

# THE VOICE

MAGAZINE  
Vol 19 Iss 07 2011-02-18

## Still Standing

Fiction

## Music and Lyrics

Finding your voice

## Undergrad Forum

A stake in the future

*Plus: Maghreb Voices  
Write Stuff  
From Where I Sit  
and much more!*



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



Re: "Write Stuff: Google Lit Trips" by S.D. Livingston, v.19 i.06  
(2011-02-11)

Thanks to S.D. Livingston for introducing us to Google Lit trips. What a great resource!

Wanda Waterman

## FICTION

Rajni Mala Khelawan



## Still Standing

The air in the apartment was thick with the smell of freshly baked cake. Clarice stood at the counter, smoothing icing over the round vanilla cake: pink, of course, Serenity's favourite colour. The small dining room was full of pink and white streamers, balloons, and "Happy Birthday" banners. Her baby was turning eight.

Serenity interrupted her mother's reverie. "Is Daddy coming to my birthday party, Mom?" The little girl's emerald eyes

were wide with naïve enthusiasm.

"He's probably lying around drunk somewhere," said Nathan, rolling his dark brown eyes.

"Nathan!" Clarice sighed, quickening her pace. A blob of icing splattered her hand. She licked it. Her hands still appeared young in spite of the housecleaning jobs she had held over the last four years to support her family.

"Is Daddy coming, Momma?" Serenity's chubby face stared back at her mother. Her blonde pigtails were held up with green ribbons to match her green dress.

"He said he was busy, Princess. Maybe next time he will come." She didn't look at her daughter.

Nathan clenched his jaw and ground his teeth.

Clarice finished icing the cake. She picked up the red gel tube and began looping the words "Happy Birthday Serenity."

"Is John coming, Momma? Is he back in Calgary?"

"Yes, and he said that he will bring the video camera so that he can tape your party. Won't that be nice, Princess?" She glanced at the imitation emerald studs in Serenity's ears. It was her birthday present to her daughter. It was more than she could afford, but Serenity had really wanted them.

"Goody, I'll get to be on TV!" said Serenity.

"It's a home video, dork. It's not like you will get to be 'on TV'," said Nathan scornfully.

"Nathan, just leave the room if you can't be nice to your sister, okay! I have had it with you." Since he had turned 12, he had started acting like he was the adult male in the house, like he was in charge. He came and went as he pleased. He said whatever came to his mind, without sensitivities to others' feelings. "Just let me enjoy your sister's birthday today."

She took out eight spiral candles from a tiny box and stabbed the cake with them. "Perfect," she said quietly, her frustration subsiding.

There was a light knock. Serenity ran to open the door.

“Hello there, Serenity. How does it feel to be eight?” said John, scooping the little girl up in his arms. He was an attractive middle-aged man, well-dressed and clean-shaven.

Nathan abruptly left the dining room and slammed the door to his bedroom.

“Is your brother in a bad mood again, Princess?” John gently slid Serenity down onto the floor. She looked up at him, wide-eyed. He removed his winter jacket and hung it in the closet.

“Hey John,” said Clarice, entering the hallway to give him a hug and a quick kiss. “Your lips are frozen.”

“Well, it is the middle of winter out there, and I see that Calgary got dumped with snow while I was gone.” John removed his boots and placed them on the floor of the jacket closet. “Looks like I’m on time for a change!”

“Yes, you are. I’m impressed!” Clarice’s face lit up a few degrees in the dark hallway. She’d had nothing to fear.

They were interrupted by voices and footsteps. “Looks like your little guests are arriving,” said John, quickly glancing out into the long hallway.

It was not long before the little apartment was echoing with the chatter of four small guests dressed in their prettiest party outfits. They played musical chairs as John walked around the living room with a video camera perched on his shoulder. Nathan hid in his room, avoiding it all.

But when Clarice lit the candles on the cake and everyone began singing “Happy Birthday” to Serenity, the familiar tune drew Nathan out of his bedroom. He quietly leaned against the wall in a corner, watching.

Serenity blew out the candles, all in one breath. John cheered. And everyone clapped as the birthday girl picked up the pink-ribboned knife and sliced the cake in the centre, right through her name.

Then Clarice took over: cutting the cake, pouring orange pop into Styrofoam cups. She was starting to feel exhausted from the party, but she knew that it was almost over . . . and she would finally be able to relax. And talk with John. It had been a long three weeks since John had stormed out of her apartment in the middle of the blizzard night.

Serenity opened her presents. She pulled out stuffed animal after stuffed animal, exclaiming over each one. Clarice wondered why on earth people had only purchased stuffed animals: Serenity’s room was already full of them. Her neck was starting to stiffen. She stretched it from one side to the other.

“There is one more present to open,” announced John, removing his video camera from his shoulder and bending down to take out a small box wrapped in silver paper.

Serenity glowed. She ripped the wrapping paper and squealed, “A Game Boy! A Game Boy! This is what I always wanted. And new games too, Mom,” she added, turning quickly toward Clarice. “You are the best, John.”

It was unusual for John to buy such an expensive present for Serenity. Nathan looked suspiciously at him and then turned around and stalked back to his room, closing out his sister's squeals. The hands of the clock ticked to 3:30. The few parents started lining up to pick up their daughters. The party was winding down.

*Only minutes till it's over*, thought Clarice. *Minutes . . . only minutes . . .*

Streamers had fallen to the ground. Droplets of orange pop puddled in the empty white cups sitting on the table. Cake crumbs and torn wrapping paper were scattered on the floor, adding to the chaos. John stood by the kitchen window.

Clarice took a deep breath as she silently observed the aftermath. "Are you staying for a while, John?" she asked tentatively.

***"Somewhere along life's gravel road, in the process of providing, nurturing, giving, she forgot to take, forgot to feel."***

Serenity went to place her new stuffed animals in her room and to play with her Game Boy.

John was silent. He did not look at Clarice.

"What's wrong?" said Clarice. Was he still mad about three weeks ago? All couples argued about children, didn't they? Besides, she really didn't think it was his place to tell her how to discipline Nathan or to stop coddling Serenity. He wasn't an equal partner. And she had her system figured out. It worked on the better days.

"What's wrong?" John sighed. "I didn't want to break it to you today, of all days . . ."

Clarice was quiet. She knew what was next. She had been there before.

"I just can't do it anymore," he said. "I'm just not ready. I'm sorry. I thought I was ready for all this, but I'm not . . . and Nathan and I don't even get along. He seems to hate me. I'm sorry." John's words stumbled out of his mouth.

"I was wondering why you bought such an expensive present for Serenity. Just to cover up your guilt, I suppose?"

"Don't start this again, Clarice."

"Start what, John?"

"The arguments."

Clarice remained quiet.

John stared outside at the snowfall.

"Would it be different if you got along with Nathan?"

"I don't know." John paused, and then said, "It's not just that, Clarice."

She said nothing.

“Sometimes when I hold you, I feel like I’m holding a cement block.”

Clarice stiffened. Cement block. Somewhere along life’s gravel road, in the process of providing, nurturing, giving, she forgot to take, forgot to feel.

“I did a lot of thinking about all this last week.”

“Yeah,” said Clarice.

“We’ve been together for six months . . .”

Clarice hurriedly picked up the remaining cake and started to put it in the fridge. “I don’t want to hear any more, John. Please!”

“See, Clarice. This is the problem. You shove the skeletons back in the closet as if they don’t exist.”

“What do you want me to say, John? What?”

“I don’t know. I really don’t know.” John looked to the ground. “I’m sorry, Clarice. I gotta go. I will bring the videotape by, and I’ll say goodbye to the kids then.”

Clarice collapsed on the sofa and looked at the mess in her living and dining room.

John leaned down to kiss her on the cheek, but she turned her face the other way, staring blankly at the wall until she heard the slam of the door and the echo of John’s boots down the hall. She took a moment to count backwards in her head. Then she got up to clean.

Clarice grabbed the streamers, Styrofoam cups, icing-smudged paper plates, torn wrapping paper, and empty boxes and shoved them into a black garbage bag. She slammed a damp cloth against the table, showering the floor with cake crumbs.

Nathan came out of his room. His hair looked tousled. He placed his box of Lego on the clean table and started building. He was going to grow up and work for a big Lego Company, designing and inventing new toys.

Serenity came out of her bedroom with her new Game Boy and said, “Where’s John, Mom? How come he didn’t stay?”

Clarice looked at her daughter with blank eyes. “He is gone, Serenity. He will come back to say goodbye when he brings your birthday tape.”

Clarice grabbed the broom and started sweeping the floors, stirring a cloud of dust in the middle of her small kitchen. Nathan concentrated harder on his Lego creation. He took a yellow piece and placed it right on top of the red one, crushing the two together.

Serenity was speechless for a moment, and then said in a shrill voice, “You’ll never get married. Will you, Mom? I’ll never have a real daddy who comes home for dinner every day.”

Clarice said nothing. She continued sweeping and washing the floors. Serenity looked at her and ran to the closet and slid open the door, grabbing her jacket and mittens. Nathan stared determinedly at his Lego.

“Where are you going, Serenity?” said Clarice.

“Outside! To finish building my snow igloo!” yelled Serenity. She slammed the door shut as she left the apartment. The air in there was suffocating.

Clarice looked out her kitchen window once to check on Serenity. The little girl was kicking the small heap of snow that she had shovelled into the corner of the yard. She dumped the shovel on top of the heap, picked it up again, and slammed it on top of the heap a second time. Then Clarice watched silently as her daughter sat on the pile of snow and looked up toward the hazy sky as the snow flurries fell upon her face.

Clarice had just finished straightening the chairs when Serenity came back indoors. Her face was red, and her mittens were wet. She took off her mittens and her jacket and put them in the closet.

“Nathan, can you please take the garbage out?” Clarice said.

Nathan did not move a joint. His whole body focused on the Lego tank he was building.

Clarice raised her voice. “Nathan, can you take out the garbage?”

“Nathan, Mom said to take out the garbage,” said Serenity in a shaky voice. “Nathan, listen to Mom. Take out the garbage.”

“Nathan!” yelled Clarice.

“He doesn’t care, Mom. He doesn’t care about this family. Nathan, take out the garbage, please. Nathan, take out the garbage!” Serenity burst into tears. “You don’t care about this family, Nathan. Nobody here cares. Nobody cares! Nobody cares!” Serenity pounced on the garbage bag and then kicked it.

The room spun around Clarice. Her children had never seen her cry. She did not remember the last time that she had cried. She just swallowed her lot in life and went on. What was the use in crying? It did not wash anything away.

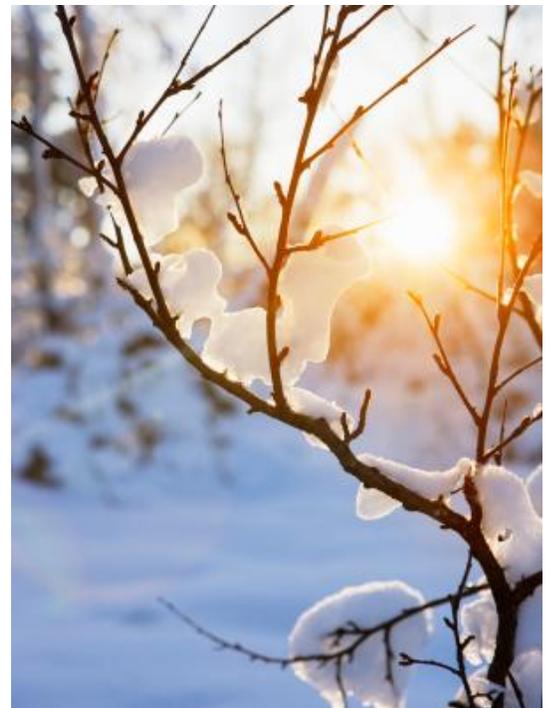
“Stop it!” said Clarice to Serenity.

“Why?” said Serenity, once again kicking the garbage bag. The plastic had started to rip and the bag’s contents were spilling out onto the clean floor.

“Because . . .” said Clarice. She paused.

“Because why?” spat Serenity.

“Because . . .” said Clarice, “because . . . I am . . . still . . . standing.” Clarice wept.



Nathan looked up from his Lego and said, “I’ll take the garbage out, Mom.” He picked up the flimsy black bag and dumped it and its contents into another bag. “Two bags together create a stronger barrier against the garbage,” he said. “Then the garbage won’t spill out everywhere.”

Clarice watched Nathan trudge the garbage outside. As she gazed at the bleak landscape, the warm rays of the sun delicately pierced through the winter haze and shone on Serenity’s igloo.

## NOTICE



### Open Forum for Undergraduates’ Input in the AU Strategic University Plan

Athabasca University is calling on its students to take part in the creation of a new Strategic University Plan. This document will guide what we do and how we do it over the next five years. It will affect everything about AU, including how it is structured, how courses are delivered, budgets, and how AU can continue to be Canada’s Open University and a leader in online and distance education.

AU needs to hear from you! If you’re an undergrad student, you’re urged to join the February 23 online discussion about your hopes and dreams for AU.

**Date:** Wednesday, February 23, 2011.

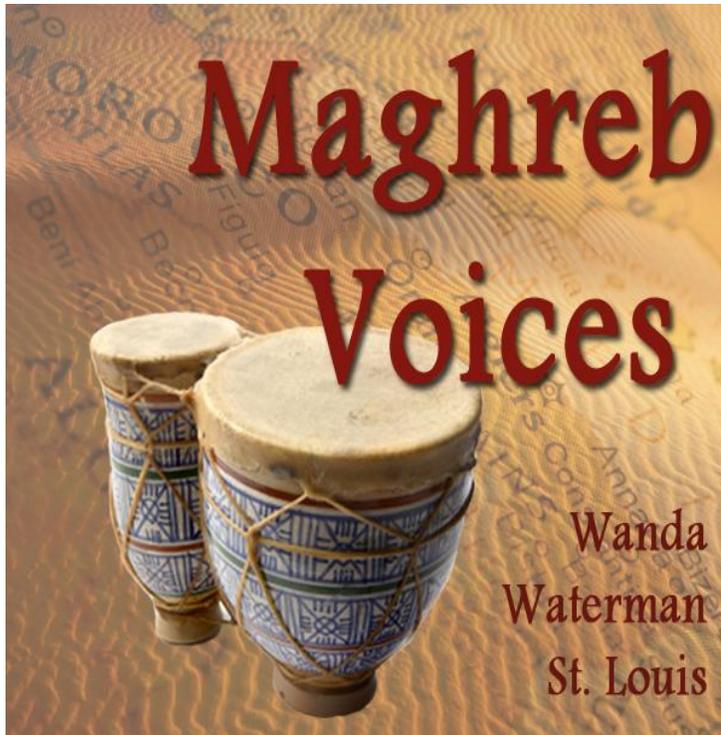
**Time:** 2:30 pm (Mountain Standard Time).

**How to join the discussion:** Click [here](#) and log in as a guest.

In preparation, you can start thinking about the following questions:

1. What are your hopes and dreams for AU, and how can they be realized?
2. What are the five key areas, ranked in order of priority, on which AU should focus on in the next five to ten years?
3. What are the biggest challenges AU will face in the next five to ten years, and how should we prepare for them?
4. How can we make AU relevant for the next generation? Cite specific actions or initiatives.

*Note: If you’re a grad student, the AU Graduate Students’ Association will be holding a separate forum.*



## Power, Poetry, and Popular Dissent in Algeria, Part II

*“Every act of rebellion expresses a nostalgia for innocence and an appeal to the essence of being.”*

Albert Camus, *The Rebel*

(Read Part I of this series [here](#).)

A communiqué sent out by group Action pour le Changement en Algérie urged a peaceful and unified, but fearlessly uncompromising, demonstration for Saturday, Feb 12. But efforts were made to derail these protests by taking advantage of the regional, political, ethnic, and religious disparities among Algerians. Some media outlets even tried to discredit the protests by framing them not as manifestations of popular dissent, but rather as rebellions contrived by the opposition party.

In this winter of Middle Eastern discontent, one young Algerian described the post-colonial corruption and brutality afflicting his country as gangrenous limbs long overdue for amputation. However, some argue that true revolution is impossible in Algeria because the civil war that ended in 1962—and the horrors that came in its wake— in a sense immunized the people against further revolt.

Many Algerians say that the violence of the 1990s (sometimes referred to as the Ten Black Years) damaged them, their families, and their communities, leaving a legacy of despair, trauma, paranoia, and paralysis. One man says he was six years old when the troubles started; he clearly remembers watching the fear daily growing in his parents’ eyes and dreading the mornings, when the wounded, the dead, and the dying could be found lying in the streets around his home.

Some actually dreamed of creating enterprises that would help their people, but this remained a dream only, continuously thwarted by a regime wilfully blind to the lot of ordinary citizens. For years many Algerians felt that the only way to have any kind of future was simply to leave the country.

This led to waves of illegal migration by means that were dangerous, if not life-threatening, and which didn’t always lead to a big rock candy mountain. Many of these young people disappeared, never to be seen or heard from again.

Even now it’s a risk that seems to many to be worth taking. It’s hard for educated youth to accept the grinding poverty around them when they’re well aware of Algeria’s wealth. For the unemployed with no possibility of marriage or home ownership in the foreseeable future, watching this wealth flow to the elites and outside the country is disheartening and infuriating.



Leaders are now in a race to develop economic, legislative, and electoral reforms in order to prevent the revolutions that probably can't be stopped but might possibly—if leaders stop their wanton use of violence—be transmuted into a positive and lasting transformation. Not very glamorous, but far less risky than revolution.

But few young people seem excited by the prospect of remaining in Algeria, even if the government does change for the better. One might hazard a guess that Algerians have been so traumatized by the historical events within their borders that many have passed the point of no return and just went to get out.

It's unfortunate, because most see Algeria's greatest resource as the Algerians themselves. They take great pride in being descended from the people who ousted the French colonial presence in 1962. Algerians describe one other as strong, spiritual, brave, and kind, and people from other Middle Eastern countries are usually in hearty accord. "Even if you don't have a job, you will not starve," says one Algerian. "The people love each other."

*(To be concluded next week.)*

## **CLICK OF THE WRIST: Michelangelo**

On February 18, 1564, the world lost one of the greatest artists of all time: Michelangelo. And yet he never really left, because his work has intrigued us and beautified civilization for the past nearly 500 years. This week's links take us on a tour of the man and his oeuvre.

### **Tour the Sistine Chapel**

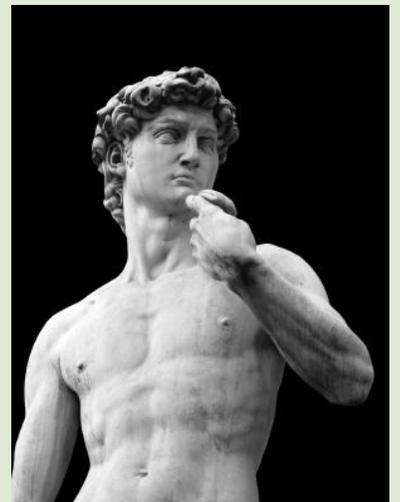
Some of Michelangelo's most famous works were commissioned for the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. The Web Gallery of Art offers close-up tours of his ceiling frescoes along with interpretations of why the artist chose to depict the stories in the manner that he did. Viewers can also send images as free e-postcards. While you're surfing the site, don't miss the WGA's [tour](#) of Michelangelo's painting *The Last Judgment*.

### **Portrait of the Artist**

Many artists of the Renaissance era enjoyed hiding clues in their artwork—whether self-portraits, images of their inspiration or mentor, or depictions of contemporaries who disagreed with them. According to some scholars, Michelangelo was no exception. This fascinating series of articles, including one from *The Art Newspaper*, explain and illustrate the theories of where and how Michelangelo placed hidden images in some of his large-scale works.

### **Bath Time**

How do you clean hundreds of years' worth of grime from artistic icons? Or do you? This NPR program discusses some of the controversies surrounding art conservation, in the light of the *David* cleaning project that rocked the art world several years ago.



## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

## Wanda Waterman St. Louis

## Stacey Kent, Part II

*Stacey Kent is a jazz chanteuse with a large and zealous worldwide cult following. Her understated phrasing and deeply sensitive renderings of standards and original tunes in several languages have won her many accolades and enthusiastic reviews.*

*Stacey began her musical career after completing a Master's degree in comparative literature. In 2010, after six best-selling albums, she released Raconte-moi. Recently she took the time to talk*

*with Wanda Waterman St. Louis about reading, The Great American Songbook, and collaborating with acclaimed novelist Kazuo Ishiguro. (Read the first part of this interview [here](#).)*

## Memorable Musical Moments

I remember being a kid and really *hearing* a João Gilberto and Stan Getz album for the first time. It was another one of those “What is *that?*” moments.

Another great moment was the first time we performed in Taipei. Our records had preceded us—they knew who we were before we knew who they were. The concert hall was one of the most magnificent I'd seen in my life. It had been sold out and they had been waiting for so long to hear us; when we walked out on the stage the welcome was so overwhelming it was hard to contain ourselves.

Wherever we play, people relate to the universal stories. I think about this constantly. There's so much divide in the world—we're like this, you're like that”—as a musician, all those boundaries fall away. People are the same wherever you go, and that's the single most heartening thing out there.

## The Words

A very important part of my childhood was reading. There were no musicians in my house growing up, but there were a lot of readers and a lot of storytelling. My grandmother was an English teacher and my mother was a literature teacher for a while, and for them reading, especially reading aloud, was very important. We used to read aloud to each other in the evenings. It taught me to recognize how singular each voice is. The way in which I interpreted a chapter was different from anybody else's interpretation. I found my voice very early on.

A frequent topic in jazz is making something your own that's been done many times by many other people. I wanted our musical arrangements to be simple and pure and I wanted the song to be at the forefront—I wanted the words to be *heard*. Just seeing the words, with my sensibility, there was never any question about what I should do to a song to make it my own. On the night that I sing “Polka Dots and Moonbeams” it

*“[T]here's so much divide in this world—  
we're like this, you're like that'—as a musician, all those boundaries fall away.”*



becomes my story and it belongs to my audience. I don't think we need to do anything newfangled to a song to make it anything other.

There are people who want to be more playful (like changing the time signature), and if that comes naturally to them then they should—you have to pursue something the way you pursue it. But for me, I always wanted to be a part of the lyric and the story, and I think that comes from early in my life and all the reading we did as a family.

### *The Great American Songbook*

*The American Songbook* is so appealing. It's not the only songbook that I like to draw from—there's French music out there and certainly Brazilian music—but there's something about that particular period in history where the message had to be so subversive because it was a repressed period and things needed to be covered up. They're so rich and full of metaphor and poetry.

### Kazuo Ishiguro

Ishiguro was on *Desert Island Disks*, a show on BBC Radio—a wonderful show because they bring in all these celebrities from different walks of life—and one of the interview questions is “If you could only listen to seven records for the rest of your life, which records would you choose?” You learn so much about people when you find out what music they listen to!

Ishiguro was on, and of the seven records that he took to his desert island, mine was one of them. I'd had no idea that he was a fan of mine, and I had for so long been a fan of his. I had read *[The] Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled* and *When We Were Orphans*, and I was just a huge fan.

My recordings have been chosen by other guests on that show, but it's one thing to be chosen and another thing entirely to be chosen by one of your heroes. So I wrote to him and he wrote me back and we started a correspondence and we became friends.

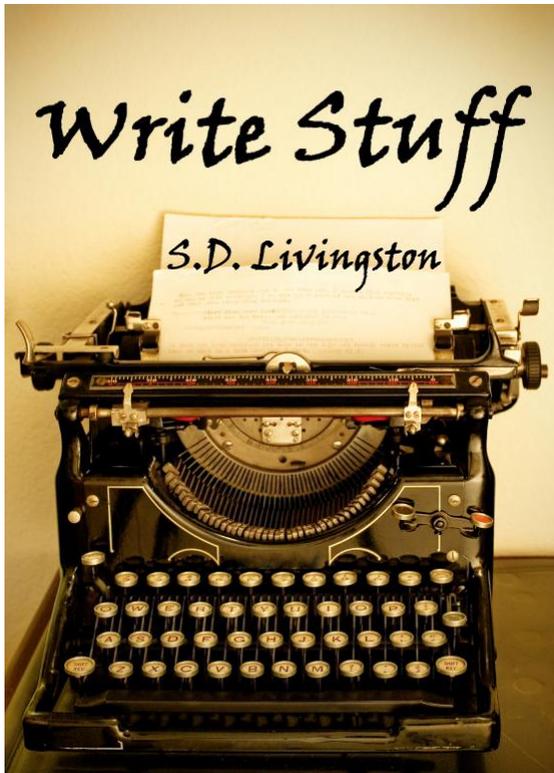
Occasionally we would get together and have lunch. It was my husband Jim who, on one of these occasions, said, “Ish, we should write a song for Stacey.”

And Ishiguro said, “Yes, we should do this.”

Ish and I both came to England from other countries and had developed the sense of being displaced persons. By losing your groundedness and taking on a floating identity, you suddenly see your world and the new world very differently and you become a person of the whole world. It's sad to lose your roots in a way, but what you gain in return is so valuable because you get to see the world in a particular way almost *because* of the insecurity of losing the ground beneath you.

*(To be concluded next week.)*





## Beauty Bound

I'm the first to admit, there's lots to love about e-books. They're portable, convenient, and Uncle Henry can enlarge the font to "super gigantic" and bid farewell to his bifocals. But what really grabs me first about a book is its cover. And a lot of times, that means its physical properties—even if it's simply the glossy stock or raised letters of a paperback. Because as much as we claim not to judge a book by its cover, as the old saying goes, the truth is that beautifully crafted bindings are works of art. They're also an element of reading that could disappear in this digital era.

Not that I'm waxing sentimental about the physical experience of reading a paper book. Far from it. The comfort of propping up a feather-light e-reader wins out over a hardcover or thick paperback every time. And I haven't yet encountered a book printed on such exquisite paper that I'd turn my nose up at an e-ink screen. Even the few truly antique books I own, from the 1800s, don't boast anything fabulous in that regard.

In the right hands, though, a book's cover becomes an artist's palette. Not simply the graphics, but the physical entity. Like [this first edition](#), first impression of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (incidentally, the first of Tolkien's fiction to be published). This copy was published in 1937, and the cover features "full green morocco, titles and decoration to spine gilt, raised bands, single rule to boards gilt" and "an elaborate onlay to both the front and back boards." Enlarging the thumbnails gives you a glimpse of the creative talent involved.

Equally astonishing is this cover of [Tulips and Tulipomania](#), created by Jean Gunner in 1982. Click the image for a truly close-up view of the "dark greyish-blue morocco, with onlays in many shades of red, brown, yellow and green." And then there's this fascinating example of [textile book binding](#) from the 1700s, made from materials like white silk and pearls.

Rare antique volumes aren't the only place you'll find well-crafted covers. Many modern artists still create [works](#) that any bibliophile would covet.

So far, finely crafted physical covers aren't something e-books look likely to replace. In fact, the nature of e-books is so ephemeral that we no longer see them once their container is turned off, so it doesn't seem likely there'll be much call for artists to offer custom-made e-reader covers for specific books.

But maybe that prediction is wrong. In fact, e-readers might just offer a whole new outlet for artists. Maybe, once the cost of the readers comes down and everybody's got one, the new trend will be for personalized covers. Not just colour options like you can order for your laptop, but exquisite designs in leather or fabric, perhaps numbered in a limited-edition release.

Either way, it would be a shame if the artistry of book binding disappeared entirely. Because sometimes, a beautifully crafted cover tells a story all its own.



*From  
Where  
I Sit*

*Hazel Anaka*

## Hurray for Harry

When Kathy Bates dropped her robe and slipped into the hot tub with Jack Nicholson in the movie *About Schmidt*, everyone weighed in on the wisdom, courage, or folly of an older, full-figured woman taking such a chance with her career and her reputation. In a world obsessed with young, nymph-like creatures whose sizes are measured in 0s or 2s, this was counterintuitive. Yet she pulled it off and added it to a list of memorable roles.

Who can forget the heinous acts of her twisted Annie Wilkes in the 1990 adaptation of Stephen King's *Misery*? She morphed from caregiver to torturer as she lived out her obsession with author Paul Sheldon. I haven't been able to look at my antique Underwood typewriter the same way ever since.

Most recently, Kathy Bates, now 62, has reinvented herself as Harriet ("Harry") Korn in a new David E. Kelley TV series called *Harry's Law*. Korn is an ex-patent lawyer who was fired from a lucrative position and ended up opening a practice in a former shoe store in a bad part of town. Amid the Manolos and Louboutins, she and her cohorts take on the tough, the disenfranchised, and the destitute.

Korn is cranky and tough. She is principled and wise. She speaks eloquently during her closing statements, often tying her defence to today's hottest issues. While there is a distinct soapbox quality to these remarks, she gets away with it because we want to believe in her and in justice and in the hope that good will prevail. She wins her cases and lifts up the downtrodden. Best of all, though, she is human. She's not a sex goddess in stilettos and designer suits. She's lumpy and bumpy. She's old.

There is something hopeful in having a woman like Bates as a role model. If a feisty old broad like Harry (or Kathy) can have success, gain respect, and make a difference, then there is hope for all of us. It is the antidote to ageism and our preoccupation with beauty. It acknowledges that there is more to a

woman than the superficial.

David E. Kelley has a proven track record with legal dramas like *Boston Legal*, *The Practice*, and *Ally McBeal*. In a wasteland of reality shows and faux celebrity/faux talent, *Harry's Law* is a welcome breath of fresh air. There are ethical dilemmas that don't involve backstabbing a fellow contestant. There are many black actors, and they're not all bad guys. There is a loud, obnoxious lawyer who, wouldn't you know it, turns out to have some redeeming qualities under his snake-like behaviour. If the quality of the writing holds up and the series can avoid the death knell of relying on formula and boring us to tears, this show will be a bright spot on Monday nights. If not, it will be short-lived.

I'm betting on Harry to carry the day because if she does, that would be justice, from where I sit.



### DID YOU KNOW? MERLOT

Do studying and Merlot mix? They do if we're talking about the web-based MERLOT, also known as Multimedia Educational Resource for Online Learning and Teaching, a "continually growing Open Educational Resource (OER) of online teaching tools and support resources." The free resource, a project of California State University, is a goldmine for those who want to supplement their online learning or teaching experience.

Learning materials are often linked to outside websites, and include everything from simple articles to involved presentations with audio and video components.

Students will enjoy browsing the resources in their study areas or in areas of personal interest. Best of all, they can guide themselves toward the more effective teaching tools by reading the comments and reviews made both by other users and by the Peer Reviewer Board in that discipline.

On the verge of graduating? MERLOT also provides opportunities for networking with colleagues across various disciplines as well as the chance to participate in the larger learning community as a peer reviewer or virtual speaker. It also co-sponsors a conference on online learning.

MERLOT can be a bit overwhelming due to the vast array of resources it contains. For a more detailed guide, view the tutorials on its [YouTube channel](#). Or, to get started, visit the [main page](#).

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Liar Liar

We're all guilty of those small, culturally-expected lies. We insist everything's fine when it's not. We tell you the dress doesn't make you look fat—but it does. And we say we're sorry when we aren't really remorseful at all. Pitfalls in the social game of life? Maybe, but for some, the stakes are much higher. And recent research suggesting that “crocodile tears” may be easier to spot is sending waves through the world of criminal justice.

As the *National Post* [reports](#), new research “probing the differences between legitimate regret and false remorse could have major implications on Canada’s parole system.”

The University of British Columbia-based study, which “examined bodily behaviours linked with deception,” gives insights on which mannerisms betray false remorse.

The information could be crucial for decision-makers in the parole system, since they're often required to determine whether remorse or regret is real or fake. And although the study itself focused on student subjects, its authors are “curious to see if the . . . results can transfer to real-world parole hopefuls and accused criminals.” As study author Leanne ten Brinke told reporters, the research “is the first step toward trying to understand how we can use this information to make better decisions in the legal arena.”

### Around the World: Ride the Rocket

It's no secret that scientists are researching the ways and means necessary for human beings to travel safely to Mars. One of the biggest roadblocks, however, is the issue of cosmic rays, high-energy particles that can damage human DNA, possibly causing cancer and other negative health effects. While preventative shields do exist, they're usually too heavy to work well with space flight or too ineffective to protect travellers during the 18-month journey required to reach the red planet.

But there's hope. According to a new paper, the future of space travel becomes much simpler when nature is consulted. As the *National Geographic's* Daily News Site [reports](#), “astronauts could hitchhike their way to Mars . . . by riding along inside asteroids.”

The paper noted that the focus should now be on “design[ing] spaceships” that can use large asteroids already in space as a natural barrier to the harmful cosmic rays.

It's a case of sci-fi coming to life. Scientists theorize that spaceships could “park . . . in a crater” like in *Star Wars*, or that “they could use on-board mining tools to tunnel into the rock.”

Possible problems arise, however, because these asteroid “taxis” have wide orbits—meaning a significant layover on the red planet itself. Alternatively, scientists are investigating the possibility of “divert[ing] an asteroid so that it cycles permanently between Earth and Mars.”

## AUSU UPDATE



### Convocation 2010

AUSU wishes to congratulate this year's graduates, whether attending Convocation in person or by distance. We wish you the best of luck in your future pursuits. You are an inspiration to all AU students!

### AUSU Executive Election

AUSU has recently held its internal election for the Executive. We wish to congratulate Barbara Rielly (President), Bethany Tynes (Vice President External and Student Affairs) and Sarah Kertcher (Vice President Finance and Administration) on their election and thank those that ran for their willingness to serve.

Internal elections are being held to determine committee membership and we expect that all will be in place shortly. Our new Council is taking its bearings and has already begun to set the direction for this term.

### Student Issues

AUSU recently completed a compilation of reported student issues covering a two year period; all issues were recorded in such a way as to ensure that student information remains protected and private. This effort confirmed what we long suspected; that tutor problems were the single biggest issue faced by our students (56 of 120 complaints).

Outdated course materials and errors in texts continue to be reported as well as were exam issues, slowness of the transfer process, and the scantiness of information in School of Business FAQs. Over that two year period there was a decrease in the number of complaints about student financing, exam request problems, difficulty registering in more than six courses, and materials shortages for courses. Kudos to AU for improving in those areas. Now if we could only get the Tutors' Union to the table . . .

### New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners – Arrived!

Finally! People have already started receiving the new planners in the mail, and we're currently shipping them out as fast as the orders come in. Full of useful information about AUSU, writing styles, course grading, great finds online for your studies that you may not have known about, as well as having places to write down your phone numbers, keep track of your assignments, and, oh yeah, a year's worth of calendar to plan out your schedule too. We'll give one free to each AUSU member just for the asking.

Remember, though, we only print a limited number of these each year, so when they're gone, they're gone.

### Let 'em Know who Represents for You!

AUSU logo mugs, hoodies, USB keys, and much more are all available for sale from our office. Also, used locks can be purchased at half price! Check out our merchandise catalog on our front page. You should

check out our hoodies in particular—made in Canada and 100% bamboo, we're offering them for just barely over our cost, and they're both durable and comfortable.

And if you have new little ones in your family, or know somebody who does, check out our baby onesies. Made by American Apparel, these onesies are high quality and let folks know your kids are growing up to great things as a "Future Graduate of Athabasca U"

## AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union – Not really an Update

Some things resist change. We're still waiting for a response from the Tutor's Union as to when we might be able to meet with them to discuss ways that AUSU and the Tutor's Union can work together to ensure that students are getting the contact they need. Unfortunately, they haven't yet replied, so we're stepping up our campaign to get in touch with them. If you want to help, the next time you're talking to your tutor, ask them if they know when the Tutor's Union will meet with AUSU so that the groups can work together on common issues.

Our statistics we've been collecting from the forums and your calls show that issues with tutors - specifically the amount of time taken for marking assignments and exams are your number one concern. Help us help you.

## SmartDraw Program Renewal

Some of you who took advantage of our program to provide SmartDraw software to members have been getting notifications that your software license will soon be expiring. Fortunately, AUSU will be continuing this program, so if you haven't already, go to the AUSU home page to download the newest version.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

AUSU  
Representing AU  
Undergrads

# Student Gear

2009 merchandise

The advertisement features a grid of six images showcasing various merchandise: AUSU sticky notes, a black t-shirt with 'Voice' branding, colorful balloons, a red hoodie, a gold star-shaped accessory, and a purple t-shirt with 'Future Graduate of Athabasca U' text.

Clothing  
Technology  
Fun Items  
Home Decor

**Fostering the Student Community**  
AUSU and Voice gear is intended to support your studies and help you feel like part of the AU student community. Suggestions for new items are welcome. Contact our office with any questions.

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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

## THE VOICE

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