

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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Old Hollywood

No business like
show business

Maghreb Voices

Family secrets

The Longest Way

Walking across China



*Plus: AU Tech, From Where I Sit,
Sister Aurora, Dear Barb, and much more...*

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**The Voice
Magazine**

www.voicemagazine.org

1213, 10011 109th
Street NW
Edmonton AB
T5J 3S8

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email
voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher
AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief
Tamra Ross

Managing Editor
Sandra Livingston

Regular Contributors
Hazel Anaka
John Buhler
Christina M. Frey
Barbara Godin
Jason Sullivan
Bethany Tynes
Wanda Waterman St.
Louis

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE (OLD) MOVIES

Christina M. Frey



No Business Like Show Business

A “Hollywood ending” seems synonymous with the world of film. Everything works out, all parties are satisfied, and the credits roll with a happily ever after. But it’s truly “just a movie.” Ironically, many old movies about Hollywood—particularly the more enduring ones—don’t share a similar optimism. Themes of jealousy, self-promotion, denial, and despair suggest a less sunny outlook than the common image of Hollywood brings forth. In this week’s instalment, we’ll look at several old films that deal with some of the trials and tribulations of old-time “stars”—actors, directors, producers, and film bosses—for some perspective on how the show business industry viewed itself.

1954’s *A Star is Born* encompasses all sides of the Hollywood experience: wide-eyed wonder at the newness of Hollywood and the excitement of seeing one’s star rising are juxtaposed with the emptiness of a failing career, alcoholism, and despair. Judy Garland plays Esther, a young singer who’s discovered by unpredictable actor Norman Maine. As Esther’s fame grows, the two fall in love and marry. But life

takes a downward turn; Norman is released from his studio contract because his alcoholism and unpredictable ways become too big a risk for producers, and his downward spiral begins as Esther’s star rises.

Trivia: In a stroke of irony, in the few years prior to *A Star is Born*, Judy Garland’s career had been experiencing a decline similar to that of Norman. In the late 1940s, she had been dropped from several pictures due to unreliability and drug and alcohol addiction, culminating in the suspension of her MGM contract in 1950. *A Star is Born* was seen as a comeback vehicle for Garland (and its showcasing of her voice and dance talent certainly suggests this).

A more macabre take on decaying careers is 1950’s film noir *Sunset Boulevard*. Out-of-work screenwriter Joe Gillis, fleeing his creditors, seeks shelter at an apparently abandoned mansion on Sunset Blvd. But it’s no empty house: it’s inhabited by tragically disturbed former silent screen star Norma Desmond. Desmond ensnares Gillis first into her plan to make a “comeback” in Hollywood, then into a romantic tragedy that most screenwriters could only dream of writing.

Trivia: In an attempt to make the story more realistic, the directors turned to real life for character casting. Norma Desmond is played by Gloria Swanson, a film star from the silent era. Her butler, Max, is played by an actor who directed Swanson in the 1920s. Legendary director Cecil B. DeMille (director of *The Ten Commandments*) plays himself, as does Hollywood gossip columnist Hedda Hopper.

In a similar vein, *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane* (1962), which I reviewed earlier in the [Horror Movies](#) series last October, deals with an aging actress unable to come to terms with her long-decayed career. A former vaudeville star and later somewhat successful screen actress, Jane Hudson is consumed by jealousy for the career of her now-infirm sister; denial of her non-existent popularity; and desperation to be loved once more. Creepier than *Sunset Boulevard*, this film is more horror than noir, but seems to carry a similar warning to grow old gracefully.

Trivia: Joan Crawford, the widow of Pepsi-Cola's former CEO and a member of its board of directors, managed to get Pepsi product placement into most of her films. *Baby Jane* is no exception; in the movie's final scenes, a beachgoer attempts to collect the deposit on empty Pepsi cans.

1950's *All About Eve* deals with stage rather than film actors, but its intriguing story similarly underlines the fleeting nature of stardom. Margo Channing is a Broadway star at the height of her career when she meets a young fan, Eve. Impressed by the girl's devotion and skill, she eventually hires her as an assistant. But Eve has a hidden agenda: through blackmail, sabotage, and trickery, she works to build her own career at the expense of Channing's. Eve triumphs, indeed, but the film's ironic final scenes suggest that in show business, career stability can never be taken for granted.

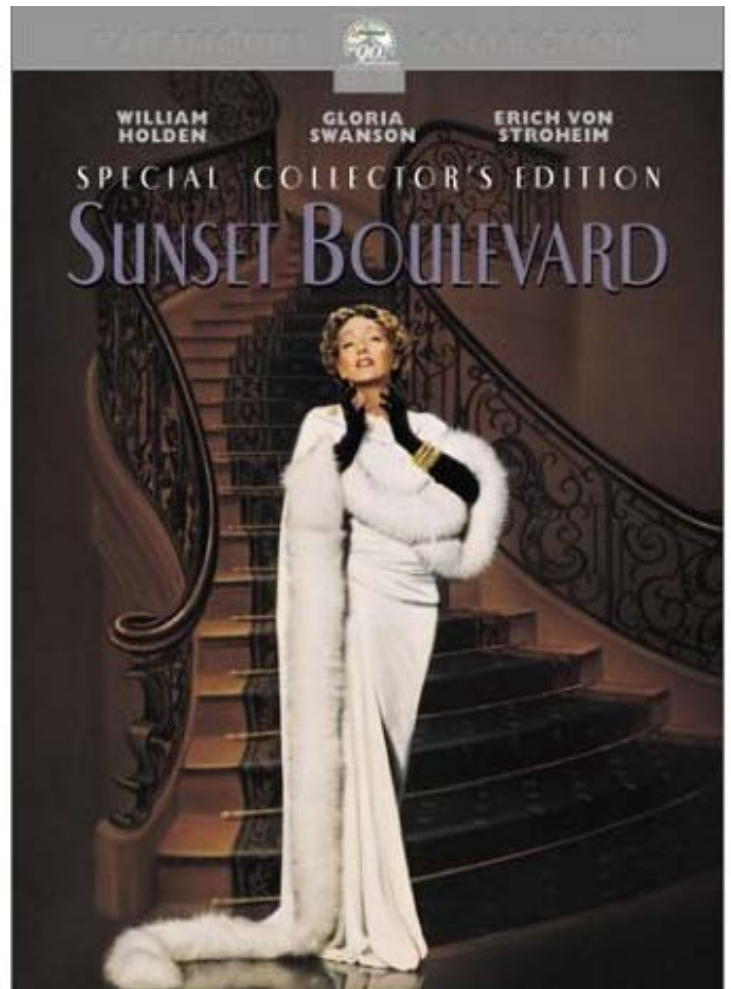
Trivia: Marilyn Monroe plays Miss Caswell; it's one of her earliest significant film roles, and its success helped launch her later career.

It's the director who's the manipulator in 1952's

The Bad and the Beautiful. When an actress, director, and screenwriter receive a call from a former colleague, Jonathan Shields, they react negatively. But on the insistence of Shields's producer, they gather together and begin to reminisce on just why Shields's name fills them with such anger. As a young director under the shadow of his unpopular, recently deceased filmmaker father, Shields was determined to make it in Hollywood no matter what the cost. Among the human cost: the hearts and spirits of the three stars sitting in his producer's office. Yet, in a twist of irony, his thoughtless actions eventually resulted in wildly successful careers for all three. At the end of the recollections, the stars' feelings haven't changed; yet, ever eager for another break, they betray curiosity over his latest offer.

Trivia: Lana Turner, who plays actress Georgia Lorrison, got her big break in a manner worthy of a Hollywood happily-ever-after. As a high school student, she skipped class one day; while stopping for a soft drink in a café, she was noticed by the publisher of one of the big film industry trade publications, and referred to a talent agency. She starred in her first film several months later.

Not all old showbiz movies were disheartening, though. *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) is an upbeat musical that treats the ups and downs of stardom with a lighter hand. Don Lockwood and Lina Lamont are successful



silent film actors whose attempt to make the difficult transition to talking pictures is played out against a romantic triangle on the studio lot. Lina wants Don, but he's less interested in the shallow leading lady than in a talented chorus girl, Kathy. Tensions run high when Lockwood and Lamont begin filming their first talking picture. Lina's voice records terribly, and it's suggested that Kathy's voice be dubbed in. However, Lina, fiercely jealous of Kathy's rising talent and Don's interest in her, attempts to sabotage both. She convinces studio executives to require Kathy to continue voicing her lines without film credit, but she's no match for the quick thinking of Lockwood, Kathy, and their friends.

Trivia: The "rainwater" during the movie's famous "Singin' in the Rain" song and dance routine was actually mixed with a small amount of milk so that it would film more easily. During the filming of the scene, Gene Kelly (who plays actor Lockwood) was ill with a 103-degree fever, but still filmed the routine in a single take.

Another musical, *The Band Wagon* (1953), follows a down-on-his-luck film star who signs on to a Broadway play helmed by a somewhat fanatical director. The play had potential, but the director's macabre bent and overindulgence of special effects create a flop. The actors, screenwriters, and stagehands decide to continue the tour, but remake the show as a lighthearted comedy. Singing, dance numbers, and romantic tension follow the players on their journey through showmaking.



Trivia: In the "Triplets" dance number, the three actors were actually dancing on their knees. Nanette Fabray, who played Lily, later said it was so painful that she had to take pain pills to get through the routine.

Finally, Mel Brooks's comedy *The Producers* (1968) brings the show business story to hilarious heights. Max Bialystock, a shady producer, and his accountant Bloom hit upon a get-rich-quick scheme: they'll oversell shares in a future Broadway play, produce a complete flop, and flee with the cash before the auditors catch up. They have the perfect script, written by a crazed former Nazi who's playing tribute to Hitler. It's a guaranteed failure. Imagine the schemers' horror when the show is seen as a comical farce—and brings in record profits!

Trivia: Initially, Dustin Hoffman was cast as the playwright. However, the night before shooting began, he left production in order to film *The Graduate* (which, ironically, co-starred Mel Brooks's wife, Anne Bancroft).

Next month, in honour of Valentine's Day, we'll look at something a little more happily-ever-after: sweeping romantic dramas and hilarious romantic comedies. In the meantime, enjoy these tales of old Hollywood and Broadway show people. Happy watching!

When she's not watching old movies, Christina M. Frey can be found blogging about kids and media at [Woozles and Heffalumps](#).

AU TECH

Bethany Tynes



Twitter

John O'Brien has served as Manager, Media Relations for AU for the past two years. O'Brien is currently investigating the potential uses AU could make of the social networking site Twitter.

"Twitter is a social networking or microblogging site that allows users to post short messages of up to 140 characters, including links to URLs," O'Brien explains. "The posts are called tweets and users can sign up to 'follow' other users. Permission is required to follow someone, and receive their tweets. In the same way, other users must have your permission to follow you. Students can explore the site at twitter.com. It's a

pretty simple process to sign up and get started."

Twitter proclaims itself as "without a doubt the best way to share and discover what is happening right now," and invites its users to "communicate and stay connected through the exchange of short status messages." The site was founded in 2006, and has rapidly gained a multitude of users, including a large number of celebrities: cyclist Lance Armstrong, rapper Soulja Boy, comedian John Cleese, actress Demi Moore, California "Governator" Arnold Schwarzenegger, and President Barack Obama can all now be followed on Twitter.

How, then, did AU come to recognize Twitter as a tool of which it might make use? According to O'Brien, Twitter was first recommended to him as a viable institutional tool "by a colleague who works at another university in the same capacity." O'Brien joined 11 months ago as "mediaau."

"Right now, I'm using it to develop further awareness of AU's projects and media releases," O'Brien says of Twitter. "It's a good, and free, supplement to the traditional media release/website route."

O'Brien's most recent tweet links to an article in the *Strathmore Standard* about the inspiring story of AU student Derek Kuntz, who is pursuing a four-year degree in business (and a passion for hockey!) in spite of an incurable disease, IgA Nephropathy.

And students following AU on Twitter can expect more sports-related tweets to come. "Next month, and through February, a colleague and I plan to use it to update followers on the status of several Olympic athletes who are also AU students," O'Brien says.

"Twitter is just one tool of many we use to share the university's message," O'Brien adds. "There's also Facebook, YouTube, iTunes University, and a raft of other social media tools we're exploring."

To get involved, students can "go to twitter.com and explore the site, and see if it's right for them. They can then request to follow mediaau for updates about the university."

EDITORIAL

Sandra Livingston



Boys, Toys, and Cougars

When actress Courteney Cox signed on for the new show *Cougar Town*, she probably didn't foresee that her latest career move would be part of an ongoing social debate.

TV ratings aside, the argument over the word "cougar" is heating up. On the one hand are those who use it to lay claim to the image of a strong, confident woman, middle-aged and happily using the power and experience of her years to pursue younger men.

On the other hand are those who cringe at the term, calling it sexist, demeaning, and just one more way of reducing women to sexual stereotypes. Newspapers and blogs are commenting on it, and [Air New Zealand](#) has pulled an ad over the controversy.

Whether you care about Courteney Cox's career or not, it's important that this debate is even happening. It's

another sign in a major social shift that, with apologies to the early women's rights activists, didn't truly gain popular traction until the '60s: that sexual stereotyping is demeaning, limits opportunities, and is never, ever acceptable.

So why does no one seem to object to another popular but degrading label: toyboy? As in a younger man used for sex and then casually discarded, or as a distracting plaything in an ongoing affair. Either way, it's part of a dangerous double standard.

The word crops up everywhere from reputable news site to dating services, with one even offering "Toyboy Speed Dating." [The Telegraph](#) has used it liberally to describe the teenaged lover of Irish politician Iris Robinson, and even as the headline of another [article](#). The *Globe and Mail's* TV columnist tossed it into a [review](#), and one blogger's recent post describes the perfect age for a "toyboy du jour - an accessory at the very zeitgeist of dating fashion."

Substitute the word "toygirl" in the same way and you can bet there'd be a backlash. Sure, there are some who'll likely say that it's payback. That women have been subjugated by men for millennia and it's about time they got a taste of that same medicine: to hold no value except for sex, and to have their opportunities in life limited to what they can achieve with physical attraction.

The problem is that, whether you ignore the trend or consider it fair turnaround, it simply perpetuates the notion that sexual stereotypes are an acceptable part of the social fabric. It doesn't eradicate the problem. It just reinforces those social norms in a different direction.

So in all the commotion about cougars, the two camps can argue it out all they want. Whether it's an empowering term or an insult is a moot point. Because as long as we can casually hang sexual stereotypes on *any* group without raising an eyebrow, we're all fair game.

AU OPTIONS

Bethany Tynes



NUTR 331 - Nutrition for Health

NUTR 331: Nutrition for Health is a senior-level science course that “introduces nutritional concepts and covers the most common nutrition-related conditions.” Nutrition for Health is the best of AU’s NUTR classes for “a student who only plans to take one nutrition course,” as well as for students who may have a more “limited science background.”

“NUTR 331 was written around 1994,” says course coordinator Dr. Norman Temple. “Since then it has been regularly revised and improved. I feel it is an excellent course.”

“Compared with nutrition courses at other universities, NUTR 331 is unusual in devoting much attention to diseases of lifestyle, especially obesity, cancer and heart disease,” Dr. Temple notes. “At the same time it provides much practical information that people can use for themselves and family. In addition, many of the students who take the course are nurses and for them it offers much useful information that can be passed to patients.”

Mehrin Pirmohamed-Rajabali is a Bachelor of Commerce student who plans to pursue designation as a chartered accountant. Pirmohamed-Rajabali says that NUTR 331 “seemed like an interesting course for an elective;” one which would provide her with “important practical knowledge concerning [her] everyday health and nutrition.”

“I was also interested in learning more about the different food groups to be able to provide nutritious food for my kids,” says Pirmohamed-Rajabali, “so they form good eating habits from their childhood.”

“I enjoyed learning and trying to adjust my eating habits as per the recommendations of the Canada food guide. It was definitely a challenge in the beginning,” Pirmohamed-Rajabali says, “but by the end it was fun to look for food to eat based on the food groups and I realized it wasn’t very hard to keep in check if you set your mind to eating proper. I wasn’t so fond of an exercise in which I had to keep track of all my calories. However, I must admit it made [me] self-aware of my shortfalls in my diet.”

According to Pirmohamed-Rajabali, the textbook for NUTR 331 is “excellent and very clear,” giving detailed background information about health and disease. “I would have to say it would be the most practical text I have read in university,” she says. “The study guide was good and covered all the important details very clearly. The CD that accompanied the book is an excellent learning tool and very comprehensive.”

Dr. Temple cautions, though, that “many non-science students take the course believing that nutrition is simple. While the course is certainly a better choice for non-science students than courses such as physics or chemistry, it is not as simple as many seem to expect. Students must therefore expect to have to work hard,” Dr. Temple warns. “In particular there is much memorization of details of vitamins and minerals.”

Pirmohamed-Rajabali, however, found the course both “informative and interesting . . . if you work diligently.” She says that she would “definitely recommend this course for all individuals regardless of their educational forte!”

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Chris Rehage

Chris Rehage is a German university student who began to walk across China in 2007. After completing a third of his journey he decided to return home and finish his degree. Rehage chronicled this walk, and his reasons for ending it, in his website [The Longest Way](#), which holds a fascinating array of incredible photos from the trek. Plugging Chris's name into YouTube will bring up a host of mesmerizing videos from the journey (be sure to check out the dances he performs every thousand kilometres).

Roots

I grew up in Bad Nenndorf, a small town in the north of Germany. There are 10 thousand inhabitants, and everybody kind of knows what the others are doing. I have a little sister and a little brother. A cat and a dog are there to brighten up our days.

Inspired

I have to admit, I like Charles Bukowski's prose. Not so much the profanity and the drinking as his use of language and his humorous outlook on life. Besides that, there is a German journalist who died in the '80s, Michael Holzach. He published a book that recounts his walk through Germany without a penny to his name. Very interesting.

How Walking Changed Me

I know now that I must get my priorities straight. Very important.

Belief

I'm Roman Catholic. I like going to church when there is no service going on, just to sit there with the big guy.

Preparing

I prepared for a year. Basically, it's all about getting as smart as possible regarding the places and the people on the way. I talked to German embassies all over the world, stumbled through map archives in several libraries, and read books, books, and more books. Then I got equipped. Then I walked.

Why?

I had to do this for some reason. Still wondering what exactly that reason was.



Teacher Xie

I met him after roughly 3,000 kilometres on the road, an old Chinese guy pulling a huge wooden cart down the desert road. I asked him how long he'd been on the road. "Since 1982," he said. "Chris, you make the rules, you are free to change them," he said to me. "Be sure of what it is you really want!" We stay in touch. He owns a cell phone and loves to send out text messages.



Enthralling Experiences

There were two moments of great happiness. The first one was next to a small pond in a desert village in Western China. I was surrounded by a horde of young kids who were bombarding me with questions. It was all laughter and hellos, and they made me a ring of twigs and flowers and put it in my hair. I remember thinking, *Damn, I want to have a family!*

The second one involved a total absence of people. I had climbed over a fence in the mountains and entered an untouched valley full of blossoming peach trees. I took off all my clothes, lay down, and let the birds sing me a song.

Uncle Shen and Huihui were two guys who helped me get myself straightened out during the last step of my trip. So many kind faces on the roadside. So many kids and old people. I feel deeply touched by all the warmth that they gave me.

When the walk ended I felt I had lost something. I didn't know exactly what it was, but I was sure that I had to try to find something new.



AU's People and Places

Linda McCloud-Bondoc

Linda McCloud-Bondoc is the Academic Coordinator in charge of overseeing AU's Write Site. As such, she supervises "the entire range of Write Site services, which includes writing assessments, writing coaching, and selection and updating of online resources." She is also "responsible for collaborating with other departments at AU to develop appropriate writing resources and standards for use by students and staff."

McCloud-Bondoc was hired as the part-time Write Site Coordinator in September of 2005, and maintained the position when it became full-time in 2007. Though she "found out about the Coordinator's position from an external, online ad," her "first contact with AU was as a student, many years ago." While working on her undergraduate degree in communications, McCloud-Bondoc "took an AU course in first year Economics and really enjoyed the independent study structure that AU offered."

"I work from a home office in Calgary, and I make an effort to keep regular, 9-5 office hours," McCloud-Bondoc says. "It's a habit I got into when I was doing my master's thesis, and it works for me because I find I'm more focused and productive when I keep good boundaries between my work and personal life."

"I usually start my day by checking my calendar for appointments or urgent projects that need work that day," McCloud-Bondoc explains. "If I have a RealTime coaching session, for example, I'll meet with the student online via Elluminate, or I might attend a conference call with staff from EMD or SAS about a writing resource that's in development. Then, once urgent matters are attended to, I might do a number of coaching sessions by email, or do some editing of a resource that is in production."

"Because the Write Site does writing assessments for all MAIS students as part of their admission process, there might also be MAIS ELA assessments to mark and return. And, of course there are always the routine emails and inquiries and occasional crises to respond to. Every day is a bit different, and I really enjoy that," she says.

When asked about her favourite aspects of the position, McCloud-Bondoc says that two things stand out. "One is meeting with students in RealTime coaching sessions because this gives me an opportunity to connect person-to-person with the students. It also gives students an opportunity to ask questions—on the spot—



about their writing. This, to me, is the ideal way to learn writing: interacting with a coach over a real writing assignment," McCloud-Bondoc says.

"My other favourite part is working with other AU departments on systems and resources for the Write Site. This gives me a chance to brainstorm and problem-solve with some very talented people from across the university," she explains. "There's nothing like the satisfaction of completing a collaboration like the Write Site Dropbox, which allows students to submit their assignments online, or the video paragraph resource, which helps students learn how to construct effective paragraphs."

McCloud-Bondoc believes that the Write Site can provide great benefits to both students and their tutors. "The coaching and online services" provided by the Write Site "relieve faculty of some of the burden of teaching remedial writing while trying to teach course content. For example, if tutors or coordinators find that a student is hampered by poor writing skills, they can refer her to the Write Site for assessment, coaching or self-help resources. This leaves faculty with more time to focus on teaching the ideas and concepts in the course material."

Students, meanwhile, are given "a place to take their writing where they can learn by doing. In a non-threatening, low-stakes setting, coaches act as both 'friendly readers' and teachers, helping students to identify their unique patterns of writing errors, and thus teaching them to be better editors of their own work. Over a period of time, students at all levels of writing development learn to become better and more independent writers."

"Most university teachers would agree that writing is an integral part of learning at university, so if students improve their writing skills, they will also enhance their ability to analyze and synthesize complex material," McCloud-Bondoc notes. "In other words, they will also improve their ability to learn."

And AU is constantly striving to improve the services offered by the Write Site. In the next year, McCloud-Bondoc says, "students can look forward to some new writing resources . . . as well as a new, more user-friendly Write Site, courtesy of the talented folks at the SAS Web Development Unit. We're also working to make services more accessible to a greater number of students."

Outside of work, McCloud-Bondoc tries "to do something that takes [her] as far away from a computer as possible!" To this end, she does a lot of cycle touring. "Last year, I did a weekend charity ride that took us through 200 kms of some of Alberta's most beautiful foothills country. The back of a bike is absolutely the best way to really see the countryside!"

"I also enjoy photography and music, and at my ripe old age, I've just started to realize a lifelong dream to play the piano," she says. "And when I start to miss my computer too much, I do a bit of creative writing just to remind myself what it feels like to be a student of writing."

"As far as professional development goes, I'm toying with the idea of returning to school for my doctorate in Education," says McCloud-Bondoc, "even though my husband covers his ears with his hands and makes 'nyah, nyah' sounds whenever I talk about it. Plans are still fluid at this point, but being the lifelong-learning devotee that I am, and working at AU, where I am surrounded by fellow devotees, I figure it's only a matter of time. (Sorry, honey!)"

"Most university teachers would agree that writing is an integral part of learning at university, so if students improve their writing skills, they will also enhance their ability to analyze and synthesize complex material. In other words, they will also improve their ability to learn."



Book: Boualem Sansal, *The German Mujahid*

Publisher: Europa Editions

Publication date: 2009

Translated by Frank Wynne from the French title *Le Village de l'Allemand ou Le Journal des Frères Schiller*

Reconciling the Irreconcilable

"Solemn judgement gives the crimes back their full horror and restores to the guilty some part of their lost humanity. Silence perpetuates a crime, gives it new life, closes the door on justice and truth and throws open the door to forgetfulness, to the possibility that it might happen again."

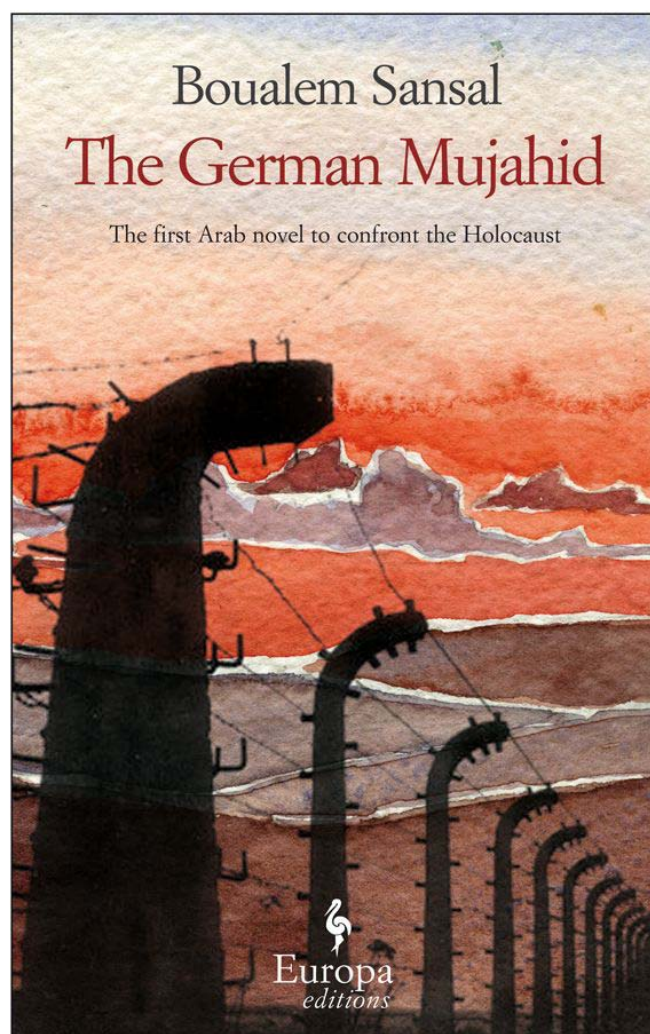
Boualem Sansal, from *The German Mujahid*

The brothers Rachel (Rashid) and Malrich (Malek) were born in a small Algerian village to an Algerian mother and a man who, unknown to his loved ones until his death, is a fugitive Nazi war criminal.

This book was banned in Algeria for its critical portrayal of the country, I'm guessing because it places Muslim jihadists on the same ethical tier as German Nazis.

The boys have been sent to live in a poor Muslim neighbourhood in Paris. The elder, Rachel, becomes an overachieving model citizen while Malrich is a consummate loser, idling his time away with his ne'er-do-well pals and showing no love for authority.

Rachel's discovery of his father's secret comes in the wake of his parents' violent murder at the hands of unnamed assassins, their throats cut at home in their rural Algerian hamlet during an attack that killed more than three dozen other villagers. The horror of the murder, coupled with the shocking new knowledge of his father's past, sends Rachel on a downward spiral that drives him to the village of his birth, then to Germany to retrace his father's steps through the concentration camps, and from there along the furtive escape route out of Europe to avoid war crime prosecution.



Rachel is exhausting all his resources trying to make sense of the mystery of the Holocaust and his father's role in it. In the end he concludes that there is no sense in it and neither is there any remedy, nothing that can ever make it right. For some this kind of admission can be a first step in healing. Not for Rachel.

As Rachel undertakes his personal exploration of Nazism Malrich focuses his attention on the destructive effects of jihadists both in his Paris ghetto and in his Algerian homeland. Malrich's brief stint as a young fundamentalist zealot shows just how easy it is to get sucked into the Islamist maelstrom.

The story unwinds in the form of entries from the diaries of the two brothers. Malrich's entries are so much more pleasant to read than those of the self-immolating Rachel, who cannot rest in this new (to him) universe in which crimes remain hidden and go unpunished. Malrich's forthright anger and good sense appear simpleminded in comparison with Rachel's obsessive probing but thankfully lessen the emotional weight of this dark tome.

"You can't commit atrocities with enlightened people, you need hatred, blindness, and a knee-jerk xenophobia."

It has often been said that one of the greatest contributors to the demise of relationships is deceit, that is, *successful* deceit, deceit that leads you to love and respect someone who is not the person you believe he is. It is the fact that Rachel's father managed to keep his past hidden that is particularly destructive to Rachel's psychological balance.

There is a particularly disturbing passage in which Rachel details some of the activities to which, under the cloak of a strictly enforced secrecy, the best scientific minds of Germany devoted themselves during the

Third Reich. The degree of cold-blooded calculation required for some of these enterprises is terrifying. Years were spent, for example, developing a gas that smelled sweet enough not to frighten the doomed into stampeding but not so sweet as to entice the guards into thinking they were safe from its deadly effect.

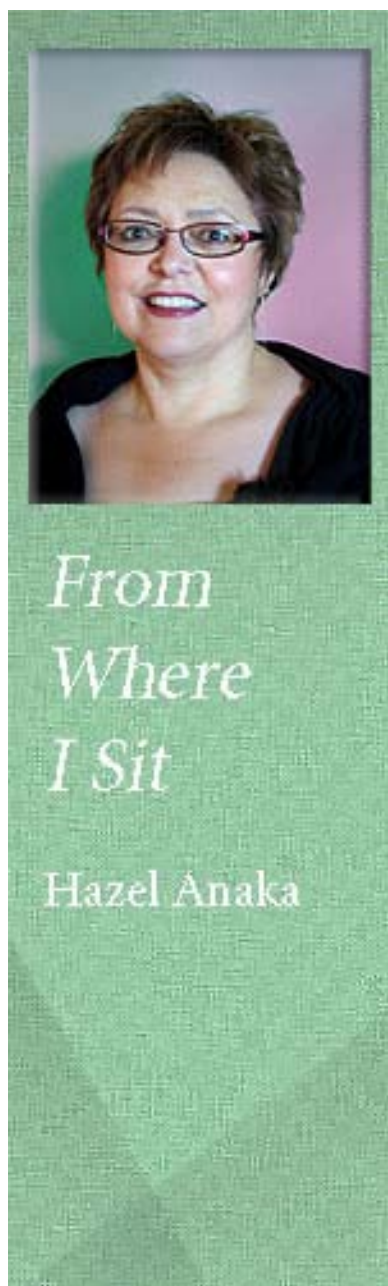
The two brothers are so horror-struck by immediate circumstances and by the legacy of the recent past that their natural urges appear to take a back seat, with the exception of Rachel's brief rhapsody on the attractions of Egyptian women, whose eyes "glitter with the most ancient mystery in all the world." This one brief mention of beauty and sensuality does much to enlighten the reader as to what both Nazis and jihadists have stolen from the world.

This book is a brilliant exegesis of the social sickness of the 20th century. At the end of page 88 is a passage that could be the definitive portrait of postmodern despair: "I am drowning in a nightmare of horror, I have no raft to cling to. I am alone."

Sansal does not spell out the conditions for future peace, but the conditions for extremism are manifest:

"You can't commit atrocities with enlightened people, you need hatred, blindness, and a knee-jerk xenophobia."

Maghreb Voices celebrates the art and culture of the people of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, in northern Africa. This column features profiles of artists, musicians, and writers who are 1) living within a Maghreb country, 2) originally from the Maghreb and are now using the culture of their homeland as inspiration in their art, and 3) come from outside the Maghreb but have based their art largely on the cultures of the Maghreb. Because French is the most common European language spoken in much of the region, many interviews will appear here in French. If you discover any books, compact disks, or films which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the above criteria, please drop a line to bard@voicemagazine.org. If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.



From a Molehill to a Mountain

I'm mad as hell and not going to take it anymore.

Have you had a teeny-weeny customer complaint mushroom into a *bloody big deal* because no one had the inkling or authority to make it right? Many corporations have escalation processes to deal with complaints that have grown from molehill to mountain in size.

I know this first-hand through a maddening series of events beginning last fall. I will not name the specific financial institution because I've gotten resolution. I tell my story to encourage others to persevere and play the escalation game until you too are satisfied.

My October credit card statement showed a charge for almost \$87 with the descriptor "security adjustment." It was the only charge so I noticed it immediately. Tip: check all invoices from wherever because mistakes happen more often than they should. On October 29 I made my first call to the company. Six more calls over two months would follow. I was assured the charge was an internal one and a mistake, and would be corrected. Like a happy, but ultimately naive, clam I assumed the matter was closed. Not.

When my November statement appeared with no credit and \$1.48 in interest I saw red. I called again and was on hold for 12 minutes before I even got to talk to anyone. Do you have any idea how many times in 12 minutes I heard the recording about how "all of our *specialists* are currently helping other customers, please hold and the next available *specialist* will be with you shortly?"

In addition to being ticked off I'm now concerned about negative impact on my credit score for supposed "non-payment." Thirty minutes in, I was told by Dana in fraud that she'd call me back the next day to assure me there was no mark against my score. Still waiting for that call and from two other people.

In total, 12 specialists heard my story and did not or could not fix it. I lost track of the amount of time I spent on hold or telling and retelling my story. On December 29 I lost it. I refused to answer any more security questions—I'd just been transferred from one person to another within their own damn organization—if the first person had deemed I was really me . . . aaarrghh. I asked for the manager's name and address. She tried giving me the assistant manager's info. Voices (mine) were raised; phones (mine) were slammed down.

Because of some pretty detailed notes—who, what, when and even some verbatim notes of comments made—I was able to write a compelling letter to the manager. I asked for two things: his personal assurance that my credit score was unchanged because of this mess, and enough reward points to get the sour taste out of my mouth and compensate me for the hours spent on this matter. I also reminded him that it costs six times as much to attract a new customer as hang onto an old one and that on average a disgruntled

customer will tell 10 people. I mentioned my long history as a customer. I may also have mentioned the consumer advocates on two local TV stations.

Long story short, on January 8 I got a call from an assistant VP of fraud apologizing, giving me the assurance and points I wanted, and his direct line. I have since gotten a letter and brochure from a third party, the Customer Advocate's Office, outlining the six steps of the escalation process.

The moral of the story is: you can fight the big guys and win. So hang in there, document names, dates, and what was said because giving up is not an option, from where I sit.

CLICK OF THE WRIST – Fashion Sense

What better way to lose the winter blahs than to peek at something bright—like, say, colourful spring clothes? The only thing is, you're not likely to see any of these designs in your neighbourhood. That's because they're made of everything from chocolate (yum) to human hair (yuck). And you thought harem pants were a debatable fashion choice.

Chocolate Fashion

On the down side, you wouldn't want to wear these chocolate outfits on a hot day. On the plus side, you'd never have to worry about satisfying a sudden chocolate craving. The chocolate-rose handbag featured here is gorgeous; just make sure you don't have sweaty palms.

Melissa Plastic Shoes

These plastic fashion statements are courtesy of a pairing between the Brazilian shoe brand Melissa and designers like Vivienne Westwood and J. Maskrey. If the thought of wearing plastic shoes conjures up images of those ballet flats at the dollar store, think again.

Newspaper Outfits

Even if you're not a fan of *Project Runway*, this slideshow offers a look at some incredible creations. The assignment was to create an outfit out of paper, and these designers . . . well, ran with it. The winner was a trench coat made of newspaper, complete with fake fur collar.

Money Dress

It's already gone down as Hollywood legend that Australian designer Lizzie Gardiner wore this American Express-card dress while accepting an Oscar in 1995. But she's not the only one. This article includes a link to Paris Hilton's money dress, as well as a \$275,000 dress made of Australian gold coins.

Hair Dress

Yes, this dress is made entirely of human hair. It was created by a Croatian company and consists of just over 50 metres of hair (click on the photo for a slightly closer view). It's not the only garment made of human hair, though; others were on display in 2008 at the London College of Fashion awards.


Sister Aurora

There's a rainbow dancing in the sky tonight, and I think I'm gonna go outside . . .

#25




Well?
Didja
tell
'im
off?



No, I just hung up on him.
Can you believe I actually
feel GUILTY about that?!



You
know
what?



We're actually
safer without
guys like that
"protecting" us!



*Dear
Barb*

Barbara Godin

Sister-in-Law's Demands are Crowding Marriage

Dear Barb,

I hope you can help me with my problem. My sister-in-law is driving me crazy. Steve and I have been married for over 20 years. Steve's father died when Steve was quite young. Therefore his mother and older sister raised him. His sister never married, but ended up taking care of the mother until her death.

Steve's mother and sister have always been a big part of our lives, but things changed drastically a couple of years ago when the mother passed away. Now Steve's sister calls or comes over every day. These are not brief visits and when she calls she talks to Steve for hours, asking him questions about every aspect of our life. I've tried to talk to Steve about the fact that I don't want his sister knowing everything about us. He doesn't understand, but instead gets angry and says that I don't like his sister. It's not that I don't like her, but I feel like there are three of us in our marriage. I don't mind him having a relationship with his sister, but this is just too much. What can I do!

Patty

Hi, Patty. In-laws can be a pain, as you obviously know, but they are a part of our lives that we can't avoid.

You are in a delicate situation, as is your husband, who most likely is feeling sandwiched between the two women in his life. He may feel more of an obligation to his sister than most brothers do because she was the one that raised him and took care of his mother, ultimately allowing him to have a life of his own.

It appears as though your sister-in-law does not have much of a life. Perhaps you and your husband could encourage her to become involved in activities where she would meet other people. I imagine your husband is exhausted from having to deal with his sister on the phone or at your home for extended periods, consequently not leaving him with much time for you.

Unfortunately, I really don't think you will be able to resolve this without outside assistance. Your husband feels you don't want him to have a relationship with his sister, but you state this is not the case. I believe you just want to be a priority, which you should be as his wife. Moreover, I believe your husband is trying his best to make everybody happy and keep the peace, but he is obviously not able to achieve this.

I would recommend that you discuss this situation with your family doctor, who will be able to refer you to a professional counsellor. I feel confident you will be able to establish some boundaries and work this situation out to everyone's satisfaction. Best of luck, Patty.

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

AUSU UPDATE



New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners

The new AUSU Handbook/Planners are in the final stages of creation, and should be available within the next couple of months. We had great response on it being full colour, so we'll be doing that once more. Also, numerous suggestions for improvements have been heard and we're fitting in what we can while still keeping the book at a convenient, compact size.

Watch the AUSU front page for the pre-order form, which should be up in early December!

SmartDraw Program Renewal

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

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

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

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

Think AUSU for Christmas

If you haven't already, take a look at our [merchandise catalogue](#) on the front page. Show your AUSU colors on your tree with one of our glass ornaments, and the hoodies and baby jumpers are great gifts for those important people who are supporting your pursuit of your degree.

We also have a selection of other items, such as *Voice* mugs and USB hubs, when you want to show where you get your student-focused news from.

Lock Loan Program Cancellation

Not everything is good news. And unfortunately, due to continued loss of loaner locks that was well beyond our expectations, AUSU has determined that it simply cannot continue to loan locks out to students at the Edmonton and Calgary Exam Centres. However, the locks are still available for purchase, and their popularity attests to their use and convenience. Used locks are being sold for \$2, new ones for \$4. Contact ausu@ausu.org for details.

The locks themselves are small and allow you to set your own three-digit combination, good not only for lockers at exam centres but also for the gym or anywhere that lets you use your own lock to guard your stuff.

AUSU Council Down to Eight

AUSU will be starting the New Year with only eight council members. Heather Fraser was removed from Council as a result of repeated absence from Council meetings. It is always a hard decision for Council when we have to remove someone the members have elected, but without full participation it gets more difficult for Council to move forward. Council does hope, however, that this gives her more time for her many other endeavours, and wishes her the best.

Election Policy Changes

AUSU has made some adjustments to the timeline of the elections. Last year we had a number of complaints that the election period was just too long. People lost interest between when it started and when the voting period rolled around. The new policy shortens the timelines for nomination and campaigning considerably, although we have left intact the four-day voting period to be sure that all members have an opportunity to make their voices heard. Full details on the changes will be released on the AUSU website shortly, and Council has set the date of this upcoming election to March 7, 2010. Voting will be until March 11, 2010, with more details as to how you can participate to be available shortly on the AUSU website.

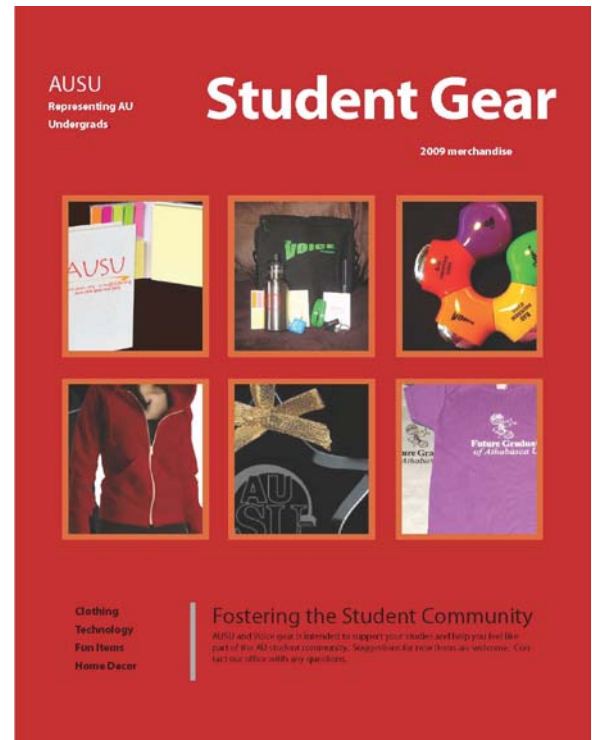
AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union

By far the most common complaint we hear from members is that some tutors take far too long to respond and that there is too little communication between certain tutors and students. With more studies emerging that show the likelihood of students completing a distance-based course can be directly related to the amount of contact they have with their instructor, AUSU views these complaints as particularly grievous. To attempt to address this, AUSU is seeking a meeting with the tutors' union to try to discuss some ways that the Students' Union and Tutors' Union can work together to ensure that both tutors and students get the support they need to make sure students get the contact they need to get them through their courses.

AUSU Thanks Minister Horner—With Odd Results

AUSU took the opportunity earlier last month to write a letter to Alberta Advanced Education Minister Doug Horner to thank him for holding firm to the regulated limits on undergraduate tuition, even though the government is under increasing budgetary pressure. Unfortunately, shortly after the letter was sent, Minister Horner announced that they were considering changing the regulation to allow significant increases to tuition beyond the regulated amounts.

Editor's note: In response to public concern on this issue, Minister Horner has clarified in interviews that only tuition for certain programs would be open to review and possible increase.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Homeowner urges tax fight against ATV noise

A group of Nova Scotia homeowners won a tax fight against ATVs last year, but their case may not have set a precedent for others.

In 2009, Bob Haagensen was one of six property owners who argued that noisy ATVs were enough of a nuisance to reduce their property values. They successfully appealed against “an increase to their assessments, and thus a rise in their property taxes,” as the [CBC](#) reports.

For other homeowners affected by excessive ATV noise, Haagensen is hoping “a flood of appeals” will convince City Hall to either enforce existing noise bylaws or ban the ATVs from municipal trails.

“Their policy is causing people’s property values to drop,” Haagensen told reporters. “And to go along with that, you’re going to have reduced revenue from your property taxes.”

However, other homeowners may not find the same relief. The company responsible for Nova Scotia property assessments,

Property Value Services Corporation, claims “there’s no proof that ATV use has any effect on property values.”

They’re looking closely at the issue, and aren’t convinced there’s any merit to last year’s successful claims. As a company spokesperson told reporters, “maybe we need to start defending these values a little more rigorously because we now feel we have evidence to say that the market value is correct.”

In Foreign News: Coca-Cola strikes deal with small fruit farmers

More than 50,000 small fruit farmers in Kenya and Uganda are poised to become suppliers to industry giant Coca-Cola. According to [Afrol News](#), the partnership will allow the farmers to “increase their productivity and double their incomes by 2014.” Other organizations involved in the deal include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the non-profit TechnoServe.

The Gates Foundation has provided a \$7.5 million grant toward the four-year, US\$11.5 million partnership. The deal will see the farmers, who grow mangoes and passion fruit, become part of Coca-Cola’s supply chain “for the first time.” The farmers’ crops will be used in fruit juices that are produced and sold locally. TechnoServe will help provide training to increase production and improve quality.

The model for this agreement is designed to be easily transferable to other areas. Muhtar Kent, Chairman and CEO of The Coca-Cola Company, told reporters, “This partnership is the type of innovative approach needed to foster economic empowerment across the globe and we are proud to be a part of this effort in East Africa.”

TechnoServe has already built several similar partnerships in Africa, with a focus on sustainable, environmental farming practices as well as maintaining social standards. The farmers involved in existing projects produce crops such as coffee, cocoa, and bananas.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

1213, 10011 109th Street NW, Edmonton, AB T5J 3S8 -- Ph: 800.788.9041 ext. 2905 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

Publisher Athabasca University Students' Union
Editor-In-Chief Tamra Ross
Managing Editor Sandra Livingston

Regular Columnists Hazel Anaka, John Buhler, Christina M. Frey, Barbara Godin,
Jason Sullivan, Bethany Tynes, Wanda Waterman St. Louis

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