

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 21 Issue 39 2013-10-18

Maghreb Voices

Tunisian Days

Shuffling Papers

A fond farewell

Tyrannosaurus Next

Jurassic science

*Plus:
Mindful Bard
Gregor's Bed
and much more!*



CONTENTS

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: Shuffling Papers	3
Maghreb Voices.....	5

Columns

Gregor's Bed: <i>Over Light Earth</i>	7
Primal Numbers: Tyrannosaurus Next.....	8
The Mindful Bard: <i>Three short films</i>	10
AUSU Update.....	13

News and Events

Did You Know?.....	4
Click of the Wrist	9
International News Desk	12

From Our Readers

Letters to the Editor	2
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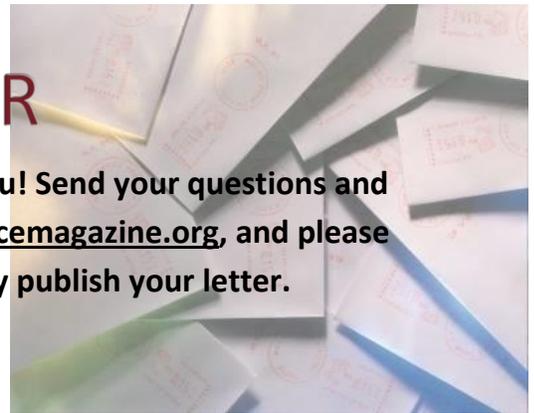
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TO THE EDITOR

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



EDITORIAL

Tamra Ross

**Shuffling Papers**

Last week we bid adieu to Christina Frey, to whom we are grateful for three years of making sure *The Voice* was always letter-perfect.

She will be missed.

While it's always hard to see a valued team member go, the reason Christina left is rather a point of pride for our publication: she was simply too much in demand for her editing skills.

This makes her the second consecutive editor we've lost to greater success in the publishing field. Current Voice

writer Sandra Livingston left the editor's position in 2010 to start what has become a very successful writing career (her fifth book will be published later this year). One thing is for certain: we know how to pick 'em!

The example set by our previous editors is very much in line with the purpose of the Voice: to provide a vehicle for AU students to speak their minds, become better writers, and, for many, to get their first experience with the publishing world. Our editors put a lot of time into helping writers improve their craft. This is objectionable to some: not everyone likes having their writing corrected. But it's more valuable than many realize. In the larger publishing world, detailed writing advice is a rare commodity; most editors prefer to toss a less-than-perfect submission in the bin than take the time to provide notes for improvement or do a little back-and-forth with a new writer.

Of course, not everyone wants to spend a lot of time working on their writing; a good number of prospective Voice writers don't respond after being asked to improve a few things. I think that's a tragic loss. Written communication was on the wane for a long time as people became increasingly dependent on their phones, but with the surge in social media popularity the written word is making one hell of a comeback. Knowing how to write clearly, persuasively, ethically, and with style is a huge advantage in a world where even major newspapers are now regularly publishing barely-edited blog-style posts because good writers and editors are just so hard to find and people want information without delay.

I've been editing for more than 15 years, and I've worked with some incredible writers through AUSU, *The Voice*, and the Editors' Association of Canada. I've noticed a few things about the best writers and the worst, the ones who improve by leaps and bounds, and those who never seem to get better despite years of practice and education. The formula for excellence is simple: the very best writers are those who always question how good they are; the ones who never stop asking for advice, looking things up, and who gobble

up editorial advice. The worst writers are invariably those who believe that learning to write is a finite process that they have mastered, and have no patience for corrections or suggestions for improvement.

Mastering the written word can benefit anyone in any career at any phase of their life. Effective writing, like a perfect smile, is often invisible: people don't always notice it because there are no flaws to focus on. When you write clearly people only focus on what you have to say. This is clear communication, and it can take you anywhere you want to go.

The Voice is changing hands, but we're still here to help AU students become the best writers they can be. Our new editor will be announced next week. Until then: farewell to Christina (who won't be going too far – she'll be adding a column to the Voice in the near future) and all our best wishes. Thank you!

DID YOU KNOW?

Ignite Survey



Your opinion on post-secondary education matters.

A student organized initiative, "[Ignite: Ideas for Post-Secondary Education](#)", recently hosted a series of conferences in post-secondary institutions across Alberta. These conferences gathered opinions from the students and other stakeholders of these institutions as to what was important in the general themes of cost & access, quality & research, and the implementation of new technologies.

Now they're running a [survey](#), the largest in Alberta's history, to collect student opinions about the current value and future direction of Alberta's post-secondary education system. This survey will be used to test whether the ideas they came up with during those conferences make sense to the larger community of individual students taking courses from Alberta institutions.

Ignite is a group organized by the Alberta Graduate Council, the Council of Alberta University Students, and the Alberta Students' Executive Council. The breadth of the group suggests that the Alberta government will likely take their ideas very seriously, so now is the time to make sure that your voice isn't missed within those plans.

The survey should only take about 15 minutes to complete, but the results may affect you for years to come. Your input before October 24, 2013 is extremely important.

MAGHREB VOICES

Wanda Waterman



Tunisian Days I

Nabeul is a seaside tourist town in Northern Tunisia, between the capital, Tunis, and the more high-end tourist zone of Hammamet. We've rented a ground-floor flat. A striped woven curtain hangs outside the door so passersby can't see inside when the door is opened. Because privacy is so valued the windows are closed, making the room dark, cozy, and intimate; the high ceilings keep it cool and prevent it from feeling claustrophobic.

The electrical system is a going concern. The power adapter on my laptop gets fried in spite of my use of a through transformer (which also gets zapped). The next few hours are spent in a frantic search for solutions until I finally settle on going to a cybercafé sans all the notes and tabs that had heretofore made meeting deadlines possible. We head off looking for one offering a subscription.

At the first cyber I once again encounter the baffling, combative manner typical of many Arab business people; the surly proprietor gripes that subscriptions are only for students and that foreigners must pay one dinar (roughly 70 cents Canadian) per hour.

We soon find a more congenial cybercafé with a good subscription deal. I resign myself to spending every morning here trying to finish my work on a Latin-Arabic (non-QWERTY) keyboard. It could be worse.

The afternoon is taken up with cooking, eating, and sleeping. Cooks here are meticulous artists; I watch, mesmerized, as garlic is crushed in a small bag with the spices and added to the sizzling olive oil. Water is trickled in to smooth out the *aija* (a Tunisian sauce made with egg and tomato sauce). The special care really does affect the taste.



Our evening stroll brings us to a friend from my husband's home village, Zanouch. He offers to drive us to the beach. The sky is dark and heavily overcast. Lightning flashes along the horizon while the Mediterranean Sea pulses gloriously with cresting waves. The wharf is edged with fishing tourists.

Along the edge of the street a charcoal fire burns in a steel drum, tended by a woman and her daughter. The woman wears a hijab and a lovely long mauve dress embroidered in white. She's roasting cobs of corn on the fire. My companions buy me a cooked one but the woman won't accept our money until she has heated it for me. I thank her. Her smile is kind and lovely.

We walk along the beach and I remove my sandals. The sand is like brown sugar as I wade in the warm water. After living in the Maritimes all my life I've developed an attachment to oceans that hasn't been indulged much since I left Nova Scotia three

years ago. Still, all I can do is remark on how different this is from the stony beaches and the bone-chilling water of the Bay of Fundy.

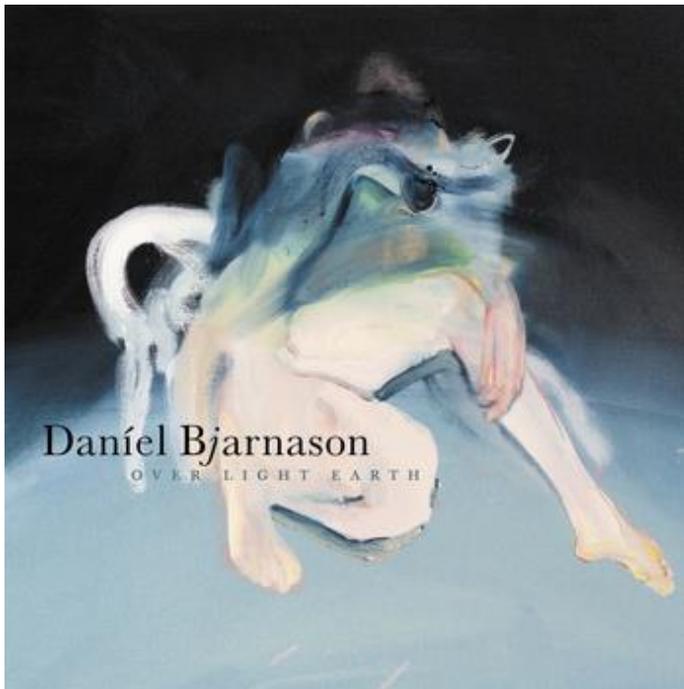
We stop at a gorgeous, sprawling cafe and recline on couches. I drink mint tea, my husband indulges in a *cafe Arabe*, and our friend smokes a *chicha*.

People come and go. Two pretty young girls in short skirts and high heels arrive with two older men. The girls are obviously delighted to be in such a glamorous place and engage in constant preening, like sparrows in the rain, as they walk across the room chattering to each other and clutching each other's arms.

(To be continued)

GREGOR'S BED

Wanda Waterman



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

Album: Daniel Bjarnason, *Over Light Earth*

A Connection with Something Marvelous

This significant new album nods in the direction of early twentieth century composers Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and Rachmaninoff. I was immediately put in mind of the animated Disney wonders *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and *Fantasia*, those splendid films, made during one of Disney's few brief golden ages. So it's quite apt that the title track, commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, will premiere at the Walt Disney Concert Hall this December.

Icelandic composer Bjarnason recorded the album by placing the microphones close to the soloists and creating

multiple tracks, so the sound feels more intimate and full-bodied than recordings in which the orchestra is recorded at arm's length. In his own words the title track is "a two-movement work for chamber orchestra that draws inspiration from paintings of the so-called abstract expressionists." Rothko and Pollock, to be precise.

Bjarnason was creatively stirred by the artists' works when visiting the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) last year, and, to prove the common ground of the artistic experience, he based this music on his experience of the paintings in much the same way that Mussorgsky was inspired for his famous piano work *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Over Light Earth is a bit of a throwback, at least in avant-garde terms; if there's such a thing as classical avant-garde, this would be it. But it focuses on those elements of twentieth century serious music that are more bombastic and less dissonant than, say, the music of Schoenberg, whose disciples slavishly produced "difficult" (hard to enjoy) music right up until the last decade. Bjarnason is true to the best of modern serious music, incorporating classical compositional style with elements of free jazz and electronic experimentation.

Bjarnason's song titles suggest a preoccupation with the existential dilemma (i.e. "Emergence," and "Solitudes") as well as outer space and spiritual ecstasy. "Dance Around in Your Skin" is a delightful, world-influenced, experimental piece: spare, minimal, and playful at first but building in tension to a defiant orchestral tour de force. (Listen for suggestions of the soundtrack from *Psycho*.)

You get a feeling of being connected to something huge while listening to this album. It's the sense that you and Bjarnason are surrounded by good company -- the best minds of the twentieth century -- engaged in a dialogue on the meaning of art and existence. Postmodernism has much to lose when it jettisons this rich, recent past. It's good to see it being preserved, and even better to see it being reinterpreted.

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.

PRIMAL NUMBERS

S.D. Livingston



Tyrannosaurus Next

The dinosaurs are back, roaring across a screen near you with the upcoming release of *Jurassic World*. It's film number four in the *Jurassic Park* franchise, the original blockbuster that sparked eager speculation about the odds of bringing dinosaurs back to life. The film still thrills us 20 years on, but we all know by now that creating dinosaurs from ancient DNA is impossible. Or is it?

According to some researchers, the closest we're going to get to a living, breathing Tyrannosaurus—or any other kind of dinosaur—are the skeletons in a museum. That's the likelihood according to Dr. David Penney, an amber expert

at the University of Manchester. As *The Telegraph* [reports](#), researchers there tried to “extract DNA from insects in subfossilised copal, the harden [sic] resin from trees that is a precursor of amber.” They were unable to, even in samples as recent as 10,000 years old. That means there's even less of a chance of finding intact, usable DNA in samples that date to millions of years ago.

“So,” as Dr. Penney told *The Telegraph*, “unfortunately, the Jurassic Park scenario must remain in the realms of fiction.”

Then again, maybe it doesn't. Dr. David Hone, a palaeontologist and lecturer in ecology at Queen Mary University of London, reminds us in a recent [article](#) that “new discoveries are constantly extending the length of time we know that DNA can survive.”

One example is the genetic data recovered from a horse that roamed the earth over 700,000 years ago. Exciting stuff, though not nearly close enough to the 65 million year shelf life we'd need to get our hands on viable dinosaur DNA.

But in December 2011, a team from Japan's Kinki University and the Siberian Mammoth Museum [discovered](#) some bone marrow cells from a mammoth—cells that “might one day help resurrect the ancient beasts.”

Science is still a long way from the dinosaur sanctuary depicted in *Jurassic Park*, but close enough that we need to start taking a serious look at the ethical questions such a feat would raise. Just because we *can* breed a triceratops or woolly mammoth one day, does it mean that we should? Who would have the right to decide how the creature was kept or whether it was exhibited to the public in a zoo?

And what about the animal's overall health? We've known for decades that species from ants to orcas lead complex social lives. Were dinosaurs highly social creatures, and would breeding a single animal be akin to keeping a dolphin alone in a tank? We simply don't know, and the only real way to find out would be to study a group of them in as natural a setting as possible.

We aren't there yet, but it's astonishing to think that research could one day turn that theory into reality. Even Dr. Penney admits that nothing's impossible. "Never say never," he said in this [interview](#) with *The Telegraph*. "Technology and science has progressed so much that it may happen one day."

So don't take your eye off that vibrating [glass of water](#) too soon. It might just be a T. Rex on the loose.

S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Halloween Finds

It's not Halloween quite yet, so there is still some time to be inspired and make your Halloween festivities something to howl about. Here are some links that will help you get the ghost (groaning is encouraged on Halloween) out of the occasion:

Cheap Halloween Costumes

Still haven't decided what you want to dress up as for Halloween? Not sure you can afford an interesting costume? Huffington Post has helpfully created a list of 30 do-it-yourself costumes that can be put together in a hurry and on a tight budget.

Literarily Disguised

Most of us have an author who inspires us, but here you can find 20 authors to inspire you to create a great costume. Whether Mark Twain, Anaïs Nin, or even Oscar Wilde, being a literary luminary does not save a person from having fun photographs taken that eventually get shared on the internet.

D-I-Y Pressure Plate

Thinking of setting up a haunted house to give people in the neighborhood some chills? Or maybe just a simple trick on the steps to give the kids some of their own medicine? Here you can find instructions on how to create a pressure plate switch out of common household materials and give people a fright when they step in front of your door.

Eye See You

Now that you have your pressure plate, are you looking for something to activate with it? Here is an idea to make large spooky eyes that can light up nearby. Let them know they're being watched.



THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



The Trap, Lina Verchery

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

Three Short Films from the National Film Board's Tremplin Project

Do most Canadians realize the singular cultural achievement that is the National Film Board of Canada (NFB)? I think not, at least not in comparison with foreign notables (including Pablo Picasso) who've been praising the Board's

contributions to human understanding since its beginnings.

To add to its credit, the NFB has been sponsoring unique projects designed to encourage the participation of *all* Canadians. One of the more recent initiatives is the [Tremplin](#) program, a competition designed to grant a voice to members of minority francophone communities.

The results are exquisite. These short films—windows into this culture that lives beside and around us—are so sincere and authentic that they create a vicarious experience very close to living among and observing these people in person.

These three films come from Acadian communities in the Maritime provinces, and they cement my belief that these people are not only close to superhuman, they are, as said of the pygmies in *The Gods Must be Crazy*, "the sweetest little buggers in the world."

Film: *A Sunday at 105*

Director: Daniel Leger

Genre: Documentary

It's really so simple: a sense of humour, a delight in simple pleasures, and a commitment to looking after one's self all conspire to create not just a long life but a long, happy life.

Aldea, a 105-year-old great-great-great-grandmother, is phenomenally chipper and spry, as tranquil in her acceptance of her impending death as she is adamant that America is getting too big for its britches. A deeply religious Roman Catholic, she nonetheless insists that hell doesn't exist. Would that we could all achieve such length of days coupled with such blessedness.

Film: *They Had Thirteen Children***Director:** Anika Lirette**Genre:** Documentary

When Madame Lirette of southeastern New Brunswick began having children she was puzzled to note that they didn't begin talking or walking at the normal age, even though they had been healthy babies. While a few of her children developed normally it was clear that she and her husband were going to continue having children with mental challenges. Since the church forbade birth control it was not an option to simply stop getting pregnant.

The Lirette's children were born with phenylketonuria (PKU), a condition that, in greatly simplified terms, prevents the metabolizing of the amino acid phenylalanine, which builds up and causes brain damage. Nowadays all babies are tested for PKU before being sent home from the hospital, and if the condition is detected the child is placed on a lifelong strict diet to avoid disability.

Madam Lirette of course knew none of this but she loved her children and cared for them tenderly and without complaint. She and her husband are spectacular evidence that happiness can be unconditional.

Film: *The Trap***Director:** Lina Verchery**Genre:** Documentary

If you've ever lived among Acadians -- the descendents of peasants from the north of France who settled in the Maritime provinces in the 17th century-- you probably can't imagine a more incongruous neighbour than a monastery filled with shaven-headed, purple-robed Buddhists. But Verchery makes it all seem so natural, finding the common ground between the two solitudes: lobster fishermen and monks striving to let go of desire. Gently placing egg-bearing female lobsters back into the ocean thus becomes as mindful an act as group chanting. It's beautiful to see how the fishermen accept a Buddhist philosophy that must have initially appeared absurd to them.

The films of the Tremplin program manifest 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 harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; 5) It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor; 6) It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 7) It displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 8) It renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; and 9) It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Torrent Site Shut Down

When people think of computer piracy and BitTorrent files often the first site to come to mind is Pirate Bay, the well-publicized and often legally attacked site that lists thousands of torrent files shared among computer users.

In Canada, however, there is a lesser known site called isoHunt that does much the same thing. Or rather, did. Made by Vancouver resident Gary Fung, isoHunt.com has been shut down as part of a settlement that includes Fung agreeing to a \$110-million fine from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). The site, which ranked as the 423rd most visited site in the world for global traffic, stated that it linked over 13 million

active files shared between 51 million users.

The MPAA says that the settlement was "a major step forward in realizing the enormous potential of the internet as a platform for legitimate commerce and innovation." It's not often that someone declares shutting new technology down will help innovation, so perhaps there's some humor to be found there.

Around the World: Halloween UK Style

Recently, a man living in Stevenage, north of London, was contacted by police and informed that his front lawn Halloween diorama was simply too gory for public display. The man, James Creighton, puts up a display annually to raise money for the Cancer Research UK charity in honour of his mother. This year, however, the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*-inspired display brought in a complaint from a parent whose children cried when they saw it. Police informed him of the complaint and suggested that he use some sort of tarpaulin along the bottom of his fence to hide the exhibit from young children.

However, in London itself, a costume company is running a promotion where you can potentially have a "fright mob" descend on an unwary friend to give them a scare, simply by sending a tweet. Jason Oliver of London found this out firsthand when nominated by his friend, Stephen Lawton, for deciding to go to the gym instead of a planned night out.

If you want a more realistic monster, and can't wait for science to recreate the dinosaurs like Sandra Livingston's article describes, perhaps you should look at the upcoming event in Billingshurst, West Sussex on November 27th, when a complete fossilized skeleton of the dinosaur Diplodocus will be auctioned off. Extremely rare, the complete skeleton is expected to fetch at least £600,000 with expected bidders to include Hollywood celebrities and museums in the Far East. However, this isn't something to purchase on a whim because at 17 meters (55 feet) long, displaying the skeleton will probably require—at the very least—moving some furniture around.

AUSU UPDATE



Dear Members,

You may have recently seen information on the internet speculating about the future of Athabasca University. These reports suggest that the Alberta government may broker a merger between AU and University of Alberta, and that this may result in drastic changes to the services and programs offered to students AU students.

We want you to know that AUSU is aware of these rumours and is actively investigating the source – we will keep you informed as we know more.

We can tell you that AU is governed via a bicameral structure with two main governing bodies: the General Faculties Council (formerly Academic Council) and the Board of Governors (formerly Governing Council). AUSU has representatives on both of these governing bodies and we can confirm that there has been no formal discussion of a university merger among these groups. The AU president, Frits Pannekoek, has also assured the press that there is no truth to the rumour. On behalf of our members, we are seeking more information from the Board of Governors, the minister, and AU executives.

At this time we simply have no evidence that a merger is being seriously considered by AU, the U of A, or the Alberta government, and we note that among the many committees and working groups of AU, planning and development for the future continues as usual.

We know that our members are worried and want more information. We will update you as soon as we know more. At this time we do not feel there is any reason for students to worry or make changes to their study plans.

Do not hesitate to contact our office if you wish to talk about this or any other issue affecting AU students.

AUSU.

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

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

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