

Terence Young

The Latest Trends

Leonard drones in amphibrachic tetrameter about his famous blue raincoat, accompanied by a few

clicks and hisses, courtesy the aging vinyl that contains his voice. To cue the song and drop the needle is an

anodyne for the painful ease of playlists selected by algorithms on machines that profess to know our taste

in music, books, film, which they clearly do with an accuracy that is both amazing and depressing, though

it really should come as no surprise that we are not unique in our attraction to lugubrious songs about

anguished love triangles, because as any good algorithm knows, the human species cut its teeth on self-inflicted

wounds, if only to have something to sing or write about. No surprise to discover that those who bought “Love and

Hate” also bought “Rain Dogs,” who loved *The Outsider* also loved *Heart of Darkness*, who watched “Hiroshima

Mon Amour” also watched “400 Blows.” Only the hard-core romantic insists it is better to stumble upon a novel, an album,

a work of art, that a title suggested during a brief encounter at the market or on the bus is glorious serendipity, and that

guidance is a word better reserved for the private realms of religion, like divine will or karma, those older organizing

principles once said to know us and direct us the way iTunes does now. The haphazard aisles of an independent bookstore,

songs heard in passing on the radio, liner notes – all “shining artefacts of the past,” as Leonard says, like window shopping

through real glass, or kneeling next to the turntable, its simple arm, and filling our lungs to blow away the dust.