

## In which our hero spots some terrific bargains and salivates over an actress's gams

Before there was *Bridget Jones*, there was Samuel Pepys (1633-1703). Here is what he wrote exactly 343 years ago today: **October 28, 1661** To Paul's Churchyard to Hunt's, and there found my Theorbo done, which pleases me very well, and costs me 26s. to the altering. But now he tells me it is as good a lute as any is in England, and is worth well £10.

### SAMUEL PEPYS' DIARY

Hither I sent for Captain Ferrers to me, who comes with a friend of his, and they and I to the Theatre, and there saw *Argalus and Parthenia*, where a woman acted Parthenia, and came afterwards on the stage in

men's clothes, and had the best legs that ever I saw, and I was very well pleased with it. Thence to the Ringo alehouse, and thither sent for a belt-maker, and bought of him a handsome belt, which cost me 24s., and is very neat. [www.nationalpost.com/pepys](http://www.nationalpost.com/pepys)



## 'I didn't have one negative response'

### DRESS

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"Besides, this is an event that's about celebrating good books, but it's also a great party and I think it's good to have fun with it."

Weaver points out that, although her dress may garner a lot of media attention, she isn't the only one who puts thought and effort into her Giller garb.

"M.G. Vassanji's wife was wearing a beautiful sari last year and one of the judges, Rosalie Abella, had a sensational necklace on," she says. "You know, it's just fun to talk about what everyone's wearing, but that doesn't mean we don't talk about the books."

Some may argue Weaver isn't so much dressing creatively as creating her own publicity stunt. But the 34-year-old TV personality insists nothing she's wearing is controversial — it's not as though she's trying to be the next J.Lo, circa the 2000 Grammys.

"I'm just giving thought to what I'm wearing, and I think that only shows respect for the evening," says Weaver.

In order to ensure she wouldn't offend any of the prominent Canadians whose headshots will adorn her skirt, Weaver phoned them all beforehand.

"I didn't have one negative response," she says. "They all thought it was a great idea. [Maclean's editor] Anthony Wilson-Smith told me, 'I always enjoy being part of something that tells people that they need to have a sense of humour.'"

And a sense of humour is what Weaver believes many Canadians are lacking — at least those who believe her dresses have and will tarnish the Giller reputation. As for the comparisons to the Oscars, she only sees this as flattery: "Hype and glamour are precisely what the Canadian literary scene needs in getting global recognition," she says.

So will Weaver continue making a statement for as long as she's invited to the Giller ceremony?

"I did consider that, but I think it could become very stressful if I put that pressure on myself every year," she says. "However, if something strikes me and I think it would be fun to wear, then I'd do it."

This year's Giller Prize will be telecast live on Thursday, Nov. 11, on CBC at 9 p.m. ET. Mary Walsh is returning as host and will be joined by Jian Ghomeshi, Jim Cuddy, Shelagh Rogers, Gordon Pinsent and others at Toronto's Four Seasons Hotel.

Renowned authors making up this year's jury are Charlotte Gray, Alistair MacLeod and last year's winner, Vassanji.

The short list includes Shauna Singh Baldwin (*The Tiger Claw*), Wayson Choy (*All That Matters*), Pauline Holdstock (*Beyond Measure*), Alice Munro (*Runaway*), Paul Quarrington (*Galveston*) and Miriam Toews (*A Complicated Kindness*).

There will also be a special tribute to the late Canadian publisher Jack McClelland.

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Carolyn Weaver, right, with Margaret Atwood at last year's Gillers.

## It was a teeming urban world

### HEER

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Buhle tells a more interesting story, which highlights the strength of Yiddish culture as a prep school for the modern world.

The Yiddish world Buhle brings to life is not the imaginary folksy shtetl of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Rather it is a teeming urban world where a vibrant working class asserted its own proud plebian identity, in defiance of both religious traditionalists and Gentile bigots. Far ahead of mainstream creators in Europe and North America, Yiddish writers were willing to break taboos to appeal to a mass audience.

These days, many newspapers have sex columns, where young *flâneurs* describe the erotic temptations of urban life. An innovation of the last few years, this type of sex column was old hat in the Yiddish press of the early 20th century.

As Buhle notes, Yiddish newspaper columnists often described "domestic scenes of conflict in the cramped tenement where modesty was an almost unattainable goal (especially with 'roomers,' non-relatives renting rooms) and non-marital sex as temptingly close as it was morally unthinkable to the senior citizens. This was *Sex in the City* for Yiddish readers..."