

# THE VOICE

MAGAZINE  
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## Second Place

Winning at living

## Black & White

Faith meets despair

## Free Design

Open source graphics

*Plus:  
From Where I Sit  
Around AU  
and much more!*



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# CONTENTS

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*The Voice's* interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

## Features

Editorial: Win, Lose, or Blah .....	3
In Conversation with John Hollenbeck .....	5
Maghreb Voices: Autumn in Tunisia, Part I .....	7

## Columns

Around AU .....	9
From Where I Sit: Make a House a Home.....	10
Write Stuff: Triple Treat .....	11
The Mindful Bard: <i>The Sunset Limited</i> .....	13
AUSU Update .....	16

## News and Events

Click of the Wrist.....	4
Did You Know?.....	12
International News Desk .....	15

## From Our Readers

Letters to the Editor.....	2
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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.



## EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey

**Win, Lose, or Blah**

The Olympics are coming to a close, and once more the drama of shocking wins and disappointing losses will fade away as we gear up for our more hectic fall and winter schedules. And yet there's one thing that will stay with me for good, I think: the somewhat counterintuitive thought that sometimes, it's better to lose than to win.

We've all heard the old adage, "It doesn't matter if you win or lose; it's how you play the game." And while there's plenty that could be said about sportsmanship and winning and losing with grace, I'm talking about something quite different.

Would you believe me if I said that third-place winners are happier than those who come in second? This [NPR article](#) describes a study which found just that. The reason, psychologists believe, is that while silver medalists compare themselves to those in first place, focussing on what they missed, bronze medalists unconsciously look to those who didn't medal at all. In comparison, of course, the third-place winners are a huge success story!

Although the study was based on athletes competing in Olympic individual events, I think the idea extends far beyond the world of sports. In fact, it's particularly intriguing to me as a non-Olympian.

If we were to see a second-place winner grouching about losing the chance for gold, we'd probably raise our eyebrows and point the poor-sport finger. Yet in our own non-athletic lives, we do it all the time.

It's just a little less obvious. After all, in sports the delineation among first, second, third, and so on, are easy to spot and define. Other areas of life, however, are a bit more muddy and grey. And it's in those murky trenches that lurks the bad sportsmanship we'd be so quick to criticize in others.

Have you ever felt piqued at someone else's success—in spite of your better judgment? Does it annoy you just a bit when you learn about someone who's had better luck? What about the driver whose strategy—or good fortune—just trumps yours enough that he maneuvers through the traffic or the yellow light before you get the chance to do so? What about the person in your life who slows you down or who keeps you from reaching the top?

Whether it's a skewed modern worldview or a facet of our evolutionary biology, we seem hard-wired to seek the prime place. Coming in just short of gold, as it were, is hard to handle. In fact, we constantly compare ourselves to those around us. The thinner, the more fit, the richer, the younger, the better looking. The people with better promotions, greater financial stability, higher grades. The happier families. The folks who seem to have it all together.

But while we're busy comparing, we're refusing to acknowledge our own successes, small as they might be. We forget at how far we've come or, really, how much we actually have compared to others, whether our neighbours or across the world. Worse, we release negative energy: toward the winner, toward ourselves, and perhaps even toward whatever or whomever we see as responsible for our perceived loss or slight.

In life there are a lot of winners and a lot of non-winners. But there are also a lot of sour-faced second-placers. Perhaps we should transfer our focus on winning in life to a focus on winning in *living*. In a world brimming with a joyful nature and a peaceful attitude, I'd settle for a silver medal any day.

## CLICK OF THE WRIST

## Olympic Randomness

As the 2012 Summer Olympics wraps up this weekend, enjoy this smattering of trivia, quizzes, and more:

### Olympic Body Match

"Olympic athletes come in all shapes and sizes," the BBC claims. Where do you fall on the spectrum, and which athlete is your body type match? Try it out if you dare!

### Weird Sports

While events like track and field, swimming, and gymnastics are standard favourites, the history of the Olympic Games includes many more unusual sports—like shooting live pigeons, dueling with a straight face, and playing tug of war. Click through the slideshow to discover the top nine.

### Extreme Athletics

From Cracked.com, a fascinating description of five extreme sports—real events—that would "spice . . . up" the Games.

### Summer or Winter

It's a fact: Canada's performance during Winter Olympic Games is far stronger than at the Summer Olympics, with higher medal counts and domination in far more events. And yet strangely, most Canadians prefer to watch the Summer Games! Read the *Vancouver Sun's* perspective on the phenomenon.



## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman



## John Hollenbeck

*“It’s traditional, when paying compliment to drummers, to draw comparisons with the octopus, implying agility beyond the means of a paltry pair of human hands. But when considering John Hollenbeck, the multi-limbed creature that seems most appropriate to invoke is the mythical hydra; for while Hollenbeck is certainly no stranger to rhythmic intricacy, its ideas that seem to spring forth like so many heads, two more arising as one falls away.”*

Shaun Brady

## The Global Reach of an American Skins Phenomenon

***John Hollenbeck*** is a world-renowned drummer and composer with his spoon in a number of pots, including the *Claudia Quintet*, an avant-garde group. Their music is described as “eclectic post-jazz” (be sure to read the *Voice* review of their album [What is the Beautiful?](#)). For the last seven years he’s been teaching *Jazz Drums and Improvisation* at the *Jazz Institute Berlin*. Recently Hollenbeck told Wanda Waterman a little about his past, his planned future, and his attraction to mystery in music.

## Beginnings

John remembers his early years as being both happy and stimulating. He says he had wonderful parents and brothers, one of whom, Pat, was a drummer himself (also an amazing musician who sometimes performs with John today). It was Pat’s avocation that initially drew John into the musical journey. He also passed on a love of jazz and avant-garde music, both of which came quite naturally to the inquisitive John:

“I’m naturally attracted to at least some mystery in music, so this took me toward jazz and other creative forms. As a child, I was bored and frustrated with pop music because a large majority of it had the same or similar groove. I don’t have that problem anymore, but it really affected what kind of music I was into growing up—I was always looking for something ‘different.’”

***“Drummers don’t write—  
or at least, that’s what  
everybody believes.”***

***Tony Williams***

One of the highlights of his young life was hearing Bob Brookmeyer’s sextet at SUNY Binghamton when he was 14 years old. “The sound, the interaction, the harmonies . . .” he exclaims. “It was all magical. I still have the bootleg!”

## Composition

In addition to being an accomplished and inventive drummer, Hollenbeck is also a prolific composer who's won commissions and kudos the world over for his highly original jazz-influenced work. How does he manage to stay disciplined, focussed, and creative?

"There's nothing that guarantees good composing; mostly I just need time and a space to work uninterrupted, with the Internet not readily accessible. Most of my best work has been at the Blue Mountain Center, an artist's retreat."

## On Improvising

The secret to improvising is, in John's words, "Just to remain open—to not think."

But what's it like to improvise with other top musicians like the players in the Claudia Quintet? "We've known each other for about 15 years, so it's just fun—like stepping into an old pair of shoes. Sometimes 'magic' happens, but most of the time it's just good music. In the Claudia Quintet there's not that much improvisation; it's used as a compositional element, as opposed to a goal, which is the case in most jazz-based music.

***The secret to improvising?  
"Just to remain open—to  
not think," says renowned  
avant-garde musician and  
drummer John Hollenbeck.***

"On *What is the Beautiful*, for example, the forms are set, but within that there are details that are improvised—some more than others. A few pieces, like 'Job,' are totally composed."

## On Kenneth Patchen

*What is the Beautiful?* was commissioned by the University of Rochester to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of famed American poet Kenneth Patchen. "Prior to," says Hollenbeck, "I did not know his poetry. I had only heard of him through his early experiments with jazz musicians, but his voice on those recordings is a little off-putting. So I didn't listen to those but just tried to get into the poems by reading them over and over again. After a while some of them were speaking to me, showing me where the music was."

## Next?

"For the Claudia Quintet, my plan is to find a place to hang together for a few days and teach them some music by rote so we can play without music or music stands. That's been a goal of mine for a long time, but because of the type of music that I gravitate toward (not song-based and not short), it will be a challenge for me."

*Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.*

## MAGHREB VOICES

Wanda Waterman



## Autumn in Tunisia

*“All of us who are concerned for peace and triumph of reason and justice must be keenly aware how small an influence reason and honest good will exert upon events in the political field.”*

Albert Einstein

## Part I: Before and After

Yes, it was a huge surprise at the time, but in retrospect we should have seen it coming: On December 17, 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself alight to protest police brutality and governmental apathy (he later died of his burns). Thus was launched the Jasmine Revolution, whose domino soon toppled noisily against that of several other Middle Eastern nations. The result is what’s now known as the Arab Spring.

A look at underlying conditions shows the inevitability of this string of events and might also suggest a way out.

Before the revolution, the former Tunisian president Ben Ali’s pathological obsession with appearances was exemplified by a photo that came out shortly after the famous immolation, a picture of Ben Ali himself and his ministers visiting—and allegedly offering aid to—a heavily bandaged man in the hospital. The injured man was alleged to be Mohamed Bouazizi. It was a valiant but too-little-too-late stab at public relations; there was no way to tell if this really was Bouazizi, and besides, the bandage job looked a little, well, *impromptu*. No one was fooled.

To further illustrate the former regime’s obsession with putting on a good front for the media at the expense of the public good, in an interview just a few weeks into the revolution Tunisian blogger and assistant linguistics professor Leena Ben Mhenni shared this [story](#) she’d heard from a friend’s gardener:

*“It had snowed there [in his northwestern village]; the people needed aid from the government and the authorities had promised to provide the aid. On the day that the aid was provided, the TV was there to record and preserve this historic moment. But according to my witness, people were just handed some old wool blankets and some food, and as soon as the TV journalists left, the authorities took the items back.”*

*“Universal peace is declared, and the foxes have a sincere interest in prolonging the lives of poultry.”*

George Eliot

But how can one argue with these kinds of propaganda tactics when they worked so well? Prior to the revolution Tunisia enjoyed a reputation as one of the most progressive of Arab nations; it had the best policies on women’s rights and a high literacy rate, and was relatively

affluent. But a deeper look beneath the surface uncovered a large number of jailed journalists, a widening gap between rich and poor, and a sense of entitlement to luxurious excess among the very rich, comparable to pre-revolutionary France or Russia.

The time had been ripe; Tunisians had thrown in the towel at the very instant that many other Arab countries were also ready to do so. We now know, for example, that the Egyptian Revolution was being planned and organized at least three years prior to the Jasmine Revolution, but that the Jasmine Revolution had provided a welcome catalyst.

What was the impact of the revolution on Tunisia itself? Since then the Tunisian tourist industry has dipped and then risen again in response to the loss and subsequent restoration of political stability in the country. Democratic elections were held and the majority voted for moderate Islamic party Ennahda, apparently as different from the Ben Ali government as night and day (there's a famous photo of the party members entering the parliament building after having travelled there together by bus and not in the conventional separate limousines). The long process of reform was begun, and the activists have since remained engaged, active, and conscientious.

But rarely are conditions so poised in a revolution as to create long-term peace and stability right out of the starting gate. Unemployment has risen since even before the revolution. Members of the old boys' network remain in key positions in both business and government. Both Marxists and religious extremists vie for their own brand of change in this brave new world.

Under Ben Ali, books that spoke ill of him or his regime were prevented from entering the country. Now, books are confiscated from bookstores because of suspicions that they might distort orthodox Islamic teachings.

This new censoring is often presented in the international media as a sign of worsening of conditions, but it's hard to argue that this new religious censoring is more backward than Ben Ali's secular justifications for jailing his critics.

*“Democracy can have a cleansing affect on corruption, but the downside is that it takes the patience of Job to achieve justice and equality in both law and practice.”*

Democracy can have a cleansing affect on corruption, but the downside is that it takes the patience of Job to achieve justice and equality in both law and practice. The ruling Ennahda party promotes the idea of a pure parliamentary system, but this is at odds with the other parties who are demanding that more power be vested in the president. Plagued by this kind of deadlock, the democratic process and reforms are so slow as to appear nonexistent. Coupled with lingering corruption and high unemployment, the snail-like pace of change contributes to a kind of hopelessness among the youth—the same feeling that fueled the revolution in the first place.

International interests point out the need to promote economic prosperity within the Tunisian private sector. The US Congress has introduced a bill to fortify business interests in Egypt and Tunisia. Senator Joe

Lieberman recently visited the Tunisian capital to announce that the US was offering \$30 million in loan guarantees to Tunisian businesses. There are also US plans to stimulate the creation of new businesses by providing the country with a \$20 million Tunisia Enterprise Fund.

But at what cost does this aid come to Tunisians? Can we even know the answer to this question within this generation?

*(Next week: hearing from Tunisians.)*

## AROUND AU

**Karl Low**



Typically early September is when AU has its highest enrollment, as this is when graduating high school students or people seeking to re-enter school start looking for options.

Whether you're a new student or continuing with a long-term educational plan, here are some tools you may not have known about:

The **AU Math Site** has a self-evaluation test that allows you to see what level of math course you would be suited for. It also works well to find out just how much you may have forgotten since taking math in high school. However, if the very idea of taking a math course is a bit daunting (or your results from the self-evaluation have embarrassed you), the Math Site also has the rather unfortunately-named **Remedial Math Centre**, which is "intended to give you a safe place to learn where there is no shame in not knowing and where your mistakes will not cost you anything but another opportunity to correct them." It is a good resource, so don't be turned off by the name; think of it as a "Practice Math Centre" rather than remedial, and it is more appealing.

For writing, there is AU's **Write Site**. Like the Math Site, this resource also includes a self-evaluation test, but it is more complicated; it's recommended that you put aside three hours to complete it. As it's comprised of several different sections, hopefully AU will implement some sort of pause feature into it in the near future.

In addition to the self-test, the Write Site has a lot of information about the research and writing process, including guides on how to write different types of essays for different types of courses, how to research and effectively use the AU Library, and how to research for specific topics.

Most importantly, however, the site also provides writing coaching. You can submit an assignment and the coaches provide feedback (not editing) on areas on which you need to concentrate to improve your work. Once again, it's not an editing service, but rather it helps you learn how to become a better editor of your own work. And that is something that can last you throughout your entire academic career and beyond.



## Make a House a Home

By the time we finish, I will have spent six days out of an already short life helping my mom prepare for and work her moving sale. She and George are moving into a seniors' housing complex. It is a 1200 square foot, four-bedroom half-duplex with double garage, deck, and a small plot of grass and garden space. Snow shovelling and grass cutting is done by someone else.

She's been doing a pretty good job of purging. Things like the shop vac, snow shovels, and most electrical and hand tools are a no-brainer. They won't be needed in the next chapter of her life.

She's also giving her girls and our children the chance to take what we want. It's odd what we chose to claim. Most of the items have little monetary value. One of the things I took home was an ancient green and yellow woven sewing basket that's probably almost as old as I am. In it are what I believe are leather work supplies: scrap pieces of leather, some wicked-looking needles, and two wood handle awls. There are also many wooden spools and balls of assorted gauge cord and thread. One label says "Acadia, Shoe Thread, Superior Quality, No. 8, Made in Ireland." I can't imagine a modern use for shoe thread, so it must be old, old, old.

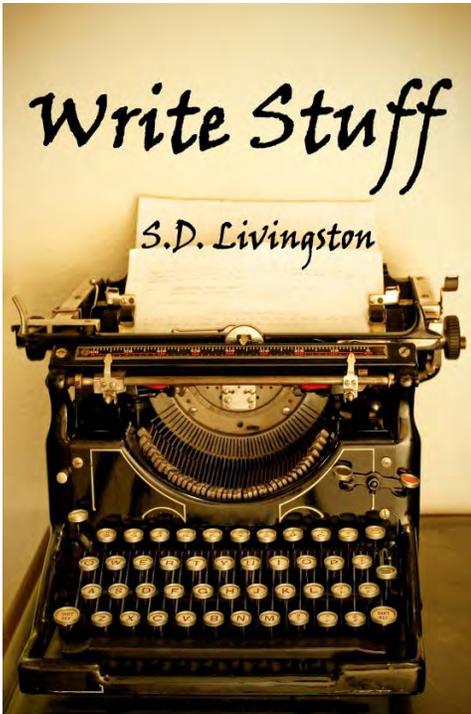
Looking at these items reminds me of a purchase I made. Several years ago when an antique store was closing out, I bought a Star Twist four-drawer metal sewing thread store display chest. It came loaded with all sorts of cool old products. There were pink sheets of paper holding Toledo steel pins, packages of Merylene and Priscilla bias fold tape in fairly atrocious colours, and a Canadian Needle Book with an assortment of hand sewing needles displayed against shiny foil papers. Mustn't forget the carded Colonial Maid dress fasteners or packages of Corticelli nylon for, among other things, "mending and reinforcing socks."

What I love most are the wooden spools of thread in a rainbow of colours and thicknesses. They range from 80 to 300 yards in size. What a relief to know the cotton is "boil fast"! Can you imagine today's woman having to boil her clothing to get it clean, no doubt in water she carried by pail from a well?

Also in the mix was a pair of metal expansion "bracelets" for holding a man's shirt sleeves in place. I'm wearing them right now to see if I get a rash from the metal or if I can add them to my jewellery cabinet.

Organizational experts advise us to honour and display those things we value or remove them from our lives. This trip down memory lane has spurred me to find the perfect glass container to display my thread collection. Something old can make a house a home, from where I sit.

*Hazel Anaka's first novel is Lucky Dog. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.*



### Triple Treat: GIMP, Scribus, Inkscape

If you're looking for a summer treat, you could always go for ice cream or a dip in the pool. But how about a trio of free, open source graphics and page layout programs that will bring your words and pictures together in all sorts of creative ways? Did I have you at free? Good. Then grab some shade and a cool drink and let's get started.

The trio I'm talking about is GIMP, Scribus, and Inkscape. No, these programs may not be a full replacement if you're a high-end graphics artist working in a professional environment. But for a wide spectrum of users who make book covers, graphics, or just about any other digital creation, these programs are a serious alternative to spending next year's cruise fund on the latest version of Adobe Photoshop.

GIMP stands for GNU Image Manipulation Program. It's a "freely distributed program for such tasks as photo retouching, image composition and image authoring." Which means you can play with those holiday photos to your heart's content, whether you're working on a Mac, PC, or in UNIX.

You'll find much more info on the [About GIMP](#) page, including links to tutorials, but a few of the things you can use it for are photo retouching, mass production image rendering, and converting your images into different formats (it handles .bmp, .gif, .jpeg, .mng, .pcx, .pdf, .png, .ps, .psd, .svg, .tiff, .tga, .xpm, and others).

A big bonus is that it will open your Adobe Photoshop files, and there's a growing community of users ready to share their know-how: for example, a [SimplyGIMP site](#) devoted to tutorials and a [GIMP Magazine](#) being launched in September. The latter will offer master classes—high-level tutorials that showcase creations by digital artists, designers, and photographers.

Next up is Scribus, a full-featured page layout program for "Linux/UNIX, Mac OS X, OS/2 Warp 4/eComStation and Windows desktops with a combination of press-ready output and new approaches to page design."

For the tech-inclined, you'll want to know that Scribus supports "color separations, CMYK and Spot Color support, ICC color management, and versatile PDF creation."

And if you're just looking to dig in and have some fun creating a digital scrapbook or a calendar with family photos, there are [wiki articles](#) that start with the basics, and dozens of Scribus how-to videos on YouTube. Another huge plus? It's available in nine languages besides English, including French, Italian, and Polish.

One caution is that Scribus won't open Adobe InDesign or Microsoft Publisher files. However, it was surprisingly simple to create a book cover in Scribus using an online tutorial intended for InDesign, and the programs' interfaces are similar enough that InDesign users will be able to navigate comfortably.

Last up is Inkscape, a "vector graphics editor with capabilities similar to Illustrator, CorelDraw, or Xara X, using the W3C standard Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG) file format."

In other words, if you've got an artistic streak and like to build your graphics from the ground up, Inkscape lets you do it. There's a showcase page where you can see what's possible and what some talented folks have created, including icons, web design, game maps, and building brands.

The Inkscape documentation is impressive, with everything from tutorials, screenshots, and even workshops.

No matter how your digital creativity expresses itself, you can't go wrong giving one or all of these programs a try. And since they're open source, available thanks to the boundless efforts of devoted programmers and writers, you'll still have enough change in your pocket for that ice cream.



*S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel Kings of Providence. Visit her website for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).*

## DID YOU KNOW?



### CanLearn's Financial Aid Resources

You're committed to the next step in your educational journey. Congratulations! Now comes the difficult question: *how are you going to pay for it?*

Navigating the maze of financial aid information out there can be overwhelming, but CanLearn will give you a good start in the right direction. CanLearn, an online resource from the Government of Canada, helps to streamline the process a little. Its goal is to "provide all the necessary resources (from interactive planning tools to information about savings programs, student loans, and scholarships)" for post-secondary educational financing, and it delivers. On CanLearn you can investigate various sources of financial aid, learn what you're qualified to apply for, and discover the appropriate provincial agencies for educational loans.

## THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



### Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

**Film:** *The Sunset Limited* (2011)

**Director:** Tommy Lee Jones

**Screenwriter:** Cormac McCarthy

**Cast:** Tommy Lee Jones, Samuel L. Jackson

*« Tout ne va pas bien dans le ménage d'Animus et d'Anima, l'esprit et l'âme. Le temps est loin, la lune de miel a été bien tôt finie pendant laquelle Anima avait le droit de parler tout à son aise et Animus l'écoutait avec ravissement. . . . Anima est une ignorante et une sottise, elle n'a jamais été à l'école, tandis qu'Animus sait un tas de choses, il a lu un tas de choses dans les livres. . . »*

Paul Claudel

### The Battleground of the Solitary Soul versus the Autonomous Mind

The central metaphor of Cormac McCarthy's fiction is the frontier, the border, the boundary, the end, the last stop, and this film's title is pregnant with a significance that begs to be plumbed by you, with your specific individual experience and worldview. But it won't be easy—in the last decade it's doubtful you've seen a film more profound than this one.

If you've ever nursed a friend or family member through a suicidal episode, you'll know this: no matter how fresh and positive you start out, the strain of trying to talk your loved one out of committing the deed or even of just sitting there offering Rogerian unconditional positive regard is so draining and soul-destroying that after even a few hours you experience physical symptoms that suggest you might need therapy yourself.

Black's rigorous spirituality and bounty of compassion compel him to accept the challenge of living among the sinful and destitute. He even seems a little grateful that life among junkies means there's no point in owning anything. He shocks White with a gruesome prison story and White thanks him by refusing to accept Black's faith in God and in brotherly love.

White scorns happiness, believing it to be the pathetic delusion of the simple-minded. If you've ever been depressed, you too have known the delusion that happiness is foolishness, and nothing convinces you of this more solidly than does despair. Black's joy, on the other hand, is unconditional:

*“WHITE: You can't be happy if you're in pain.*

*BLACK: Why not?”*

It's actually the uneducated ex-con Black to whom McCarthy grants all the best arguments, and White is left only with the rock-hard certainty of his despair. ("The darker picture is always the correct one," he claims with certainty). Again and again Black nails the intellectually superior White with faultless logic, but every time he does so White deflects him by changing the subject or by dismissing him with a sneer, reducing his opponent's arguments to the status of opinion while maintaining that he himself has a firm handle on the truth.

White can't argue with Black's greater suffering, his miserable living conditions, and his assertion that if God could save him he can save anyone. White is left feeling shame that in his comfortable circumstances he's discontented; his only excuse is an argument that keeps holding less and less water.

The scenario is gloomy and the scene is ugly, but nonetheless the cinematography is incredibly beautiful, the colour rich, muted, and evocative of the lovely essence of a bleak reality. And it's quite something to see these two incredibly good actors sparring off in what appears to be a calculated imbalance of acting styles. Jackson comes across as natural but Tommy's timing is always a bit off, his gestures and intonations self-conscious and wooden. Is this intentional? Even if not, it works, maybe because Jones is playing straight man to draw attention to Jackson's phenomenal performance in this challenging and quite mesmerizing role.

In the end, what's the answer to the question "Why shouldn't we kill ourselves?" "Because he said not to," declares Black. This opens the door to a whole realm of questions the mind can't grasp.

Black doesn't strive to understand God, since to him the existence of God is a given; rather he strives to discover what God wants from him. White believes in "the primacy of the intellect," but when he asserts with pride that he's always gone his own way, he ironically backs it up by quoting Martin Luther's famous "*Ich kann nicht anders*" [I can do nothing else], Luther's defense when tried for challenging the authority of the pope.

***"BLACK: If it ain't got the lingering scent of divinity to it I ain't interested in it.***

***WHITE: 'The lingering scent of divinity'?***

***BLACK: You like that?***

***WHITE: Yeah, it's not bad.***

***BLACK: Heard it on the radio. Black preacher."***

***Cormac McCarthy, The Sunset Limited***

**BLACK:** [Reading from newspaper] "*The man's last words as he hurtled toward the oncoming commuter train were, I am right!*"

*The Sunset Limited* manifests nine of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 3) it stimulates my mind; 4) it is about attainment of the true self; 5) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 6) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 7) it makes me want to be a better artist; 8) it gives me tools of compassion, enabling me to respond with compassion and efficacy to the suffering around me; and 9) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Personal Tour Guide

You've got online guides and walking guides and exhibits. Now, with an innovative new model, the Royal BC Museum in Victoria lets you use your smart phone to navigate all three.

As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), the technology involves an "indoor navigation system" that uses "wifi hotspots to pinpoint visitors' locations" rather than relying on hardware-based technology.

While many museums have created technological apps and QR codes to "enhance the experience," the Royal BC Museum goes a step further: "your phone can not only tell you more than you've ever wanted to know about the [woolly mammoth] – it can take you right to him." Future updates may include the ability to purchase books from the museum store without leaving the exhibit hall.

While the Victoria museum is the first to launch the program, the "app is in the pilot stage in almost two dozen places around North America – including . . . the University of British Columbia and the Vancouver International Airport."

### Around the World: Long-Lived Women

It's a fact: women, on average, have a greater lifespan than men. And while scientists and comedians alike have attempted to pinpoint the cause, a new study suggests that the answer may be buried deep within the structure of our cells.

As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), scientists previously assumed that "elevated levels of testosterone drive men to live fast and die young." However, the "new study points to a very different type of culprit – mitochondria."

Mitochondria, which are often described as the powerhouses that provide fuel for each cell in our bodies, are also home to "genetic mutations that are potentially harmful to males," the study showed. These mutations, which do not appear to affect females, "speed up the aging process, which can lead to early death for some men."

According to evolutionary biologists, humans inherit "two copies of each gene – one from each parent, [but] mitochondria genes are passed down only through females." This means that "a mutation that harms fathers but has no effect on mothers won't be easily eliminated from the genetic pool."

The study was based on genetic experiments with fruit flies, but it's believed that this "general pattern . . . extends throughout the animal kingdom," lead researcher Damian Dowling told reporters.

## AUSU UPDATE



### AU Students urge candidates to improve university funding

AU students are concerned about the financial health of Athabasca University and the effect of recent news stories on the reputation of the AUSU membership.

A recent CBC report notes that in recent years the university has made a series of reserve draws to cover budget shortfalls, draining the once \$30-million reserve fund.

Tuition and fees at AU, meanwhile, continue to increase despite the concerns of AUSU that education is becoming increasingly unaffordable in Alberta.

“I’m very concerned about AU’s financial situation,” says AUSU President Bethany Tynes. “AU is increasing student fees, observing hiring freezes, denying sabbaticals, delaying projects, and downsizing their offices due to a lack of available funds. We don’t want to see the quality of our education diminish.”

“At the same time,” Tynes continues, “I am confused by AU Board Chair Barry Walker’s comment to the CBC that AU is ‘in a very sound financial position,’ as the concerns we’ve noted do not support the notion that we’re financially sound.”

Chronic underfunding of public post-secondary education is a factor in AU’s financial stress. AU students have lobbied Alberta in recent years to address the shortfall; our members call on the candidates in Alberta’s provincial election to make post-secondary funding a priority in their platforms and to ensure that all Alberta universities are funded equally and sufficiently. Public post-secondary institutions need a reliable, predictable funding model that provides sufficient base operating funds to support a world-class education.

Athabasca University Students' Union is the largest students' union in Alberta, representing nearly 40,000 undergraduates annually.

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*This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org).*

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## THE VOICE

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