

The Document – Post-Apocalyptic Edition



New Year's Resolutions... For Grad Students - By Adrian Gamble

The Ancient Mayans got it wrong. Instead of ending like it should, the world, those exams you were banking on not having to mark, and the holiday pounds you gained just in case, are all here to stay. To help you lovely people get through what hopefully is not the unluckiest year of the new millennium - 2013 - we here at *The Document* have created a list of New Year's Resolutions to guide your way.

1. Make lists. Try to organize and prioritize all of your upcoming projects, timelines, and obligations on a regular basis. This will help keep your life moving efficiently. Also, they are a great way to procrastinate while feeling good about things you have not done yet. A sort of porn for procrastinators. That reminds me... Am I out of bananas? Better make a grocery list... Get back to this article later...
2. Stop procrastinating. You know who you are. Cut it out.
3. Set realistic goals. These do not all have to be work related. They might include getting more sleep, exercising more, or catching up on *Mad Men*. If the latter, you may need to set realistic, quit-smoking-and-drinking-all-the-time, goals as well.
4. Remember who you are. One of the my favourite *Simpson's* moments is the one where Dustin Hoffman voices the perfect substitute teacher whom Lisa naturally falls for. As his train departs, the teacher hands a tearful Lisa a note which reads simply, 'I am Lisa Simpson'. This is a valuable lesson for all of us amid the wishy-washy existence of being a grad student.
5. Rekindle your relationship with your supervisor(s). For many of, this may not apply. If however, it has been a while (They keep calling you 'Bob', etc), then it is probably time to reconnect.

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New Year's Resolutions...Continued

6. That dreaded chapter... If you are a normal human being, you may from time to time suffer from do-nothingness. This is a serious and complex condition. It can happen to anyone. You said it would be done by Halloween, you then let it go till Christmas, Now it is nearly February... It is OK. You will be alright. Try to break it down into manageable parts. Set goals based on topics, or subheadings rather than arbitrary page counts or chapter completion. If it just is not happening, it is a good bet that there is something else important you could write in the meantime.

7. Hobbies. Reading, photography, knitting sweaters for you cat... these are all good, constructive, activities to go to for a well-deserved break from writing and researching. With a good sense of balance, a hobby can add that sense of personal accomplishment with something uniquely meaningful to you and who you are.

8. Health. We like to sit. A lot. It is what we do as grad students - our often pasty complexions and doughy middles are a testament to the imbalance of mind-over-body that can come to define life in academia. Try something new. Walk more, move more, join a yoga class, or cut back on beer. Do something positive to make you feel better.

9. Plan Ahead. On paper, we grad students have a lot of time. Without classes or term papers, it is easy to get lost in the jumble of life, family, friends, and work. Got to get ethics approval for those interviews this spring? Get on it. Need to submit a paper proposal for that conference in May? Get on it. Tuition coming up? Get on it. You get the idea.

10. You. Sometimes we have to know when to be selfish. 'No, I cannot come out for drinks.', 'No, I cannot go spend the weekend with your parents', 'Yes, I would like some me time'. Such sentiments, though at times a potential source of friction with friends, partners, and family members, are a true, necessary evil. To all outward appearances (to those with full-time jobs, spouses, and kids, or to our parents, or non-academic friends), we are footloose and fancy free. We never work, so why can't we do thing X at a moment's notice? We just can't. That is all. Those closest to us are sure to understand. That being said, as with all things, balance is key.

In the News - Why We Love the Ikea Monkey
- By Adrian Gamble



"Where did I park?"

The holidays are a time of good tidings, and good savings. Consumer goods are routinely marked down to riot-inducing low prices that every year attract record-breaking numbers of bargain-mad shoppers. Hence this past Christmas in a parking lot in North Toronto, a star was born. His name was Darwin, and he came into the world wide-eyed and alarmed, nothing but a diaper and a faux-shearling coat to his name. His 'mother', Toronto lawyer and pet monkey advocate, Yasmin Nakhuda, had been inexplicably lured to hunt for bargains at the North York Ikea, the promise of a discount Malm Dresser and cheap meatballs too tempting to resist. Making a dash past the ball-pit, Ms. Nakhuda following the blue arrows on the floor to her destination, yet alas, they were all out of maple...

Meanwhile in the parking lot outside, Darwin had become restless, his primate curiosity quickly getting the better of him. A short fiddle with the latch on his crate, and a dextrous manipulation of the car door control later, and this brilliant product of evolution, as honoured by his namesake, had escaped to freedom. The strange new world of the cold, grey parking lot, soon proved to be a cruel, unforgiving place, much like the ultra-modern Scandavian furniture outlet to which it was adjoined. Within moments, Darwin had been spotted by curious shoppers, concerned and bemused gawkers who all stopped to point, laugh, and snap photos on their smartphones. By the six o'clock news, 'The Ikea Monkey' would be the most famous holiday shopper of all - a news story seen 'round the world.

The story of Darwin the 'Ikea Monkey' captured headlines and hearts around the globe, his fate quickly becoming the most tweeted news item for days. Perhaps in Darwin we all see a bit of ourselves. We have all had moments, when we feel alone, in unfamiliar surroundings, and longing for loved ones to help get us through. There exists as well, I believe, a love of our not-so-distant monkey cousins, whether in the wild, at the zoo, or supersized and misunderstood as they scale the Empire State Building in black-and-white. More often loved and adored than cast away as 'damn, dirty apes', primates *seem* nearly human, and in them we see more than a little of ourselves. Also, doesn't he just look *adorable* in that little coat?



Will the Real Abe Lincoln Please Stand Up?



- By Adrian
Gamble

Honestly, Abe... If I had an (American) penny for every Lincoln-based film to arrive in the last four score and seven days...this editor would be at least 4 cents richer. 150 years after the Civil War, and it seems that Hollywood cannot get enough of America's late, great, 16th President. 2012 has proven to be year of Lincoln, as four separate film projects (in no particular order of greatness) - *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, *Lincoln VS. Zombies*, *Lincoln*, and, *Killing Lincoln* - have either recently been released or are in post-production.

As historians, we should be thankful. No matter our particular area of interest, we can be satisfied knowing that something big, shiny, and historical (at least in some way), has become wildly, if temporarily, popular and dare I say it... mainstream. Before we gripe and bemoan the misguided approach of Hollywood execs and film studios as they present the popcorn masses with their incomplete, boiled-down, or just plain wrong facsimile of the man in question, we must take a collective moment to cherish the fact that a historical figure has become cool, camp even - a cult hero and historical great all at once. Whether he be portrayed as Lincoln the Emancipator, or Lincoln the ass-kicking vampire slayer, his lanky shadow has been cast long and looming over pop culture in a non-stop barrage of over-exposure usually reserved for the likes of Justin Bieber or Lady Gaga.

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Will the Real Abe Lincoln...Continued

Now we must ask ourselves, as historians, and presumably, as participants in popular culture, and as people of earth, what steps we must take to ensure that we shamelessly snag as much mileage as possible from this rare opportunity? The obvious route, one which has been the tried, tested, and true standby of harrumphing historians since the dawn of filmdom, would be to begin a barrage of crusty, academic criticism, to flood history journals and conference panels with scathing reviews, and to all have a good, father/mother-knows-best chuckle at the expense of the bloated Hollywood machine. To this - and I am certain that it has already begun in earnest - I say 'hold on'. There is a golden opportunity here, that if handled with care, could do wonders for our oft-underrepresented trade.

While of course there will always be room for critical discussion in the wake of any Hollywood production of the historic drama variety, this recent addition of the B-Movie element riding along in tandem, has created a window of endless possibilities. In the English Lit world, there has already been a precedent for this. In 2009, Seth Grahame-Smith published his retake of the Jane Austen classic in the form of his *New York Times* bestseller, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. The novel was largely untouched, albeit with the addition of zombies to add a campy, action-horror element to the otherwise light, studied affect, of the English classic. And before we begin shoehorning zombies and vampires into every historical moment from Napoleon to Nixon, we might have a think on what subjects might benefit from a little creative overexposure.

So go forth historians, young and old, and consider your current research. Ask yourself, would zombies make it sell? What about vampires? What about sexy, brooding vampires... who sparkle in the sunlight? All the kids will be wearing 'Team Jane Jacobs' and 'Team Edward VIII' T-shirts in no time.



At the Oscars with Carly Simpson

Awards season is upon us, and for many of you that means nothing. For others, the Academy Awards provide an opportunity to get together with friends on a Sunday night and drink a bottle of wine (or two) while commenting on the appearance of the rich and famous. And for competitive people, like myself, the chance to outperform my friends in our annual Oscar pool provides the perfect excuse to hit the theatre months in advance. Between fistfuls of popcorn I take in each of the nominees carefully crafting my picks for best actor/actress, supporting actor/actress, director, and picture. Unfortunately I have not had a chance to see all of the movies yet, but I hope to provide a brief overview of the buzz-worthy films.

Life of Pi

Based on the bestselling novel by Canadian Yann Martel, the *Life of Pi* is a visual masterpiece. Director Ang Lee was able to bring this epic story to life on the big screen. The stunning visuals are enhanced by Mychael Danna's original score, which has already won the Golden Globe. *Life of Pi* will be a contender in the best picture, director, visual effects and original score categories. The numerous Canadian connections make *Life of Pi* a movie to route for.

Silver Linings Playbook

I really want to see this movie! *Silver Linings Playbook* is getting a lot of buzz right now. It takes a unique approach to the classic love story. Jennifer Lawrence picked up the Golden Globe for best actress in a musical/comedy and she is a top contender in the best actress category at the Oscars. With the backing of Harvey Weinstein I would be shocked if *Silver Linings* went home empty handed.

Zero Dark Thirty

Directed by Kathryn Bigelow, *Zero Dark Thirty*, documents the American military take down of Osama Bin Laden. Bigelow upset her former husband, James Cameron, by winning best director in 2009 for *The Hurt Locker*. Although she was overlooked this year in the category of best director, *Zero Dark Thirty* could be a dark horse for best picture. Also, Jessica Chastain's outstanding performance places her in tight competition with Jennifer Lawrence in the best actress category.

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At the Oscars...Continued**Django Unchained**

In classic Tarantino style, Django Unchained, follows the life of freed slave Django as he attempts to reconnect with his wife who was sold to another slave owner. At times brutally violent, and at others extremely witty Django Unchained is definitely an entertaining film. With a star-studded cast led by Jamie Foxx, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Christoph Waltz (nominated for best supporting actor), Django will not disappoint. Django will likely not take home the award for best picture, but I would be surprised if Waltz was overlooked in the supporting actor category.

Lincoln

Nominated for the most awards this year, including best picture, best actor, best director, and best supporting actor/actress, Lincoln is a must see. Although I am not betting on Lincoln to take best picture I do think Daniel Day-Lewis has a great chance of receiving the nod for best actor. As we all know the Academy loves a good bio-pic and Lincoln is sure to have a lot of support.

Argo

Argo surprised many at the Golden Globes by taking home two of the biggest awards: best motion picture drama and best director. Although Ben Affleck did not receive an Oscar nomination for his directing, Argo should not be ruled out for best picture. The movie tracks the escape of six American diplomats held hostage in Iran in the late 1970s. After taking refuge in the Canadian embassy the diplomats attempt to escape Iran under the guise of a film production. With a great cast and a fast-paced plot, Argo keeps the audience on the edge of their seats.

Les Miserables

As someone who has never read the novel or seen the play I thoroughly enjoyed Les Miserables. Hugh Jackman, as Jean Valjean, and Anne Hathaway, as Fantine give stunning emotional performances and they are both top runners in their respective categories. Even though Helena Bonham Carter and Sasha Baron Cohen are not nominated they were great in their minor roles. Will Les Miserables be the first musical to win best picture since Chicago in 2002?

Also nominated for best picture are Amour and Beasts of the Southern Wild. I don't know much about these movies, but the Oscars are always filled with upsets and surprises so don't count either of them out when you are making your final selections. Happy watching! Oh, and p.s. Silver City is no longer giving free refills when you order a large popcorn. Not that I have ever finished a large popcorn myself...



The Document Presents:
**The First Annual Graduate
History Creative Writing
Competition**

Dear Readers,

We would like to invite all of you to submit a short piece of creative writing for publication in the next issue of *The Document*. This is your chance to show off your best purple prose, historic haikus, and pretentious poetry for all the world to see. The next Keats, Dickens, or E.L. James may be lurking among our ranks, just waiting for the chance to blossom. (Warning: Anything resembling a, *Fifty Shades of Blue: An Erotic Romp Featuring Brian Mulrone and Kim Campbell*, will immediately be disqualified and burned). All kidding aside (but really, no Fifty Shades wannabes, please), we encourage all of you to send in your submissions in time for the next issue.

The winner will receive a free coffee and a complimentary handshake. That plus the recognition that they are superior to their friends and colleagues. Always a plus.

Please send all submissions to *The Document*

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In Conversation With... Dr. William Jenkins
- Contributed by Carly Simpson

We at *The Document* recently caught up to York's very own Dr. Jenkins at a York parking lot (pictured left), and had a lovely discussion about life, academia, and Anglo-Norman domestic architecture. The following is just a short excerpt from the three hours we delayed him from going home after a long day in the office.

The phone call from Marcel Martel caught me completely off-guard. "How would you feel about becoming the next Graduate Program Director in History?" With a book completed, a research grant that had almost dried up, and the appearance of a few more gray hairs up top, there was nowhere to run. On reflection, though, I felt quite flattered. Even before joining the Program in 2008, I was aware of its reputation at national and international levels. And though it seemed somewhat daunting to step into a position involving such a large number of students and faculty, I was confident of the co-operation, expertise and collegiality that I would receive from faculty, staff, graduate students and former directors alike. So it has since proved. I could even go as far as to say that it is a new and welcome lease of life. While there is more than a little bit of work involved, I am nonetheless looking forward to the next two years and eight months of my tenure.

So what sort of an historian am I? I am, I'd say, a cross-breed of both History and Geography in that my training is as an historical geographer. Growing up close to the capital of a motorway-less Ireland in the 1980s (no big inflows of EU structural funds yet), and with my extended family scattered between urban and rural locations on the island, I was reminded from an early age of the close and enduring interconnections between place, region, and history. These were observable not only in the landscape through routine sightings of early Christian abbeys and monasteries, Anglo-Norman castles, sixteenth-century tower houses, eighteenth-century demesnes, and the odd surviving thatched cottage; they were also audible in people's accents and modes of expression...

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Dr. William Jenkins...Continued

...What I did not see directly at the time I remained curious about – the bilingual signposts pointing towards towns (and their rivers and bridges – I liked rivers and bridges!) off the beaten track, and of course the mystery of the international border to the north, which I did not cross until seventeen years of age. So while it was natural that I should become obsessed with maps, geography, and places, a school trip to Kilmainham Jail in Dublin, and the daily reminders of the northern troubles, impressed on me the long history of struggle on behalf of “the nation”. My grandmother bought me a book about some of those who died in Kilmainham to add something domestic to what until then had been a burgeoning collection of Dickens classics. I knew nothing of the sub-discipline of historical geography before going to university in Dublin, but once introduced to it through class and field courses, as well as archival trips, I was eager to learn more.

I remain fascinated with Irish places, regions, and ideas about nationhood, especially through the long nineteenth century, but since entering graduate school in Canada more than fifteen years ago, I have turned my attention to those who left those places and regions to become part of the building of societies and environments in North America. I decided on this topic for several reasons, not least because I knew there was a long tradition of scholarship to which I could fit my work into. The comparative structure of the dissertation made it hard work, but then that is what a dissertation should be! Looking back, I realize the value of the time I had both pre- and post-comps to read, digest and actively discuss a vast amount of scholarship. I would therefore remind our graduate students to treasure the time they currently have to enjoy and assimilate their own sets of canonical works as they try to figure out just what it is that counts as “cultural history” or “transnational history” etc. as well as the sort of historian they want to be. But surviving grad school involves more than simply spending hours at a desk, and I would emphasize also the value of social interaction, collective intellectual stimulation, and learning from each other. This learning does not always have to be academic, by the way, and I have friends from my grad student days to blame for some of my current hobbies, including playing bass guitar. Other pre-grad school pursuits that have remained intact include running, travelling, and the indescribable pleasure (space constraints preclude me from saying too much about the pain) that one gets from supporting Arsenal F.C.!

Finally, and in the context of the current labour market situation especially, I will be happy to receive ideas from grad students, and indeed those who have since graduated, about the ways in which the Graduate Program in History can serve you and future cohorts of students better, especially where workshops and degree requirements are concerned. In the meantime, I look forward to meeting and seeing you around and serving you as director.

William Jenkins