head higher as I strode across the arena and out the double doors for a quick breath of fresh air.

As the second half got underway, I started getting nervous again but this time it had nothing to do with my usual



JACK KING

Ragdoll Ruby passes Vette City jammer.

self-consciousness. I sat on the edge of my seat with my fists balled tightly at my side. My eyes darted from the pack to the scoreboard. The Vixens’ had the lead again. I stopped making notes altogether so that I could start focusing on tripping the Vette City Vixens with my mind.

The clock was running out. With the Vixens’ Jammer in the penalty box, a new jam began. The strategy would have to be explained to me later, of course, but the drama was evident. The audience was on its feet with fists in the air. Roller girls from both teams were jumping up and down on the sidelines, cheering and cursing.

ROCK’s Jammer fought her way through the pack, first, to become

lead Jammer. Second, to win a grand slam—which (I remembered from the Youtube tutorial I’d watched pregame) was when one Jammer lapped the other. On her third trip around the track, Vette City Vixen’s Jammer was released from the penalty box but it was too late. ROCK had won the bout in the final two minutes: 110 to 106. The final ten points were scored by ROCK’s MVP Jammer, Ragdoll Ruby, who also happened to be married to ROCK’s coach, Ragman. Yes, this is a love story, my friends. I cannot wait for my next ROCK experience.

*Join us July 2 at Lexington Convention Center! Doors open at 6 P.M., and the bout begins at 7.*

# “Hold the Line”

## Out on the streets, that’s where we meet

By Captain Comannokers  
NoC Transportation Czar

In their infinite songwriting wisdom, the band Toto told us in 1978 to “Hold The Line.” It’s a song about the tricky game of timing in relationships—well, at last that’s what I think it’s about, I mean, this band was splitting time between singing songs about Rosanna Arquette, George Lucas’ *THX1138* and blessing the rains down in Africa with lines like “As sure as Kilimanjaro rises like Olympus above the Serengeti,” so really, all bets are off for me de-coding Toto lyrics.

Anyway, I’m co-opting “Hold The Line” as a cycling mantra for getting around the streets of Lexington.

Let’s use North Limestone as a good example. Once you cross over Main Street there is a right turn lane for Short Street—don’t slide over into that turn lane if you plan on continuing straight on Limestone — hold the line! (Sing the Toto riff here if you’re feelin’ it).

Once you cross over Third Street and are passing Lexington Traditional Magnet School (LTMS), there is usually a wide right-hand lane to ride in, due to the fact that there is no street parking Monday-Friday during the day—still, hold the line!

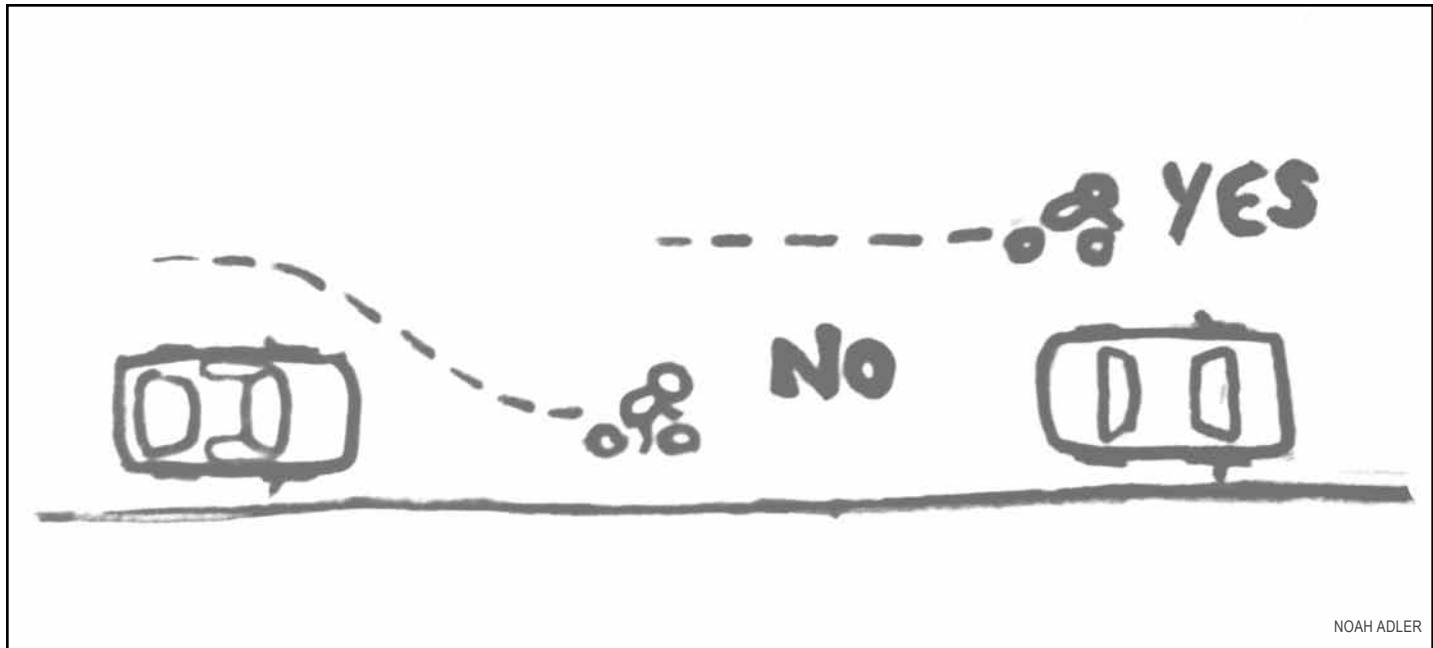
If you ride close to the curb in front of LTMS, but then approach parked cars as soon as you pass through the light at Fourth Street, you are setting up a precarious

situation for yourself and motorists. You are essentially merging back into the line you should have been holding. If cars in the right-hand driving lane have other vehicles flanking them on the left, they will probably take their chances putting the squeeze on you,

even annoyed some motorists to do so—but that’s OK, because that’s the proper way to share the road and it’s ultimately safer for all parties involved.

The League of American Bicyclists website recommends that you “ride in a straight line, not in and out of parked

I’m not even talking about people). So ride ready and think ahead. If you take away one thing from this installment my good biker, I hope you’ll remember to hold the line — it would also behoove you to note that, “love isn’t always on time.”



NOAH ADLER

rather than colliding with motorists on their left. Or, they may need to hit their brakes suddenly and give you a honk (and maybe something extra?) when they see you swerving around parked cars that you were directly behind moments ago.

Had you been holding your line, cars may have had to slow down until they had ample room on their left to make the pass—and hell, it might have

cars on the side of the road. Take the lane position that serves your destination and when moving through certain situations holding your line makes you more predictable to overtaking autos. When it is safe, then move back to the right and allow vehicles to pass.”

Per usual, it is about approaching particular situations and traffic issues as they arise; it can be tricky and there are some strange anomalies out there (and

Next issue, I’ll ponder the mystery of why staples and nails litter streets and bike lanes worldwide (as opposed to, say, ham sandwiches or cotton balls). Until then, this is your Captain, over and out.

*Want more cycling tips? Check out [www.bikeleague.org](http://www.bikeleague.org) or [www.lexrides.com](http://www.lexrides.com). Continue the discussion on the NoC website at [noclexington.com](http://noclexington.com).*



# Opinion

## Austerity comes to Lexington

Politics, as the saying goes, is always local. So while at the national level, tea party righties and socialist lefties have begun to join forces in battle against conservative and liberal coalitions over things like auditing the fed and stopping the illegal Obama war in Libya (and Yemen...and Afghanistan), things are bending at the state and city levels, too.

As has happened in many cities where expensive campaigns dictate the narrow range of candidate options (and thought), we Lexington residents elected a wealthy, unabashedly pro-business head honcho of a corporate, global construction firm to the office of city mayor, and we did it by somehow claiming him as a progressive, a clear alternative to the non local-first, big-business friendly then-current mayor (who has now started his own online city newspaper).

Residents are beginning to get a sense of what it means to have a progressive mayor who wants to run the city as efficiently as a good global

corporation. Last week, city council submitted a \$273.9 million budget to Mayor Jim Gray, which prompted a sharp rebuke from the businessman. Gray claimed that the council’s budget, which added \$2.8 million to the mayor’s originally submitted \$271.1 million proposal, was a challenge to his “philosophy that right-sizing and outsourcing and eliminating certain programs and positions is essential in restoring financial responsibility to our city government,” calling such positions “solutions that people in business have been dealing with ever since this great recession hit us.” One local outlet has framed the story, “Jim Gray cuts, Lexington council spends.”

All politics may be local, but most of our rhetoric (and thought) is national, top-down. “Right-sizing,” “outsourcing,” and the elimination of public programs in the name of “financial responsibility” have all been the words of austerity on the global (and

now national) stage, the words of, well, big-business and (for the last 40 years) oligarchy governments. With a deep history of use in South American and African countries, austerity solutions are currently being used in Greece, in the UK, in Washington D.C., in Wisconsin, and, yup, right here in Lexington. Such debates are usually framed by depictions of “good guy” cutters standing firm against “bad guy” spenders. Austerity is always sold as disciplining government through the use of good business practice.

At the national level that Gray invokes, big business solutions have been anything but successful. They have proven both ineffective and inefficient. While stocks, luxury goods and highly capitalized big businesses with global reaches have prospered through our country’s latest national financial depression (which, it should be noted, big business itself caused). Under the pro-business guise of financial

responsibility, the federal government has given away over \$3 trillion dollars to many of these same business people, on the pretense of restoring financial responsibility to the “global market.”

Meanwhile, the rest of the country is still mired in a depression, their housing prices still plummeting, their college and health care and food and leisure costs all going up. The big business solution of out-sourcing has resulted in lost jobs and falling wages. Its efforts to right-size government have barely moved short term unemployment, had no effect on long-term unemployment rolls, and a negative effect on consumer and small business spending.

Both nationally and globally, Gray’s business/austerity solutions have clearly not worked.Shouldn’t that be something the city—its elected officials and fourth estate, its bar patrons and college-going students and teachers, its residents of every color—be debating, possibly even challenging?

## Publish and perish (cont.)

*continued from page 1*

least half of their working energies on scholarly writing, the amount of money the Commonwealth allocates to higher education warrants at least a little reflection on whether or not the scholarship demanded of those who teach unduly hampers their ability to affect change in the world around them.

In an ideal world, scholarly publication would presage active engagement with social problems, but that is not always what ends up happening. Instead publishing often gives scholars a ticket to the Ivory Tower’s most remote bastion: release from teaching or administrative duties.

### Academic energy

Another writer I came across, Karen Kilcup, wonders if literary criticism is meaningful in a world at risk and wonders how “can (and should) scholars in literature and language use their often privileged positions to contribute to the urgent project of global sustainability?” This is a difficult question to answer, and it implicates me and other professional scholars in a set of contradictions about the academy that are harder still to sort through.

As it stands, our universities are sustained by a model that values limitless production and demands limitless circulation of intellectual capital. If I want to succeed in this profession, I’ll need to participate in a system that rewards people according to how much they produce. More is better. Publish or perish, or, many people realize, publish *and* perish. I have already had to (pre)professionalize and place my work in journals in order to compete in a job market where newly-minted Ph.D.s jockey for precious-few positions and compete with seasoned scholars, themselves transitioning up the academic

ladder, leveraging an opportunity for a spouse, or perhaps just hoping to secure a tenure track job for the first time.

Moreover, as I go on I have to decide whether or not I can justify jetting around the country—on the university’s dime, no less—to read papers in rooms where five, or maybe ten, interested (and well-connected) listeners have gathered. Given that air travel is expensive, and a chief contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, it would seem that higher education should lead a movement to find more efficient and sustainable venues for scholarly creativity. For now, though, this is a decision that is made for me. If I’m going to be a professor, I am going to produce, write, and travel.

The CO2 emissions generated by conference-goers and the reams of paper consumed by writers and readers are but minor factors when compared to the costs of human energy. The overproduction of knowledge, particularly by graduate students and underdeveloped scholars seeking to gain traction in their respective fields, is a direct consequence of the demand that all scholars “create” knowledge, yet much of the “knowledge” that’s created only appears in print because it is published by a university press system that has a fiduciary responsibility to uphold the tenure and promotion system.

In the United States, a system of just 88 university presses maintains the entire tenure system in arts and humanities disciplines. When a junior scholar can’t publish a monograph and subsequently is denied tenure, money and energy is inevitably wasted: human energy expended in conducting academic searches, fossil fuel burned to fly in job candidates and send interviewers to national conventions, and emotional energy burned by scholars who feel as if they have failed. All of this, of course, directly affects the

quality of undergraduate education at our institutions.

### The academic press

Unless funding models change, or unless institutions revise their criteria for intellectual accomplishment, the opportunities to maintain stable employment in higher education will virtually disappear for most graduate students and junior faculty. This is because it’s getting harder and harder to actually publish. University presses, like almost all book publishers, live on a hand-to-mouth basis. Until about 10 years ago, university presses were guaranteed to sell anywhere from 300-500 copies of a book to research libraries across the country. According to Stephen M. Wrinn, Director of the University Press of Kentucky, that number is now down to about 120 copies because library book budgets are shrinking. Since it can cost a university press anywhere from \$40,000 to \$60,000 to publish a single book, the shortfall in book sales will make it nearly impossible for most presses to remain solvent.

To make matters worse, all kinds of private corporations have their eye on a slice of higher education’s financial pie, and publishing markets are often the most susceptible to parasites. It simply costs institutions too much money to access the knowledge they need to produce more knowledge. Thirty years ago, libraries paid about \$200 per year for access to an average scientific journal. According to the *Library Journal*, the average cost is now \$3400 per year, an increase that exceeds the rate of inflation by a factor of at least 3.

In a vicious cycle, universities pay once for their employees to produce information and then pay for it again when they subscribe to database aggregators. The model is essentially like paying

a handyman to build a house, giving it to a bank, and then taking out a mortgage from that bank to get the house back.

The problems with publishing and scholarship wouldn’t be so bad if it had a greater impact. However, according to Deborah L. Rhode, a Professor of Law at Stanford University, only two percent of all scholarship in the humanities is ever cited by anyone. This statistic should be alarming because it reveals a systemic crisis of overproduction and squandered resources in higher education. The demands to publish placed on faculty at many institutions create a pattern, in which scholars generate superfluous information, seemingly for the sake of advancement. Given its evident lack of audience, I believe it is disingenuous to say that scholarly writing is activism proper when it reaches few people inside of the academy and almost no one outside of it.

So what can we do? Cut funding to public education? Ask professors to publish less? Come up with new standards for professional advancement? The problems I’ve touched on here scratch the surface of what’s wrong with the academy. But the conversation is an important start to forging a healthier relationship between the publicly-supported university and the public it serves.

## Letters to the editor

### More praise for “Adjunct”

Thank you so much for this article (“Adjuncts: the invisible majority,” April 27). Your experience echoes mine in so many ways. I am also an adjunct at a KCTCS college—one with multiple campuses under the umbrella of one college. I am qualified to teach (and have) in several different divisions and disciplines due to the interdisciplinary nature of my graduate work.

According to the rules, I am free to teach many classes spread out to other colleges in the KCTCS system, as well as other area institutions, but officially limited to 3 (4 with permission) at my “home” college. I personally know someone who taught up to 12 classes a semester at 3 KCTCS colleges before finally earning a full time position.

I am currently teaching multiple classes at separate campuses (separate departments and divisions with separate contracts) and no one is currently

looking my way. Yet, I live in constant fear I will lose those extra courses or be forced to choose between departments, programs, and campuses who have treated me with respect, or no longer be available to students who need me. One department head needs me to pick up extra courses next semester due to the departure of a long time adjunct, but cannot give them to me because I don’t even have a full-time “temp” contract.

Last semester, I picked up an “overload” (bumping my courses up to 4 through one campus for a total of 7) when a truly inept instructor was terminated from a difficult to staff external program. This brought me to the attention of the Provost, which, rather than giving me hope that I will gain a more secure position, instead makes me anxious that I will soon be subject to the 4-courses-college-wide-rule.

At times, I feel ashamed of my position as the academic equivalent of a “scab” but my greatest worry at the moment is not benefits, a personal office, or a voice in the Faculty Senate. Oh, I want those things, but right now I can’t afford to lose the meager amount of money I make while I am functioning under the radar, as well as struggling to find the time to complete my PhD.

KCTCS adjunct, online

### May Day comfort

I was nervous and worried when I showed up at the Fayette County Prison for a long weekend in jail. But as I was getting processed, I looked down and saw a *North of Center* and the picture of your baby on the cover (“May Day sprout,” May 11). Prison still sucked, but the picture and your paper made it a little better.

Anonymous friend of editor, as relayed to him verbally

*North of Center* is a periodical, a place, and a perspective. Read on to find out what that means.

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JUNE 22, 2011

# Comics

Fierce Company (Part 10) by Kenn Minter

I DON'T SEE HOW ME ROBBING A BANK ...

I MEAN REALLY, WHO AM I HURTING? THE PEOPLE? NO!

... IS ANY OF YER CONCERN!

AND YOU AND I BOTH KNOW, YOU CAN'T HURT THE BANKS. THE FEDS'LL JUST BAIL THOSE BASTARDS OUT!

CRAK!

HUH. SHE'S ACTUALLY RIGHT.

BUT SHE'S NOT THINKING AHEAD. THE BANKS WILL JUST TAKE IT OUT ON THE PEOPLE.

THAT BITCH!

NO ONE HURTS THE PEOPLE ON MY WATCH!

GRRRRRRR!!

notfromherecomic.blogspot.com

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THE EVOLUTION OF A RIVER RAT BY: WESTERN

TAXES ...

PADDLE...

# Obituaries

**Chaco Mayer**  
*September 2000-June 6, 2011*

Chaco Mayer, river queen, was put to sleep on Monday, June 6, 2011. A Scott County native, at the age of four months Chaco adopted a pair of recent Kentucky transplants during a snowy MLK weekend in 2001 and lived the rest of her life in Lexington. From her first March 2001 river trip on the Flint River in Georgia, when she was placed aboard a beat-up 17 foot Coleman canoe and floated through a dirt parking lot to escape a sudden spring flood, Chaco remained an avid river dog.

From her spot in front of the captain's seat, she floated rivers in Georgia (Flint, Chattooga), Tennessee (Big South Fork), Arkansas (Buffalo), and Kentucky (Rockcastle, Red, Green, Elkhorn, Kentucky, Dix, and Hickman). She is survived by her adopted parents, Julie and Danny, adopted brother, Hartford, newborn adopted sister, Josie, and a great mix of human, squirrel, rabbit and canine friends. She will be missed.

**Dewburger**  
*Date unknown-June 10, 2011*

After a brief unknown affliction, possibly the heart, Dewey Lackey died on June 10, 2011. Found several years back as a scrawny little suburban wildcat, Dewey resided in the Lackey household for the last years of his life, where

he catted around his critter-filled backyard and turned quite plump. The beefed-up Dewey took center stage as Dewburger, leading cat for

a series of John Lackey comics that appeared in *North of Center* from June through September 2009. The strip, titled "Dewburger the Cubist

Cat," featured Lackey's feline mentor dispensing sage advice and dead animal offerings to the homegrown artist.



Chaco Mayer, river queen, on her last trip, Hickman Creek.