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(In)Famous Cover Tunes of 2014

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I was initially reluctant to make a mash-up of the Simon & Garfunkel song “The Only Living Boy in New York” (1970), because the satirical use to which I was putting these lines, on first glance, runs contrary to the themes of innocence and honesty that inform the song. On closer reading, however, even the original song is about how honesty and presence easily become lost in a modern world where “half of the time we’re gone, but we don’t know where.” This refrain seems even more pertinent in 2014, where we run around with one ear and eye fixed on the internet, practically drowning in information, and yet our political leaders can still turn a wilfully blind eye to the problems that our lifestyles, institutions, and policies are creating for the larger world.

In the song's original context of the seventies, the line "I get all the news I need from the weather report" used the weather to signal a natural and grounded contrast with the chaotic "news of the world." Forty-four years later, the weather report has become *part* of our chaotic, unpredictable, and disastrous "news": we can no longer distinguish a clear line between where the "natural" world ends and the human begins. But wasn't this blurring of categories inherent even in the song's original iteration? Even here, the singer experiences the weather through the mediation of the weather *report*, rather than experiencing it "directly." The political silencing of scientific discourse performs the same kind of nostalgic belief (perhaps covering over a cynical dismissal) that Simon & Garfunkel's song comments upon. The difference today is that the stakes for ourselves and the world, if we continue with this irresponsible behaviour, are much higher than they have ever been.

SIMON ORPANA has been drawing and publishing cartoons since 1987. He has a PhD in English and Cultural Studies from McMaster University, and has published articles in *Psychogeographies*, *Topia*, and *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*. His illustrated 'zine, "The Art of Gentrification," is reprinted in *Popular Culture: A User's Guide* (3rd ed.). His short documentary *Beaz Steez: Skateboarding at Beasley Park* is available online.