

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 16 Issue 22
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Planning for Adventure

The sky's the limit

Fiction

The end of the
affair

AU Profiles

Meghan Roberts



Plus:

*Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan, From Where I Sit,
Milk-Crate Bandit, and much more...*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



EDITORIAL

Sandra Livingston



After a Fashion

You'll just have to believe me when I say I'm no slave to fashion. The whole *Sex and the City* frenzy (The bags! The shoes!) is quite happily passing me by. Most days, jeans work just fine, thank you very much.

However, when it is time to dress things up, I do appreciate great style; that seemingly effortless look that happens when exceptional design and quality workmanship come together. So as summer approaches and photos of the latest fashion trends are splashed across websites, magazine covers, and billboards, it's this innate appreciation for flair and elegance that's got me wondering—what the hell are they thinking?

For starters, there's the abomination known as the shorts suit. Apparently, it's supposed to be latest thing in men's business wear (there's a photo [here](#), if you dare.) Think Little Lord Fauntleroy without the ruffles—or the tights.

On second thought, this hybrid of men's suit jacket and sawed-off dress pants achieves more of a centaur effect: adult male on top, and, well, we're not quite sure what on the bottom. Guys, if you're even tempted, just remember that other article of men's clothing that requires you to choose between knee and ankle socks: plaid golf shorts. Enough said.

Equally confusing is a little something for the ladies. Is it a sandal? Is it a boot? No, it's a [sandal ankle bootie](#). What's that, you ask? I certainly couldn't make up my mind, and apparently neither could the designer. The top half is a boot and the bottom half is a wide-open sandal, sporting one narrow strap across the toe. The only explanation I can think of is that whoever created this footwear faux pas must have had a lot of distractions at the office that day. On one website, you can pick up a pair for a mere \$595—more if you want the entire boot.

Another fashion trend being flogged is leg warmers. In case you weren't around when *Flashdance* came out, leg warmers are tubes of material that cover varying lengths of leg between your ankle and your knee. The point? Unless you're a professional dancer, there isn't one (and I don't even know if dancers wear them). They were bad enough the first time around, but it seems they're back with a vengeance. Striped, fishnet, with pompoms, checked, rainbow, chenille: you name it, [this site](#) has them. Perhaps the most alarming thing about this leg-wear revival is that they aren't just for legs anymore—the 2008 version is being touted as something you can wear on your arms. I just don't get it.

And finally, if you think back with fondness to the big-shouldered dresses popular in the '80s, you'll be happy to know the trend is enjoying a revival. Designers haven't quite embraced a full-blown return to shoulder pads. Instead, the look this spring is known as "shoulder accents." At the more subtle end of the spectrum are puffed shoulders on everything from sun dresses to T-shirts. More [extreme versions](#) feature a kind of weird, Judy Jetson look—only suitable for cartoon characters and old *Dynasty* posters.

Yes, fashion is a highly subjective thing. What's hot in one city may be passé in another, and today's must-have is tomorrow's misstep. But if you're tempted to embrace some of the odder fashion offerings this spring, just remember: shorts suits may last a season, but your co-workers' YouTube videos are forever.

FICTION

Clare L. Booth



The End of the Affair

"Quit looking at me like that. I'm getting married. You're supposed to be happy for me. Here, I'll help you—say 'congratulations.' Come on, say it." Phoebe sighed. "Or don't. Jimmy, give the man another drink before he faints on me."

"You wanna know what I think?" Paul said, suddenly banging his drink down hard on the bar. "I think you're settling. You're marrying John to make Cynthia happy, that's it."

"Women have done it for years, marrying the best friend, brother—hell, father—to keep the relationship with the true object of their affection above board. Not so damn clandestine, look at us, how far we've fallen. We're in a rundown hole in the wall on a bad side of town, no offense Jimmy, listening to Elvis on the juke. We can't dance to Elvis forever. We can't make love at the Caldwell. We just *can't*."

"So, you want to go to a place a little more classy, is that it? We could go to that swanky oyster bar on third."

"Verona's? That place closed years ago—health code violations, too many food poisonings. No, Paul, I don't want to go someplace else, I want you to be happy for my engagement. I want you to be John's best man, I want you to bring Cynthia to the wedding and then when I'm married I want us to get together as couples at Milan or Middish."

"But you don't love him," he said obstinately.

"I'll learn to," she said, taking another sip of her gin and tonic. "Marriages based on love are doomed anyhow; 50 per cent of them end in divorce. Now come on, let's go. Thanks Jimmy, I guess I'll see you around."

They stepped out of the bar into the cold night air. "Caldwell?" Paul asked, hoping Phoebe didn't hear the eagerness in his voice.

"Paul . . ." She looked at him a moment, and then acquiesced with a sigh. "No sex."

In her undergarments she felt like a teenager, slipping under the covers to sleep with the object of her feral, animal lust. The sheets were cold against her bare skin and she stared at the ceiling, waiting for Paul to get through in the bathroom. She could hear him singing "Down by the Bay" to his son. He must be at least six by now, Phoebe thought.

How quickly those six years had gone by: a phone call here—Cynthia was in labour, he wouldn't be coming—had that really been six years ago? A phone call there—it was his son's T-ball game, he'd see her afterwards, after pizza and ice cream. She smiled, the two sides of his life as separate as Clark Kent and Superman.

"Are you asleep?" she heard Paul ask. It took a moment for her mind to register it was her he was talking to.

"No, just thinking," she said, smiling into the sepia darkness. "Come to bed," she said, feeling blindly for his body, her fingers brushing skin and air simultaneously.

"When John and I have children, I'd like you to be the godfather," she whispered, their bodies a mad tangle of arms and legs.

"You're going to have sex with him?" Paul asked.

"That's what married people do," she said evenly.

Barely audible over the noise outside, he whispered, "That will kill me."

"No it won't, you'll survive. It's not like you married me."

They were perfectly still, and for a moment the silence in the room was so heavy and deafening, Phoebe held her breath.

"No, you're worse than an ex-wife. You're the one that got away."

"Only because you let me," she said somewhat quickly, as if to imply "And that is all I have to say about it, The End."

"Is it too late to rectify that?" he asked, more to bare shoulder he was kissing than to her.

"Kind of, yeah. Can we just lay here?"

After moments spent getting situated comfortably on the sagging bed, all they could hear was the beating of their own hearts and their steady breathing. His arms were wrapped over her breasts like chains, tight and constricting, but she found it comforting and didn't complain.

"Paul?"

"Shh . . ." he whispered.

"Paul? I just . . ." She paused. Maybe some things were better left unsaid—love complicated things—but no.

"Paul? I love you."

It was almost dawn when they awoke. Phoebe got dressed on the far side of the bed by the wall, while Paul sat on the edge of the bed staring at his socks.

"Now what?" He looked at her, buttoning her dress and smoothing it down over her hips.

"Here's your invitation," she said, pulling a pink card out of her purse. "The wedding's two Thursdays from now, at 11, photos in the park at 10. Wear jeans and a white dress shirt, we're going for casual. You'll look smashing," she said, smiling. "Be there, okay? Eleven o'clock."

THE LEARNING CURVE

Heather Fraser



Planning for Adventure

I only receive 80 per cent of my pay. By choice!

Let me give you some background. Three years ago I moved to Kenora, Ontario, when I accepted my new job as a Systems Administrator. As I got used to the fast pace of my new position, I also began getting used to the slower pace of a small town. However, in the back of my mind this little voice was always nagging at me, asking me if I had really made the right decision.

As I have two daughters, I worried that I might be taking something away from my daughters' childhood; Kenora doesn't even have the large theatre or arts component, or the festivals, that Winnipeg (my home town) had.

Winnipeg is no Toronto, I realize that. But in Kenora, the town revolves around the lake, outdoor activities, sports, and more outdoor activities! It is beautiful, and a great place for any child to grow up. But I didn't want them to miss out on the variety that a larger town might offer in any area they might grow interested in.

While exploring my new employer, I started looking into all the benefits they had mentioned during my interviews. And one of them really stood out to me: a self-paid leave of absence.

For four years you receive 80 per cent of your pay, and during the fifth year—while not working—you receive the 80 per cent of your pay the company has squirreled away for you. On paper it looks great, but for the first few years I didn't think it was something I could really afford.

The self-paid leave of absence really kept my attention for a few reasons. First, who wouldn't want a year off with pay! Also, I have always wished I had the financial means to travel more with my daughters. We go camping for a good part of the summer, but I haven't had the chance to take them on an airplane or for the true adventures I wish I had growing up. I was raised in a single parent family, and as a child I didn't have the opportunity to travel at all.

Finally, this would give them the chance to break out of the small-town living we have grown to love, and really branch out their interests. If I took a year off with my daughters, we wouldn't stay at home. We would pack up our belongings, give up our rental house, and go overseas on a one-year family adventure!

But how could I afford to give up even a cent of my pay cheque? Honestly, as a single parent with kids who participate in 14 sports throughout the year, things get very tight. And then I began researching the tax implications, as well as the day-to-day implications of purposely dropping my pay.

Full-time students get amazing tax breaks—tuition credits and tax credits for the months you are a full-time student. However, I am in the "grey area" of income earners, as I make just enough to push me into the next tax bracket. That means a higher tax rate, and I also start to lose my other benefits (e.g., GST rebate, Child Tax Credit).

The income tax taken from my pay cheques is higher, and my tax time refund is lower. I did the math, and by dropping my pay down to 80 per cent to participate in a self-paid leave of absence, the actual take-home pay difference would be minimal. I am actually sliding myself into the lower tax bracket!

I realized I could actually afford to opt into this plan at work, so I began asking around the community to see if there was someone else who had done something similar that I could bounce ideas off. And I realized that this type of plan isn't that uncommon anymore. A self-paid leave of absence, deferred salary plan, or self-paid sabbatical is something that many employers are opting to offer their employees. As the economy is tight, it is one benefit that is not directly costing the employer anything.

Indirectly, there are staffing costs and administrative costs, but that is more palatable to many employers. I made some new friends in the community that are more than willing to share their experiences travelling throughout the world with a clear conscience, knowing they have employment to return to when their adventure comes to an end.

With my employer, you have to apply for the program and fit a number of prerequisites to be allowed to join the program. I was accepted, and April 1 began my salary deferral. Even though I don't begin my leave of absence until April 2012 (or later if I choose), my daughters are absolutely excited about the trip. Not only has this turned my dream of travel and adventure into reality, and toned down my fears about small-town living, it has become another source of entertainment and education for my family.

In the five months since I first told my daughters about the idea, I have seen school library books come home on countries they may be interested in, and instead of playing online games, I have seen them read blogs written by different families who have participated in sabbaticals together.

Also, I have tailored my full-time studies so I qualify for graduation in January 2012. On my way out of the country I plan on stopping by Athabasca University for graduation—what an excellent graduation present I am setting up for myself!

What surprises me the most is that more people aren't interested or participating in this type of program when it's offered by an employer. My company employs over 200 people, and I am only the second person to ever go on the 80/20 program.

I think part of it might be that four years is a long time in the future. I just turned 30, and four years does seem quite far away. My daughters will be 12 and 14. Four years in the future, things might be totally different for me and my family. But there is always fine print: if I choose not to go on my adventure with my daughters, I can cash out the deferred salary that my employer put away for me at the end of the four year duration, with no penalties (other than the interesting tax situation I would put myself in for that tax year).

And if I decide to resign from my job, the money would be returned to me upon my termination. I urge anyone whose employer offers this type of program to take a second look at it. The tax and net pay implications may surprise you!

We are now beginning to look into overseas volunteer positions in Thailand and Russia, as well as the benefits of beginning to travel while still considered a full-time student. I was reading a travel book on Russia today during my daughter's soccer practice, and another mom struck up a conversation with me. As I explained the program and my plans to her, she introduced another term for my five-year plan—the fact that I am putting myself on “layaway”!

Stay tuned, as I look forward to sharing some of my hard-earned knowledge with my fellow AU students!

CAREERS

Behdin Nowrouzi



Consider a Career as a Pharmacist

What is Pharmacy?

Pharmacists working in different settings mix and dispense prescribed medications and provide consultative services to patients and other health care professionals.

Pharmacists may work as individual practitioners or as part of health teams that include physicians, nurses and rehabilitation professionals, social workers, and dietitians.

Pharmacists are detail- and task-oriented individuals that often need to synthesize a great deal of information and are avid problem solvers.

As health care professionals, pharmacists are responsible for the optimal use of drugs and ultimately improve an individual's quality of life.

Education and training

A baccalaureate of science degree in pharmacy is required.

Pharmacists also require supervised clinical practice under the guidance of a licensed pharmacist.

In order to obtain licensure, pharmacy students require a pharmacy degree and the successful completion of a national board examination that is administered through the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada. Like many health professions, pharmacy is regulated across the country through a provincial or territorial governing body.

Admission information and requirements

There are 10 Canadian faculties and schools of pharmacy: Memorial University of Newfoundland, Dalhousie University, Université de Montréal, Université Laval, University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, University of Manitoba, University of Saskatchewan, University of Alberta, and University of British Columbia.

The Canadian Pharmacists Association recommends that applicants contact the school of their choice directly to get specific information. Most entrants to a pharmacy program have an undergraduate university degree. Admission to pharmacy programs at Canadian schools is competitive.

The University of Alberta has a four-year baccalaureate of science degree in pharmacy. Entrance requirements include a letter of intent explaining an applicant's interest in pharmacy.

Moreover, they must have one year of post-secondary study with courses taken in inorganic and organic chemistry, English, calculus, biology, biochemistry, and statistics. The one year of post-secondary studies is not included as part of the baccalaureate degree in pharmacy.

Where pharmacists work

Pharmacists work in a variety of settings. Students in Canadian pharmacy programs are provided with a course that allows them to discover the many different options available. Most commonly, they can be found working in pharmacies and in retail stores with a pharmacy department.

These community pharmacists work in dispensing prescribed medication and offer patients consultative services. Furthermore, they have a registry of poisons and narcotic and controlled drugs. In Alberta, 80 per cent of pharmacists work as community pharmacists.

Industrial pharmacists take part in the research and manufacturing of new pharmaceuticals. Positions range from sales to clinical research to professional relations employment. Often, pharmacists in this sector develop and implement educational material for other health care professionals and patients alike.

Druggists also work as consultants to the government. Some work for the military or pursue clinical specialist practices such as in psychiatry, cardiology, or pediatrics.

In addition, they may be employed as part of public health units, with food and drug inspection services, or as part of professional and regulatory bodies. Further, they may work in directing students, assistants, and technicians in providing optimal care to patients.

Salaries and demographic information

According to Service Canada, pharmacists earn \$32.47 per hour in Canada. In Alberta, part- and full-time pharmacists earned from \$53,900 to over \$120,000. The mean yearly income was \$83,900.

Women comprise 59 per cent of pharmacists, and 18 per cent of pharmacists worked part-time in 2004. The majority of pharmacists (86 per cent) were between 25 and 54 years of age, while 11 per cent were older than 55 and 3 per cent were age 24 or younger.

For more information regarding a career in pharmacy, please visit the [Canadian Pharmacists Association website](#).

DID YOU KNOW?

AUSU Bulletin Board



Have something to sell? Looking for a new job, or maybe a volunteer opportunity? Want to connect with a Study Buddy for that new course you just enrolled in? Then why not check out the [AUSU Bulletin Board](#)?

If you're an AU student, and have a valid login and username for the AUSU site, you can access all the latest postings on the bulletin board. The Study Buddy section is a great place to find other students taking the same courses as you, and just about every subject area is covered: Psychology, Math, English, Communications Studies, Philosophy, Astronomy, and more.

You can also search job listings for that perfect summer job or volunteer opportunity, while other sections have items for sale or wanted. The more students that use the bulletin board, the better it works for everyone, so why not check it out today?

AU Profiles:

AU Profiles: Meghan Roberts

Christina M. Frey



This week, we meet a first-year student who's already presenting her historical research at symposiums.

Meghan Roberts, a student in Athabasca University's Bachelor of Arts program, tells what sparked her keen interest in history, particularly the Viking Age. She also describes some of her research, and explains how an undergraduate student can get her research recognized.

Meghan, who lives in Toronto, is planning a double major in history and anthropology. It's an important stepping stone to her long-term goals: to obtain a Master's, and then a Ph.D., in Medieval Studies.

"I'd really like to teach, but I'd also desperately like to do research," she says.

She isn't waiting for her Ph.D. to pursue her research interests, however. "I have a really strong interest in the Viking Age," Meghan says.

In March, she presented a paper on Viking Age sewing tools at the Medieval World Symposium held at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto. The society conducting the symposium—Friends of Medieval Studies—has subsequently asked her to do a follow-up lecture for its evening lecture series. She's also working on a paper for an undergraduate conference in Arizona. "It's pretty exciting," she says.

How does an undergrad student get her research recognized? "You have to be very, very persistent," Meghan says. Having connections helps as well: she submitted her abstract for the Medieval World Symposium to a person she'd already known for several years.

Sometimes, it can be difficult to overcome the prejudice favouring graduate over undergraduate research. "I . . . talk about my work for a while before letting anyone ask me what my job is," Meghan says. "I tell them after they already have an opinion formed!"

However, she adds, it's important to keep trying. "There's more and more interest in undergrad research now," she says. "Even if it's a lot of long shots, one will eventually hit!"

Some of Meghan's recent research centres on Viking Age sewing.

"Clothes were often gifts given by kings," she says, "but we don't think enough about who made the clothes."

"I went in with my eyes closed and my fingers crossed. And it worked out!"

When you begin asking questions about the daily lives of women in Viking times, it opens up a whole new world—one "that is easy to ignore for a lot of historians," Meghan says.

For example, many aren't aware that "sewing tools were a status symbol for women of the time . . . [women] wore sewing tools as part of their jewellery," Meghan notes. "Good sewing was one of the ways one really made one's name."

Meghan's fascination with history began several years ago when she was a film student. "I was working on a screenplay . . . a period action swords-and-sorcerers kind of thing," she says. "It . . . quickly turned into an interest in real history."

It was learning about the Icelandic legal system that sparked her interest in the Viking Age. "It's one of the earliest democracies in Europe, and it's got some really interesting features," she says.

Meghan first began studying with AU because of its open admissions policy. "I went in with my eyes closed and my fingers crossed," she says. "And it worked out!"

Although she started with just one course, she succeeded enough that she enrolled in two more. Now, as of June, she'll be taking three courses simultaneously, with three already finished.

Distance education works well for Meghan, who doesn't feel comfortable in a classroom setting.

"I definitely prefer distance ed to classrooms," she says. "I have a lot of trouble listening to information," she adds. "I get less frustrated by my [distance] courses . . . which means it's easier to knuckle down."

It's also easier now that she has control over when and where she studies. "I especially like coffee-shop hopping," Meghan says. "I think the fresh air wakes me up a bit!"

Meghan's long-term goals help keep her motivated, even when homework becomes burdensome. "I find schoolwork extremely difficult," Meghan says. "I have to spend a lot of time on courses."

She adds: "There are times I wonder if it's actually worth it. But this is just one of those things I've got to do!"

When she's not studying history—for school or on her own—or participating in Renaissance dance, Meghan works as an illustrator.

"I 'translate' complex texts—[like] a bill of rights, a self-help book, a quality of life questionnaire—into pictures for people who have lost their ability to use and understand language," she says.

And although she enjoys her job, her real dream is to pursue more historical research. "I want it all!" she says.



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

Book: Alberto Manguel, *The Iliad and The Odyssey: A Biography*

Publication date: 2007

Publisher: Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, NY

"The chronology we have invented for ourselves prompts us to imagine that our sense of the world and of ourselves evolves, and that there is progress of feeling and imagination as there is development of technology and invention . . . It is difficult for us to imagine that, such a long time ago, we already had words to name our most bewildering experiences and our deepest and most obscure emotions."

Alberto Manguel, *The Iliad and The Odyssey: A Biography*

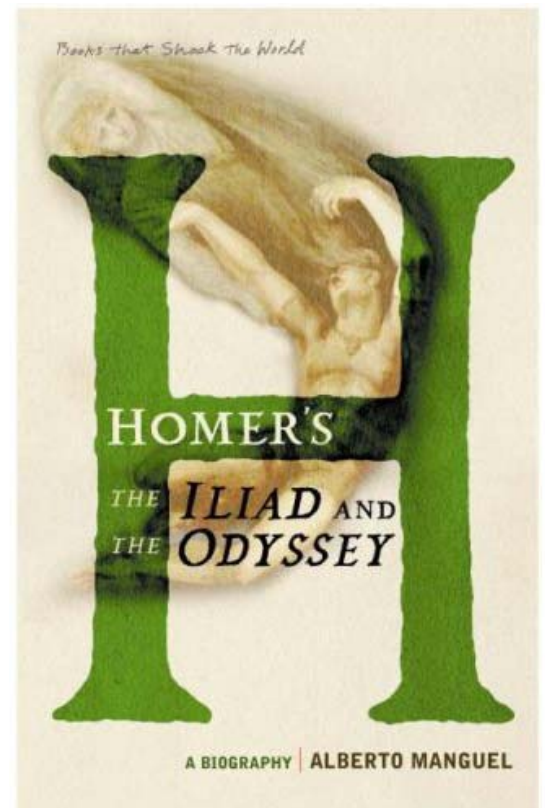
There's this guy, Ulysses, who just wants to stay home with his wife and baby boy and farm his fields in peace. In spite of himself he gets dragged across the sea into some war over some other guy's wife. His side wins but it takes Ulysses some time to get home. When he finally makes it back to the hearth there's a big bloodbath, and everyone is just so happy.

There; now you don't have to read *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*. Wait a minute—yes, you do.

Ever have one of those vivid dreams that makes no sense at all and yet leaves you with such a sense of significance that you can't get it out of your mind and so you irk your friends by repeatedly asking them what it could mean? That's what you'll get out of this book. Somewhere between an epic-length vision of the night and a concise survey course in the liberal arts, *The Iliad and The Odyssey: A Biography* is a compelling reading experience.

Another in Atlantic Monthly Press's phenomenal and timely "Books That Changed the World" series, this one traces the paths of the poet Homer and the heroes and heroines and animals and landscapes and events of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* in the West, from Virgil all the way up to Timothy Findley.

The dimension of Homer's influence boggles the mind. One begins to understand, for example, Blake's assertion that it was the classics and not the Goths which desolated Europe, when you read Turkish Emperor Mehmet II's letter to Pope Pius II, in which he talks of uniting with the Italians to avenge the blood of Hector on the Greeks, ominously calling to mind the use of the New Testament to justify anti-Semitism. Rarely is a written work taken seriously enough to be radically misinterpreted and still be used successfully to build support for atrocities.



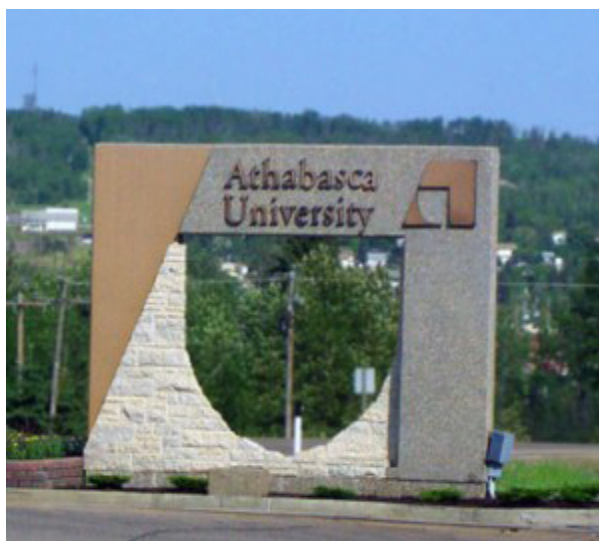
It's crucial that culture makers continually return to the great works of the past to rethink the literary canon in terms of what's happening in their own lives, and not just to test the relevance of the work in question.

Northrop Frye wrote: ". . . it is the primary function of literature, more particularly of poetry, to keep recreating the first or metaphorical phase of language during the domination of the later phases, to keep presenting it to us as a mode of language that we must never be allowed to underestimate, much less lose sight of."

The Iliad and The Odyssey: A Biography lives up to six of The Mindful Bard's criteria for books well worth reading: 1) it makes you want to be a better artist; 2) it proffers tools which help you to be a better artist; 3) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 4) it is about attainment of the true self; 5) it stimulates the mind; and 6) it poses and admirably responds to questions which have a direct bearing on our view of existence.

The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to bard@voicemagazine.org. For a list of criteria, go [here](#). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.

AROUND AU



New AU Research Centre Website

The new AU Research Centre [website](#) is up and running, and it's the place to go for all the news about AU's "scholarly, research and creative activities."

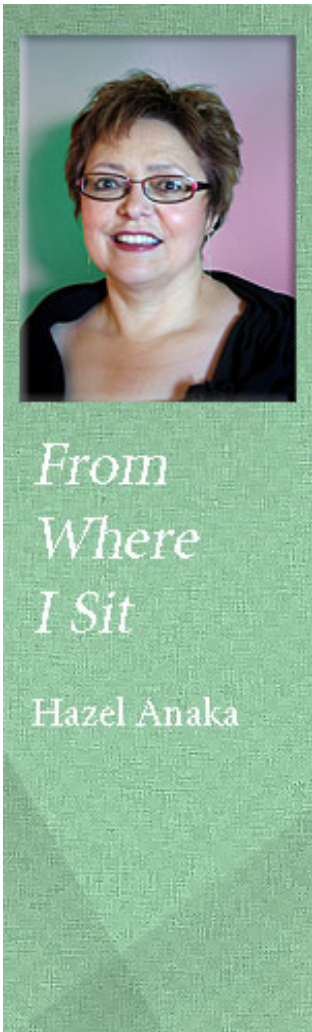
As the site explains, AU's 2006-2011 Strategic University Plan (SUP) "commits Athabasca University to building new capacity as a research institution, and provides a framework for the development of a viable and purposeful research agenda."

The new site reflects AU's research objectives, including the support of provincial research goals; expanding new research and scholarship projects and fostering existing

research; participating in federal government initiatives; and reflecting the priorities of national research councils.

Students interested in the Graduate Student Research Fund (GSRF) can find out about application guidelines and deadlines, and the section on Research Ethics offers in-depth information on AU's research policies, as well as links to the university's Research Ethics Board.

Other sections include info on Externally Funded Research, Internally Funded Research, and AU's Arts and Science Research Talk series. There's a lot to explore, so be sure to check out this great new resource!



Packing for Pleasure

Several months ago, when we booked a week at a Manitoba resort for late May, we made some assumptions. I know what you're thinking: Manitoba resort—who's she kidding?

Promotional materials promise hiking trails, water sports, golf, horseback riding, pools, on-site spa, and much more. We'll see.

We believed spring seeding would be done. And it was. We assumed making the 10-hour drive would be great with the Honda CR-V. No need to rush, no worry about car trouble. Crank up the tunes and hit the open road. We didn't know fuel would be nearing \$1.30 a litre.

This trip was to be a getaway to celebrate our 35th anniversary. It would have been about two and a half months early but hey, there's haying to be done in August. It now appears Roy can't go because he has to work. He's breaking into the asphalt and gravel hauling business and needs to be available when the jobs finally start.

One part of me is obviously disappointed. Call me crazy, but an anniversary getaway generally requires two people. And Roy needs the break as much as or more than I do. Chiselling out time to relax is never easy, especially when farming.

But part of me is tickled pink at the thought of a relaxing drive and a week all to myself. Once it became obvious I would be going it alone, I started thinking of the possibilities and began list-making. I wanted to stay open to doing whatever moves me but I also needed to build some structure into the equation too.

I'm finding the anticipation of a trip is nearly as delicious as the excursion itself. I'm packing for pleasure.

Packing favourite CDs for a solo trip means not having to defend my choices to anyone. I've got a small, wheeled suitcase for some books awaiting my attention. I intend to do some journaling. There's nothing like self-imposed solitude to clear the cobwebs; realign priorities; hear the still, small voice inside; and just chill.

It's another great opportunity to see firsthand how I function on my own. Ultimately, we're all in this alone, so embrace it.

I'm packing a pedometer, exercise gear, comfort food, scented candles, and favourite talismans. I have a new game for my Nintendo DS that I'm itching to get into: crosswords, word find, and anagrams. Some comfy lounging clothing will make the nights cosier as will the in-suite fireplace. Ideally, I'll achieve a healthy mix of activity and sloth, inspiration and relaxation.

Can you imagine if a person ate when she was hungry, slept when she was tired, and exercised for the sheer pleasure of it? What about the joy of just reading and writing and staring into space if that's what feels right? That's why I'm filled with anticipation at the possibilities. I'm enjoying the packing and the promise of a week away. We really need to do this more often, from where I sit.

The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by
Wanda
Waterman
St. Louis



MILK-CRATE BANDIT

Erik Ditz



Music is Better Than Cars

When Ontario introduced an additional character to license plates, the new system incorporated a random, four-letter sequence at the start of the plates.

During the process of programming a machine to select the sequences of letters to be used, somebody surely saw fit to include a statute that, should any colourful language arise from a random set of characters, it should be passed over.

Of course, as large a list as possible of foul foursomes would be desirable, to prevent the largest amount of people from being offended, so a lot of people would need to weigh in with their favourites.

Then, someone would need to enter all of the sequences to be skipped into a computer that would, of necessity, be on federal or provincial property, which means that somewhere, the Canadian government has a machine containing all the best four-letter words ever, which was paid for and stocked by us, and we're not allowed to see these words on a license plate.

And that's why I like music like this.

Drudkh - *Blood in Our Wells*

Drudkh is the soundtrack to a wintry forest glen that occasionally hosts glorious duels. Pretty and distant piano and fiddle interludes replace the standard "Grr grr grrr!" of black metal, and a lot of the heavy bits are modest and melodic in their own right, though it does get pretty brutal. For fans of Opeth and Dimmu Borgir bored with solos and plastic spikes.

NoMeansNo - *0 + 2 = 1*

0 + 2 = 1 is one of the best albums by one of the best Vancouver bands of all time and deserves to be listened to for a number of reasons: the music seems impossible at first, layered beyond belief with out-of-sync bass lines, wailing guitar squelches, and technical yet maddeningly simple drum beats, but somehow ends up so catchy and driving that it won't leave your head for days; the Dylanish use of obvious metaphor is coupled with a fantastic enthusiasm and swift styling that Dylan certainly never possessed, and has a lot of weight behind the words; it's way punker than D.O.A. ever was, and these guys never ran for office; and the list goes on.

Just trust me, this album is worth your time.

Ufomammut - *Idolum*

Sometimes when I'm in a quiet place, I'll notice a noise (perhaps dripping water) repeating rhythmically in the distance, and realize that it's been doing so all along, only my focus changed to appreciate it.

Then my awareness of the sound amplifies it and adds to it and builds on it until I've got a full-fledged orchestra pounding in my head around this sound, and that's usually when I realize it was just Ufomammut all along.

The Kittens - *Bazooka and The Hustler*

This is what Nirvana would have sounded like if they were from Winnipeg and Kurt wasn't high all the time. Pretty much the best band ever.

Morbid Angel - *Domination*

I'm told that Florida has an awful lot of swamps, so it's no surprise that the forefathers of sludge metal are natives there. This is one of the heaviest and dirtiest sounding recordings of all time, designed specifically with causing aggression in mind.

When Dr. Phil and his army of mutant counsellor-psychiatrist-self-help-gurus take over the world with book clubs and guest appearances, music like this will come with warnings like "May cause you to destroy public property," and "Not recommended for anyone who wears paisley."

Simple, unadulterated, heavy rock riffs plod along a deep trench of sludgy but compelling beats and speaker-blowing bass, marching in a cadence like horned, fire-breathing rock ants.

Toner Low - *Toner Low*

This is pure rock and roll, stripped of wanky solos and turned up to 11. Simple, unadulterated, heavy rock riffs plod along a deep trench of sludgy but compelling beats and speaker-blowing bass, marching in a cadence like horned, fire-breathing rock ants. Anything this album doesn't break wasn't there in the first place.

Macabre - *Morbid Campfire Songs*

That's right. An album of campfire singalongs based on the grisly true details of famous mass-murder careers. Fun for the whole family.

Entombed - *Sons of Satan Praise the Lord*

When Entombed released *Clandestine*, the face of black metal was forever changed by the raw, heavy, and stylistically intense way the album sounded. That's probably why nobody really expected this record to come from the same band, stocked front to back with covers of KISS, Alice Cooper, Roky Erickson, Bob Dylan, Bad Brains, and MC5.

It just goes to show that there will always be bands out there willing to undo the knots of definitions so mercilessly used to tie them down by playing punk versions of "Amazing Grace."

AUSU This Month



Meet Your New Council

The AUSU Council and staff have added and updated their bio pages. If you're curious about who these nine people are, you can go to our [council page](#) to find out more, or meet our Councillors in the AUSU chat room at the times announced on the front page of the AUSU website.

Also, on May 26, at 6:00 p.m. MST, the new AUSU Council will be having their first council meeting open to public attendance. See the people you elected in action. Contact ausu@ausu.org or phone 1-800-788-9041, ext 3413 for details on how you can attend.

New Addition to Council Family

The VP Finance and Administration, Sarah Kertcher, was not able to participate in the most recent AUSU executive meeting, but her absence was understandable. The night before, Sarah had a baby boy by the name of Nathan Ross Kertcher. Nathan came into this world at 7 lbs. and 13 oz. AUSU sends its congratulations out to Nathan and his parents, and looks forward to the day when he's an Active Member.



AUSU Merchandise for Sale

Due to a high demand for AUSU merchandise, and delays in setting up our online store, we have put together a quick catalogue with a few items we have in stock now.

You can download the catalogue in PDF from the link on our home page, or go to <http://www.ausu.org/services/store.php> to see the catalogue online. Shipping costs will be calculated per order and we'll let you know by phone or email.

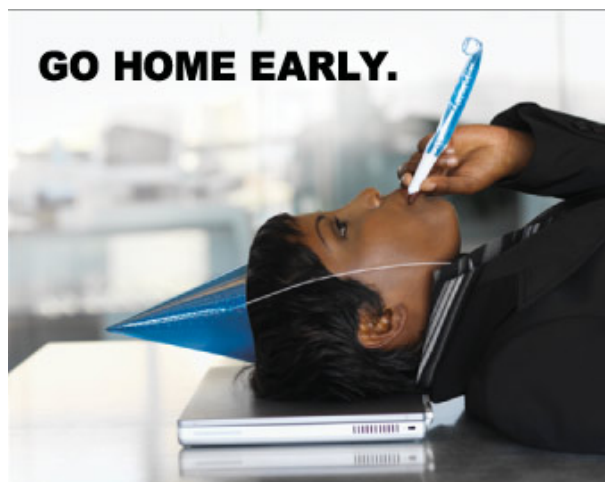
We are only accepting credit card orders at this time, unless you are able to visit our Edmonton office. We are in the process of selecting more product of good quality and use for our members, and some of these should start to be available soon. Suggestions as to other products are welcome.

AUSU Lock Loan Program

If you take exams at the Calgary or Edmonton campus, you can participate in our Lock Loan Program. Under this program, you can borrow a lock to secure your stuff while you take your exam, then return it at no cost and with no deposit. If you're not in Calgary or Edmonton, or would like to purchase a lock to keep, we are keeping the price close to our cost in the spirit of this program. However, to do this means we rely on you to return the borrowed locks, and to make sure the combination is reset to 0-0-0 when you do.

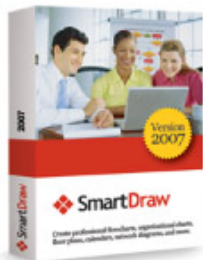
Employment Site Nearly Ready

Big news! AUSU has nearly completed the final testing of the new employment site developed in coordination with the Personnel Department. This site will be available to all of our members and their family or friends, and will help them to find employers looking for their skills.



Create professional-looking flowcharts, timelines, graphs, and more, in minutes, all by yourself. Then go spend some quality time with your family.

Free for AUSU members. Visit www.ausu.org



SmartDraw

Smart Draw – Benefit for AUSU members

AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our website.

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

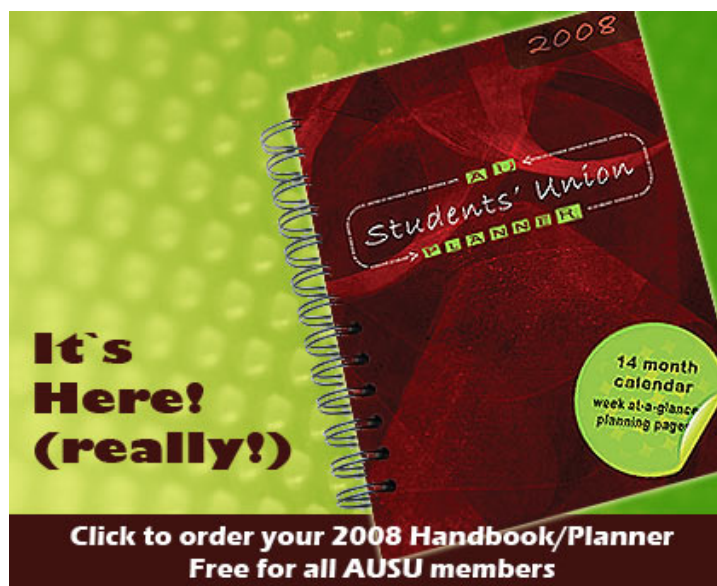
For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email. Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however.

Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

AUSU Handbook/Planner 2008 in stock!

The 2008 AUSU planner is still in stock. We've added a few enhancements this year, including cheat sheets for common citation styles, a clip-in page-marker ruler, and a funky fridge magnet to remind you to get your weekly dose of *The Voice*.

As always, we're excited to know what you think of the planner.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Medical-marijuana user challenges smoking laws

An Ontario man who has a prescription to use medical marijuana has launched a lawsuit challenging the province's smoking laws, claiming that restrictions on where he can light up violate his human rights.

Russell Barth, an amateur comedian, has been diagnosed with several disorders, including asthma, fibromyalgia, and post-traumatic stress syndrome. In 2003, Health Canada issued him a licence to use medical marijuana for his ailments.

Barth lodged the complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission on behalf of himself and his wife (who also uses medical marijuana) after he was barred from smoking marijuana on the patio of an Ottawa comedy club.

According to the [CBC](#), the patio is a designated smoking area, but Ontario regulations ban the use of medicinal marijuana on bar and restaurant patios. Barth's position is that the rules "violate the human rights of people with disabilities."

"If I am having a muscle spasm, if I'm having nausea or anxiety or an asthma attack, I need to have my medicine immediately," Barth told reporters. "We're not asking for special rights; we're just asking for the right to use cannabis where people use tobacco."

In part, Barth's complaint is that, as an amateur comedian, the smoking regulations infringe on his "ability to perform on stage and to seek possible future employment," because he needs cannabis every two to three hours to treat his symptoms.

While medical marijuana users may have an exemption to use the substance in a private setting, the Ontario Liquor Licence Act specifically prohibits business owners from allowing it.

If Barth wins his case, it will be interesting to see how legislators handle the new problems it may create. For example, if second-hand marijuana smoke affects nearby customers, will they be liable for driving under the influence of a controlled substance? And if accidents result, can the medical-marijuana user be held accountable as a contributing party?

In Foreign News: Spanish fishermen join European protests against fuel costs

Soaring fuel prices have sparked widespread protests in Europe, and commercial fishermen in Spain have joined in, launching a strike on May 30.

Along with workers in Britain, France, and Italy, Spanish fishermen are protesting record-high oil prices that have seen diesel fuel rise "by 300 per cent in the past five years while fish prices have remained static or declined." In the past year, even France has seen prices double, in spite of the fact that fuel for fishing boats is subsidized there.

Since Spain is the largest fish producer in Europe, their actions could bring this important food industry to a halt. As well, Spanish consumers are expected to increase pressure on their government to resolve the issue: more seafood is eaten in Spain than in most European countries.

As Spanish fishermen began their strike, thousands of protestors marched on Madrid's Agriculture Ministry, handing out 20 tonnes of fresh fish to spectators.

In Britain and France, protests have included truck drivers blocking roads and gathering at political rallies, while farmers have also staged protests.

In spite of the growing outcry against fuel prices, the European Commission has refused to offer subsidies to fishing fleets, and the problem is expected to get worse. Prices are holding steady at near-record highs despite a slight decrease in recent days, and analysts are "predicting steady increases over the months to come."

While consumers everywhere are feeling the pinch of increased fuel prices, both at the pump and in stores, Europeans have an extra burden. Road taxes on fuel are much higher there than in Canada or the U.S., pushing the average cost of gas in Britain to around \$2.20 a litre.

CLICK ON THIS – Oddball

Lonita Fraser

I'm a big fan of the odd, the strange, the bizarre, the weird, the kooky, the mad, and the just plain fun. Here, for your amusement, bemusement, and beguilement are odd things and others who can lead you to the strange things man dreams up and makes.

WebUrbanist

A master of finding what is cool, new, old, and most assuredly odd, near daily collections are presented on all manner of topics from hotel rooms to monuments to narrow houses to freaky animal life.

Fiendish Curiosities

These very clever and talented folks produce "leading edge sideshow gaffs and abnormalities for exhibit in modern day odditoriums, touring grimoires, or nestled comfortably in one's own bizarre cabinet of genetic anomalies." Perhaps, if you've been a little late with that Mother's Day gift . . .

Living Tables

If you're the sort who likes to eat alone, this may not be for you; but if you just happen to be alone for some reason not of personal preference, then you don't actually have to stay that way—your table will talk back to you, in character too!

Top Ten Craziest Science Stuff You Didn't Know

. . . and in some cases may not want to know. Remember before you look, you can't unknow something.

Seven Strange Lucky Charms

Vulture heads? I think I'll stick with crossing my toes.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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