

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 38 2012-10-05

Stranger Than Fiction

World of offbeat nonfic

Brush vs. Bottle

A beautiful picture

Fabulous Feast

Healthy Thanksgiving

Plus:

*From Where I Sit
In Conversation
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, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.



STILL SOBER: PAINTING SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

E.L. Farris



The condensation glistens on the pint-sized glass of mahogany beer. A caption on the picture lists the type of beer, and above it, announces the day: National Beer Appreciation Day. It looks like one of those perfect autumn brews.

I wish I was at that bar, with that beer in front of me, and the cold liquid in my mouth, crisp, a tad bitter, a touch sweet; and then it's flowing down my throat and I'm feeling it in my head, this numbing, buzzing, floating

feeling. It will take me up and away from the chair my back presses against; it will send me into a new and better stratosphere. A new world. A better one.

It always has had this effect on me. Wherever I was, however I was, it promised to take me away from it. It took me away from the pain and sadness of it all, or it sent me flying into a deeper sadness. You see, I knew it didn't make me feel better. I knew damned well it made me feel worse. And that was what I was bent on doing. Destroying it all, including the good, until I didn't have to see or feel any of it.

Sometimes I admitted it. Usually I lied. I lied to myself. After all, I was just like all the other Americans who drink beer and watch football, and if they were okay, so was I.

I sit there staring at the picture one of my friends has posted—the glistening pint glass full of beautiful brown beer—and I'm flooded by anger. It feels heavy inside me, just like how I feel after eating too much pasta. I'm angry. I'm really, really angry. Take something and throw it through a window angry . . . scream and yell and flail around on the floor angry.

Why can't I? Why must today and tomorrow stretch into endless eternity . . . why, damn it, why can't I hold a pint in my hand and tip it back and feel the cold liquid turn me warm inside? Why, damn it, why can't I?

A day later, I'm driving westward for my husband's work picnic. I knead the leather steering wheel with the tips of my fingers. I can feel every thread, and I like to rub my fingers across the stitches again and again as the road folds and rises and falls ahead of me. In a little while, I'll be greeting people I barely know, and I'll be fidgeting and worrying and everyone else will be drinking a cold, ice-brewed something or other.

I'll be holding a diet soda, and I'll rub my hand over the aluminum and try to hold on and take it all in without being afraid. And then . . . then the sadness will slam into the deepest pit of me. You know the place I'm talking about? The place where you want to mourn for something you thought you had but never really could have, should have owned? A closed-off part of you, an elusive, elemental aloneness that no bottle, no glistening pint of slightly bitter liquid could fill? It's where some of us go to hide,

pretending that with the door shut tight, we'll find peace and love and comfort, but we know that when we open our eyes, all we'll have is the shreds of something real, something good . . . dying slowly inside.

That's the colour of what I'm facing. It's all the colours from a box of children's paints mixed in together, and when the child is done playing, there is no hue really, no beauty left, just another shade of putrid greenish-gray. And that, that my friends, is why I don't pick up the glass and pour the liquid down my throat and wait, wait for the colours to fade.

Instead, I hold a paintbrush. I dip it into my favorite colour, which is blue, and I draw my own picture. The pain is still there, but in my mind, I envision something different . . . something better. I pick up the brush. Maybe, just maybe, I'll paint something beautiful.

Writer E.L. Farris blogs at [*Running from Hell with El*](#).

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Performance Art

Performance art is hardly new, but it never seems to get old, with innovative artists creating still more unique concepts every day. Spice up the dinner conversation this Thanksgiving by talking about some of these gems:

Photoshoppers Need Not Apply

Beijing artist Li Wei combines acrobatics and photography in his photos, which, unbelievably, haven't been computer-altered. To achieve the unreal effect, Wei uses "props such as mirror, metal wires, scaffolding and acrobatics."

Follow That Ball

An artist. A travelling giant red ball. Sounds like a winner, right? Kurt Perschke's RedBall Project is a constantly changing, innovative bit of performance art. He bounces the ball to cities around the world, and spectators and fans can join in the fun and respond or encourage the ball to visit their own home cities—meaning, Perschke says on his project's site, that "[in] that moment the person is not a spectator but a participant in the act of imagination."

Staring Contest

A couple of years ago, New York's Museum of Modern Art hosted a unique, interactive display: artist Marina Abramovic engaged visitors in a 700-hour staring contest. Visitors stood in line to sit across from her and stare—some for a short time, some for hours. Abramovic told reporters that "The work is done for the audience . . . [without] the audience, the work doesn't exist. It doesn't have any meaning."



HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza

**Healthy Thanksgiving**

You're probably in the midst of preparations for your Thanksgiving weekend—inviting friends and family and shopping or cooking. But before you worry about wrecking your diet, here's some good news: did you know that several foods can significantly enhance the health potential of your Thanksgiving feast? And chances are, they're already on the menu.

Orange, Orange, Orange!

Bring on the sweet potatoes, squash, and pumpkin—your Thanksgiving superfoods! These foods are naturally high in several B-vitamins (including B2, B6, and folic acid), as well as vitamin C. Additionally, their orange colour signifies high beta-carotene levels; your body converts beta-carotene to Vitamin A, which gives glowing skin and helps maintain strong bones and teeth.

Brightly coloured foods like these orange gems also signify a high antioxidant potential, and therefore help protect against certain types of cancer (including lung and prostate). From a traditional healing perspective, warm and nourishing foods like sweet potato and pumpkin are an excellent adrenal tonic, gently restoring the body back to health after stress.

Go Starch!

Potatoes are a common Thanksgiving menu starch, and are a great nutritional staple if you're able to consume them (some find themselves sensitive to foods from the *Solanaceae* family: peppers, tomatoes, and potatoes). I like to think of potatoes as a trace mineral source, since they contain tiny amounts of in-ground minerals that are necessary for our body's healthy functioning. The trace minerals found in potatoes include copper, manganese (this is not magnesium!), and boron—minerals that, in high doses, have toxic properties, but that in small amounts are necessary co-factors to many of our bodies' chemical reactions. Copper, for instance, in its trace mineral amounts, is required for skin health, energy, and immunity; manganese is a necessary component for male fertility; and boron is a key ingredient for healthy bones and joints.

Cranberries

In last year's Thanksgiving [article](#), I talked about nutrition-packed cranberries. But here's a quick refresher: the bright red colour of cranberries means they're vitamin and antioxidant powerhouses, offering a nearly-full spectrum of vitamins B and C, as well as protection against the cell damage occurring in day-to-day life (inhaled pollutants, for example). Just be sure to limit the added sugar; and for maximum nutritional benefit, consider preparing a raw relish instead of cooking the berries.

Crazy for nuts

Many of us put out a nut plate on Thanksgiving Day—a great choice for healthy afternoon snacking. Nuts contain protein, something that many of us don't get enough of in our daily diets. Protein is necessary for cell repair and growth (remember, your body is constantly repairing and regenerating itself). Crunch a few cashews; they offer trace minerals like magnesium, copper, and phosphorus. Or sample some fibre-rich pistachios to up your daily fibre intake.

Walnuts are the omega-3 kings (or queens); their omega-3 content is one of the highest of all nuts. Omega-3, a healthy fat, helps maintain the fatty layer encircling cells. It also supports optimal brain health, and many studies show that diets with adequate omega-3 help prevent heart disease, arthritis, and depression.

Note, of course, that a little goes a long way—a serving of nuts should be a small one, since although nuts contain healthy fats they are high in calories and should not be overconsumed.

***Thanksgiving dinner
may be a feast, but it's
by no means a health
disaster!***

Thanksgiving dinner may be a feast, but it's by no means a health disaster.

Squash, sweet potato, pumpkin, potatoes, cranberries, and nuts are nutritional stars and should have a place on your holiday table this year!

Katie D'Souza is an AU graduate and a licensed naturopathic doctor. She currently practices in Ontario.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this article is for personal interest only; it is not intended for diagnosis or treatment of any condition. Readers are always encouraged to seek the professional advice of a licensed physician or qualified health care practitioner for personal health or medical conditions.

DID YOU KNOW?



Most of us have at some time—even if only briefly—entertained the dream of running our own businesses. Maybe we already have a great idea, one that we're sure would be at least a moderate success. But making the jump between idea and reality is such a drastic step that we get stuck at stage one; overwhelmed, we back away too soon and our plans go by the wayside.

[MyOwnBusiness](#), a free online resource for entrepreneurs, seeks to change this by “helping people start and succeed in business.” The site offers free courses which guide students through the often complicated process of creating and building small businesses. Courses cover topics like business plans, insurance, negotiating, growth, and even exit strategies, and textbook versions of the online course contents are also available.

If you've already taken the class, you can apply to become an instructor; in addition to being accessible online, the courses are also suitable for in-person instruction at community colleges, non-profit organizations, or even private tutoring sessions.

Minding My Own Business

IN CONVERSATION

Wanda Waterman

A Syrian Kurd: Part II, A Heart in Love With Beauty

Moustafa Mala Bozan is a Kurdish poet and musician from the city of Kobany in northern Syria, not far from Aleppo. He's been corresponding online with Wanda Waterman for the last year, during which time he's been imprisoned, has lived in refugee camps, and has travelled over Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. Read the first part of this article [here](#).



July, 2012, Iraqi Kurdistan: Moustafa asks me if I'd like to see an Iraqi sunset. He pans his webcam around the refugee camp, saying in his methodical English, "I suppose to you this is not so great, but to me it is really amazing." The landscape is ruggedly beautiful, and yes, the sunset is lovely. A friend walks by, a fellow Kurd who lives with his wife and children in the camp with Moustafa, and Moustafa introduces us. I play my guitar and sing "I Shall Not Be Moved" while they smile with delight.

Back in 2011, discussions with Moustafa start out congenially and end up drowning in misunderstandings. To add to the frustration level, the power in Kobany is turned off several times a day at regular intervals, to conserve electricity.

He says that his group, a band of intellectuals, artists, teachers, and professionals, will be in Kobany participating in a big demonstration, which they also helped organize. He promises me photos. Fabulous. I tell him I'll need to talk to his friends as well. No problem.

I check the news, and sure enough, a large demonstration transpires, exactly where he said it would and for the reasons he gave me. I can't wait to talk to Moustafa again and to see his photos.

Again he disappears.

When a few days later I find him online, he's agitated and confused. He's been to the doctor but the doctor can't help him. Nothing feels right. Even his scarf has betrayed him. Laid low by crushing disappointment (my inside source is clearly unreliable and so I don't have a story), I wish him well and move on.

In my short-lived misery, though, I ask myself if sanity has any place in Assad's Syria. Perhaps reason has been completely driven from the country and one can no longer write about Syria without looking at it through psychotic eyes. Here even the sane experience periods of blackout, psychosis, and the worst symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. It is true that one of the purposes of both war and terrorism

is to delegitimize suffering—to render witnesses so disturbed that they’re no longer capable of faithfully testifying to their own experiences, of relaying to the outside world exactly what has happened to them.

But as Christopher Morley said, a poet is one who keeps the door to madness ajar. Moustafa is a true poet—he not only exemplifies the poetic persona, he writes ecstatic, authentic, heartfelt poems, rich in imagery and metaphor.

He’s also an extremely good *bouzouki* player. He says he’s not good in comparison with the others, but clearly it took years of study to create the *makams* and riffs and intricate melodic rhapsodies of Kurdish music, mixed freely with the cultures that have surrounded it and passed through it.

He sends me a video clip of a Kurdish celebration at which he played with a group of other musicians. The crowd is huge. A lovely young brunette dressed in red wanders among the crowd, throwing petals. There are dancers in traditional dress twirling gauzy scarves. The singer is amazing and the song profoundly moving. I don’t know Kurdish, but all you need to know is that this song, at this festival, is a passionate celebration of cultural identity, a way of expressing an oppressed nation’s longings and heartbreak.

It’s also illegal. A day after the celebration, Moustafa and his friends are arrested for playing Kurdish music in public. They keep him for several months, torture him, and break his knee. By the time he’s released, the trauma and malnutrition have made his hair, so thick and full in the video, fall out. It’s now growing back, but only in tufts; he keeps his head shaved.

And now his cousin has been killed, while working as a soldier for the same government forces who’ve imprisoned Moustafa several times. He was killed by the Free Syrian Army.

“But this does not mean that we are against the Free Syrian Army!” Moustafa insists. I’m guessing his cousin was forced into service by compulsion or hunger.

“A red apple invites stones.”

“A heart in love with beauty never grows old.”

Kurdish proverbs




After burying his cousin, Moustafa writes, “All my religion thinking should be changed. I should pray, I shouldn’t drink alcohol anymore. I have to be ready to meet my God any time. Happiness can be taken from us at any time—we don’t know how. Death is close to us, and we have to be ready to be confident to meet our God and show our white book to the angels and to God.”

(To be continued.)

THE NONPARTISAN


Wanda Waterman

THE NONPARTISAN




IF CONSERVATIVES SAY THEY BELIEVE IN FAMILY VALUES, WHY DO THEIR POLITICIANS KEEP TRADING UP TROPHY WIVES?


IF SOCIALISTS WANT TO HELP THE POOR...



...WHY DO THEIR SOCIAL PROGRAMS DO NOTHING BUT GIVE MORE JOBS TO THE MIDDLE CLASS?




GOLLY, YOU SURE DO KNOW A LOT! YOU SHOULD BE IN POLITICS YOURSELF!




IF LIBERALS WANT PROGRESS, WHY DO THEY KEEP REPEATING THE SAME FLUBS?

CONSERVATIVES BELIEVE IN REDUCING GOVERNMENT SPENDING...

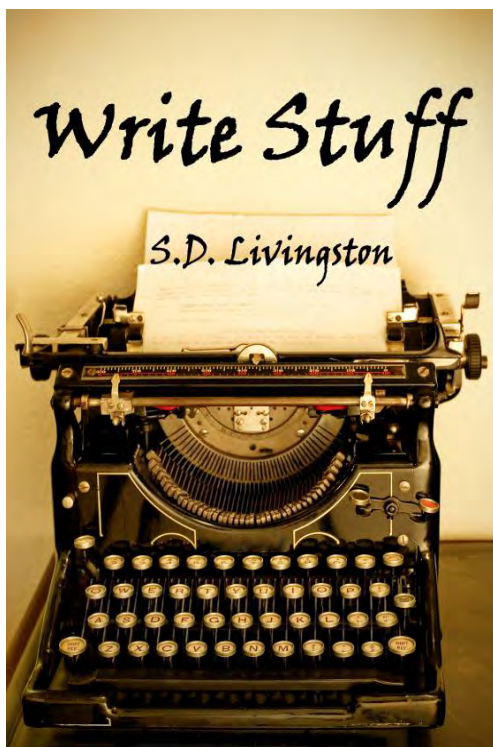


... EVEN THOUGH MOST OF THE GOVERNMENT DEBT WAS GENERATED WHILE CONSERVATIVES WERE IN POWER.

NAH. IT WOULD CUT INTO MY DRINKING TIME.



WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY
WANDA WATERMAN



Offbeat Topics

There's some great non-fiction hitting the shelves these days, covering everything from deadly missions in Iraq to real-life *Shades of Grey*. But what about the reader who's looking for something truly different? Well, fear not, eclectic book lover! No matter how offbeat or arcane the subject, chances are that someone, somewhere, has published a book about it.

Before we start, it's worth noting that many of these titles have mainstream publishing houses behind them. Not the Big Six, perhaps, but successful, established houses. Which makes it that much more intriguing to picture an acquisitions editor, pencil in hand, poring through a slush pile and having a eureka moment when her eyes light upon a title like this: *Your Three-Year-Old: Friend or Enemy?* (Though most parents probably have had days when they wondered.)

And just because a book has an offbeat title doesn't mean it's not full of useful information. For instance, there's *Exercises for Gentlemen: 50 Exercises to Do With Your Suit On*. Published in 1908, this "text-book in health culture" is a novelty and a charming glimpse into the past.

It also shows that things haven't changed as much as we think. Even a hundred years ago, readers were urged to improve their health by turning their backs on "the soul-deadening artificialities and machine methods, and the mad, feverish rush after wealth which are eating into the very heart of present-day society."

If all that exercise sounds like too much work, there's always this cheery little number: *Teach Your Wife to be a Widow*. No doubt the author gave some good '50s-era advice on financial planning—perhaps inspired by the sight of a smiling housewife on *The Radiation Cookbook*.

In spite of its alarming title, the cookbook actually refers to a brand of gas stove that was sold in the 1920s. *The Radiation Cookbook* has become a bit of a cult classic, and The Cake Historian blog has a copy of its pound cake recipe if you're tempted to do some old-style baking.

Not every obscure cookbook is quite as palatable, though—like some of the other curious titles in the AbeBooks' Weird Book Room.

Unmentionable Cuisine takes a serious look at food practices around the world, and according to Amazon reviewers it includes recipes for dogs, cats, and even armadillo on the half shell. And then there's *Critter Cuisine*, a collection of "new and wonderful dishes based on the creatures that crawl in our yards at night, swim in our drainage ditches, and flap around in vacant houses." Intriguing, but I think I'll stick to the Radiation pound cake.

Writing about such arcane topics might not put authors in line for the Giller Prize, but that's where the Diagram Prize for Oddest Book Title of the Year comes in. Run by *The Bookseller* since 1978, this literary prize "celebrates the very best in books with odd titles published around the world."

So whether it's antique English smock patterns or how to raise a witch, there's a book out there for almost every interest. Just remember not to tell your dinner guests where you found that recipe.

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!).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Park and Cry

Fed up with outrageous city parking fees? Here's some bad news: As the *Calgary Herald* reports, Canada's parking rates are on the rise. If you're in Calgary, you really have reason to complain, since Calgary's parking rates are the highest in Canada (and in fact the second-highest in North America).

With minimal space but more and more activity in urban centres, parking is becoming scarcer. As a result, "Canadian drivers should not expect relief any time soon when pulling into a parking lot in major cities across the country."

Sounds like another good reason to use public transportation whenever possible.

Around the World: Hog Madness

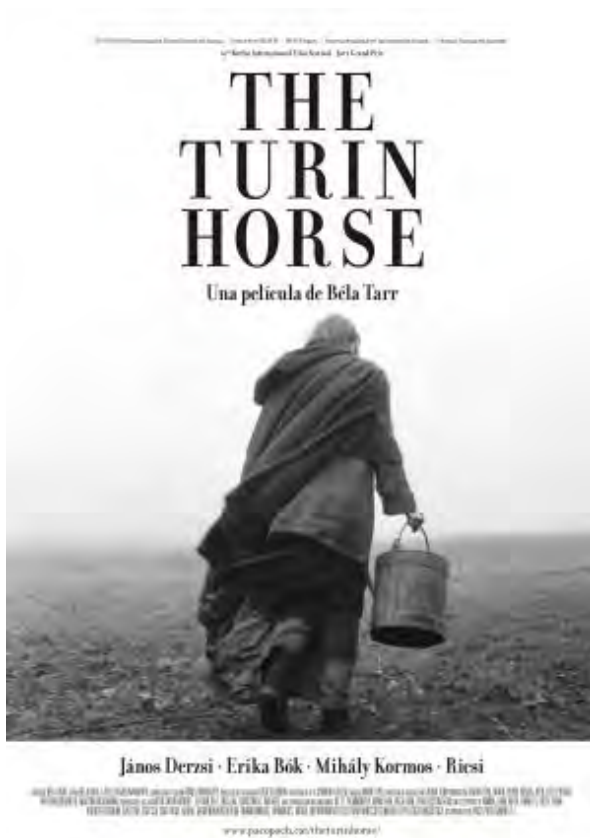
They say that pigs will eat anything—and when you put food in front of them, they will, for lack of a better term, hog out. Now, it seems, they may even attack live prey.

As CBS News reports, the dentures and some body parts of an Oregon-area farmer were found "in the hog enclosure . . . but most of his remains had been consumed." Some of the hogs "weighed 700 pounds or more," more than double the typical market hog size.

It is not yet known whether the farmer was deliberately attacked or whether he "had a medical emergency, such as a heart attack" and then was devoured by the animals. The District Attorney has not yet ruled out foul play.

GREGOR'S BED

Wanda Waterman



Recent Discoveries from the Realm of the Experimental and the Avant-Garde

Film: *The Turin Horse* (Hungarian with subtitles) (2011)

Directors: Béla Tarr, Ágnes Hranitzky

Cast: János Derzsi, Erika Bók, Mihály Kormos

Screenwriters: Béla Tarr, László Krasznahorkai

"Acquire, debase, debase, acquire. Or I can put it differently if you'd like. To touch, debase, and thereby acquire, or touch, acquire, and thereby debase. It's been going on like this for centuries. On, on, and on."

from *The Turin Horse*

"In Turin on 3rd January, 1889, Friedrich Nietzsche steps out of the doorway of number six, Via Carlo Albert. Not far from him, the driver of a hansom cab is having trouble with a stubborn horse. Despite all his urging, the horse refuses to

move, whereupon the driver loses his patience and takes his whip to it. Nietzsche comes up to the throng and puts an end to the brutal scene, throwing his arms around the horse's neck, sobbing. His landlord takes him home, he lies motionless and silent for two days on a divan until he mutters the obligatory last words, and lives for another ten years, silent and demented, cared for by his mother and sisters. We do not know what happened to the horse."

Béla Tarr

The Dark Night of the Closed Heart

This film is a story about the hansom cab owner and his daughter. There's a long sequence at the start in which we're forced to observe a well-bred but thin horse pulling a heavy cart down a road in winter. The wind is blowing hard and the horse is wearing the shaggy coat horses grow in winter in cold countries.

The horse has been worked so hard that her hair is wet and matted. The image of the sweating, cold, thin animal, eyes rolling behind her blinkers as she trudges jerkily along, is grotesquely beautiful, and becomes more so as it's dragged out to a haunting soundtrack.

The Turin Horse is no pleasure cruise. If, as Jacques Maritain says, to qualify as art a work must be significant, rational, and delightful, this flick is weighted almost exclusively on the significant end.

The two main characters are a craggily handsome widower and his daughter, a young girl with good physical attributes but not a speck of glamour or charm. She rarely speaks, and he never grunts more than

a few dismissive words. It's a bleak world, of silence, howling winds, ancient stone walls, and cracked plaster, plain and scarce food eaten desperately while still too hot, and clothing that looks damp and itchy.

Morning and night, Father sits or stands as his daughter dresses and undresses him. He stares at her the whole time, not uttering a word as she goes quickly and methodically about her chore. It's an oft-repeated scene, disturbing on several levels. Thankfully he buttons his own fly.

Belief, custom, duty, and tradition all throw their shoulders against the door of experience and crumple. The noblest thoughts, the most sophisticated arguments, the deepest religious epiphanies, crash on brute reality. To survive they're obliged to change. Sometimes they refuse.

"It's fitting that the film is named for the horse because in fact it's the horse that registers the pain of existence here. The man and his daughter also live in despair, but their suffering does no more than stupefy them."

The horse doesn't respond when his master enters the barn, unusual behaviour for a horse. She does respond when the daughter enters. It's clear they identify with each other's misery as beasts of burden, though the girl exhibits flat affect and the horse's face gives glimpses of a deep consciousness.

She's not eating, the girl remarks, to which Pa growls in reply, *She will*. The daughter implores the horse to eat, but the horse is apparently too depressed to do so, too overcome by despair. It's fitting that the film is named for the horse because in fact it's the horse that registers the pain of existence here. The man and his daughter also live in despair, but their suffering does no more than stupefy them.

The quality of the black and white cinematography is phenomenally high, each scene pulsating with intensity and meaning. The soundtrack is a modal, tension-building force à la Phillip Glass, and this, along with the grey mists, flying dry leaves, and austere characters, makes the film deliciously dreary.

A group of raggle-taggle gypsies arrives, their aesthetic purpose being, it seems, to show the difference between their own happy-go-lucky poverty and the austere misery of the widower and his daughter. Their horses, in contrast to the scrawny, despondent mare, are spirited, beautiful, and obviously loved and well-fed.

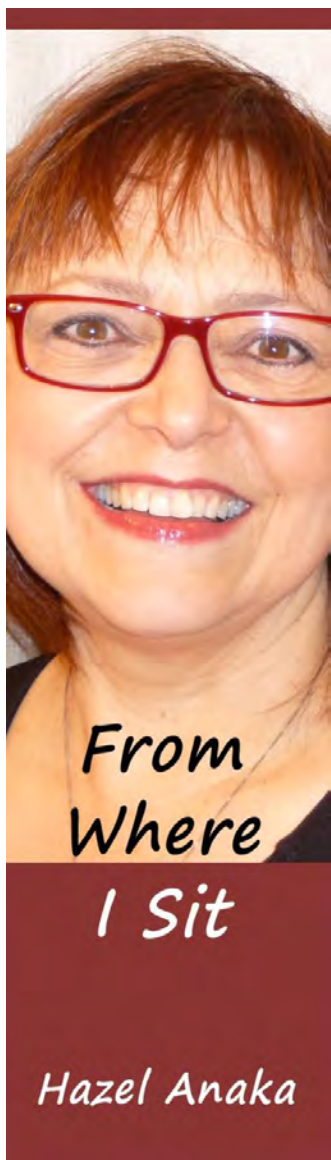
"Man is the cruelest animal."

Friedrich Nietzsche

The gypsies are laughing, chattering, and whooping it up. And as the man and his daughter drive them angrily from their well, they scream curses: *The water is ours! The earth is ours! You're weak! You're weak! Drop dead! Drop dead!*

An imprecation like that might put a damper on someone's joy, if they had any, but this father and daughter are so emotionally closed that in their world nothing can get better or worse. The film's achievement is making something so intensely beautiful out of such a gloomy theme.

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.



Second Chance

Harvest 2012 was a thing of beauty. Never in 35 years of farming do I remember such a long stretch of absolutely perfect harvest weather. And that's quite something for a farmer to admit!

We began combining at 5 pm on Sunday, September 16, and worked almost without interruption until 1:30 on September 25. Each day the temperatures were in the low to mid-20s. There wasn't a shower, frost, or even a dewy morning to slow our start each day. If anything, the reason we didn't get started until the afternoon during the first few days was our lack of manpower. When Greg came out on Friday night to help all weekend, things got easier. He is licensed to drive the semis and has more strength and skill than I do for certain jobs. The presence of his little sidekick Grady also meant that childcare became my job (joy!). But I got a break from even that when Grady rode in the combine with Greg. It blows my mind that a three-year-old could be happy riding up and down the field at two miles per hour for two or three hours at a time.

When he was ready for a break from that, though, I was ready. The balmy weather meant that he could play in the sandbox with a Tonka grader, loader, and dump truck as well as broken old farm toys. We played with the remote control monster truck he got for his birthday.

We went to watch the scrapers and loaders at the gravel pit as they prepared the site for more crushing. We visited the large dugout on the home quarter section and wondered why our presence didn't scare away the Canada geese that were swimming in it.

We visited our spring-fed dugout and looked, really looked into the shallow water from the west bank. I spotted snail shells; then noticed them moving ever so slowly. They had tenants! Just like the snail drawing in a coloring book, there was the slimy flat surface with two horn-like shapes at one end. I was awestruck at this miracle of life.

We looked into the water and saw a microcosm of life. And yet again I wondered how in the miracle of the world, this man-made body of water came to be inhabited. This water body is the result of a gravel hole, not the action of the ice age. Before this it was a pasture. How did snails get there? I can see plants establishing themselves through airborne seed depositing or insects simply flying in. But snails? How is this possible?

I need, not want, to find the answers for myself and my grandson. When I was raising my own kids I didn't have the time, patience, or interest in these things. I was caught up in the minutiae of life. This small boy is a huge gift to all who are willing to notice—and I see a second chance to learn, from where I sit.

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

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.

CLASSIFIEDS

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THE VOICE

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