

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 18 Issue 14
April 9, 2010

Health Matters

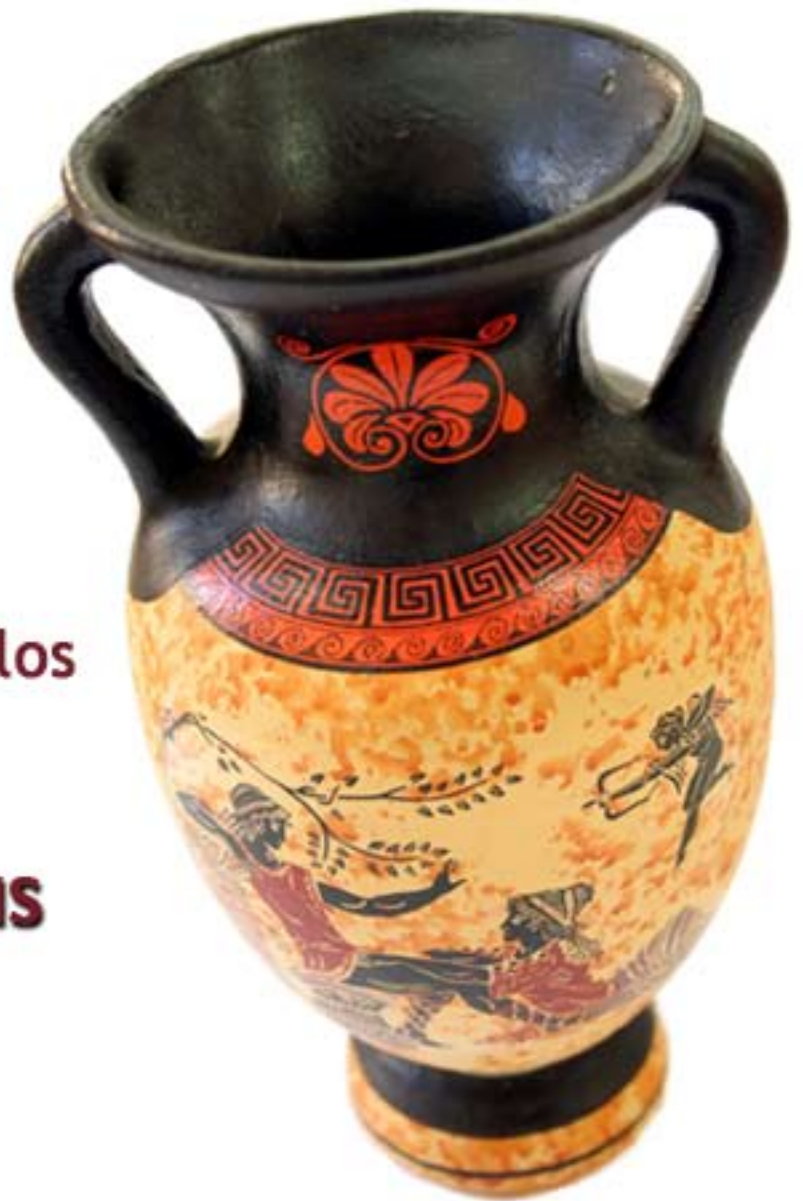
Goji berries

Inner Worlds

Christos Stassinopoulos

Around eCampus

Dr. Dianne Conrad



Plus:

*AU Options, The Mindful Bard,
From Where I Sit, and much more ...*

CONTENTS

WELCOME TO THE VOICE PDF

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

Features

Health Matters: The Tale of the Goji Berry Superfood.....3

Articles

In Conversation With: Christos Stassinopoulos, Part I.....5

AU Options: Joining a Club7

Columns

Dear Barb8

The Mindful Bard.....9

From Where I Sit 11

Sister Aurora..... 12

Around eCampus 13

AUSU Update 15

News and Events

Did You Know?: New Look for AU Library Site 10

Click of the Wrist 14

International News Desk 17

From the Readers

Letters to the Editor2

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

The Voice is published
every Friday in HTML
and PDF format

To subscribe for weekly
email reminders as
each issue is posted,
see the 'subscribe' link
on *The Voice* front
page

The Voice does not
share its subscriber list
with anyone

Special thanks to
Athabasca University's
The Insider for its
frequent contributions

© 2010 by *The Voice*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



Re: "AU Profiles: DeAnne Csada" by Christina M. Frey, v18 i12 (2010-03-26)

Dear Editor,

I want to commend you for including the article about my god-daughter, DeAnne Csada, in your magazine.

The article truly represents the goal-orientation that DeAnne has had throughout her childhood and adult life. She enthusiastically takes on life's challenges and is committed to multi-tasking, while utilizing her outstanding organizational skills. She was able to balance being a great home-maker, wife, and mother of four youngsters, part-time employee, and university student all at the same time! This is quite an accomplishment, and I am excited that you recognized her efforts in this way.

I have long been a proponent of Athabasca University, since a lifelong friend of mine, Dr. Dominique Abrioux, was its president. Over the years, I referred many young people to the distance education programs at AU, as I felt strongly that it met a critical niche to educate adults at each individual's pace and within personalized timeframes. Being a school administrator and educator myself, I felt that the advantages offered through your diversified programs were ones that met the new realities of education for the twenty-first century.

I offer my heartiest congratulations to DeAnne and her family, and to Athabasca University, for ensuring that she and so many others can attain their educational dreams through your excellent programs!

Sincerely,

Shirley Gaura

HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza



The Tale of the Goji Berry Superfood

They've been advertised on TV. They've been written about in magazines. They've been talked about over coffee. They've been stockpiled on health food store shelves. They are goji berries.

A Little History

What are these strange little red raisin look-alikes? Also referred to as the wolfberry, goji berries (*Lycium barbarum*) are the fruit of a perennial shrub that grows natively in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Tibet. (Interestingly enough, researchers have also found small areas of goji surviving closer to home, in Arizona). Growing up to five metres in height, the goji plant is a hardy one, thriving along floodplains and ecologically used in erosion prevention.

Possibly the largest harvests of goji berries are reaped from Ningxia, China; this area boasts several million acres of goji plants available for harvest. In fact, since ancient times, an annual festival is celebrated that corresponds to the harvest date of the goji berry crop. Goji berries are used in Chinese cooking, especially as an adjunct to soups or stews.

So, why the name goji? Although the origin of this name is unknown, it's been suggested that it is a Western take on the Mandarin name *gǒuqǐ*, used to refer to the plant.

Fact or Fiction?

The claims about the goji berry first began in the West when we discovered its high antioxidant capacity. (Goji berries have been used as antioxidants in the East for thousands of years). An antioxidant is a compound that has the ability to neutralize free radicals. More simply put, an antioxidant counters cellular damage and negative cellular effects that occur in our bodies on a day-to-day, minute-by-minute basis by the action of just living. Although a certain quantity of free radicals produced by our bodies is considered normal, factors like pollution, poor diet, and stressors can significantly increase free radical production, and hence the use of an antioxidant helps bring back a health balance. Often, fruit-based antioxidants are brightly coloured (think of purplish-red grapes and orangey-red goji berries).

It's been proposed that goji berries are the most antioxidant-rich fruits currently found on the earth. Although this hasn't been quantified scientifically, it *is* safe to conclude that, looking at the nutritional profile of these two-inch-long berries, they are exceptionally good for you!

Goji berries contain 18 amino acids (amino acids are the building blocks of proteins), including all eight of the essential amino acids (leucine, isoleucine, methionine, lysine, phenylalanine, threonine, tryptophan, and valine). Essential amino acids are ones that the body cannot synthesize on its own, so it's necessary ("essential"!) for us to ingest them.

Goji berries also contain a wide variety of trace minerals (e.g., boron), and carotenoids (hence the berries' orange-infused colour). Goji berries are also significantly higher in vitamin C content than a traditional

orange, and contain several B vitamins, including thiamine (B1), riboflavin (B2), and pyridoxine (B6). The B vitamins are cofactors in a host of cellular processes.

Several analyses of goji berries have revealed that they contain certain key chemical compounds. For instance, the berries are source of betaine. Betaine is what gives goji berries their sweetness (it's also found in sugar beets, although in higher quantity). Chemically, betaine is a methyl donor, meaning that it is used in many of the body's chemical reactions and also aids in liver function, muscle growth, and cellular replication.

Another compound in goji berries is physalin, a steroid-ring compound whose functions are still largely unknown. However, physalins are known to possess antimicrobial effects, and suggestions have been made for studying physalin concentrations and their positive effects on leukemia.

The dried berries taste like a cross between a raisin and a cranberry, with a twist.

Goji berries also contain solavetivone, which is antimicrobial like physalins; it is also thought to be antifungal. Additionally, the berries are also a minor source of beta-sitosterols, plant-derived phytoestrogens that are largely used in treating benign prostate hypertrophy (BPH).

How Do I . . . ?

Goji berries come in a variety of forms. As with most fruits, the fresh, raw berry is the most ideal, but logistically it's difficult to access these fresh berries in North America. One option is to consume a small amount (i.e., one to two tablespoons) of goji juice daily, since the juice is made from the fresh berries. The juice should be a whole-fruit juice; in other words, the entire fruit should be used to make the juice, and these fruits should *not* be strained out at the end. (A comparison would be a carton of orange juice (oranges pulverized then strained) contrasted with whole oranges crushed in your blender (no straining)).

The whole-fruit juice ensures that the health potential of the berries is still accurate. The juice is a vivid orange in colour and tastes similar to sweetened carrot juice. If you're not keen on consuming the juice on its own, you can mix it into a smoothie or with other juice (e.g., orange) to dilute the taste.

In addition to the juice, consuming dried goji berries is also an option. The dried berries taste like a cross between a raisin and a cranberry, with a twist. I often add a handful of berries to a homemade nut-and-raisin trail mix, or you could sprinkle two to three tablespoons onto your breakfast cereal or into a salad for an exciting option. If you're really ambitious, you could even try the fermented goji berry beer that's popular in China. Imagine cooling off on a summer afternoon with goji beer! (Unfortunately, I haven't actually seen this product yet sold where I live in Canada.)

Conclusion

Although the media hype surrounding the health claims of the goji berry may be cause for suspicion of these claims' validity, it does appear that the berry possesses a modest array of health benefits. If you happen to pass by your natural health food store, drop by to take a look and get acquainted in person with the goji berry!

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

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

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Christos Stassinopoulos, Part I

Christos Stassinopoulos is a Greek tenor opera singer and actor with a distinguished career in theatre, television, radio, and film. The Walt Disney Company selected him as the voice of Aladdin in the Greek dubbed version of the animated movie and its sequels and as the dubbed voices for Tweedledum and Tweedledee in Alice in Wonderland. He is also the Greek voice of Aladdin in the television series.

Selections from his latest work, Four Centuries of Songs, (which unfortunately is not available for distribution at the moment) can be heard on his website, [MySpace page](#), and [YouTube channel](#). The songs were selected from a number of cultural epochs from the Renaissance until today and are stunning examples of an astonishing natural gift honed by an artistic sensibility that is at once earthy and refined. Recently Christos took the time to talk with Wanda Waterman St. Louis about moving musical experiences and singing as an expression of his inner world.

Sweet Trouble

I grew up in Athens, Greece. I had a happy childhood, with loving, caring parents. My mother said I started singing just after I'd started talking. I was a "sweet trouble" for them with all that premature passion for music and theatre. Naturally they were not positive when in my very early childhood I first expressed my desire to become a singer and an actor. I was allowed to practice acting and singing only as hobbies during my school years.

Being always an excellent pupil, they were expecting me to join a faculty, which I probably would have done as I was very interested in ancient Greek language, literature, and archaeology. But when I was only 14 years old I passed an audition before a Special Committee of the Ministry of Culture and was granted permission to enter a Drama School as an "exceptionally talented" student without having yet finished high school.

This happened in great secrecy from my parents. They discovered it quite soon and I was forced to leave the Drama School until I was 18, when I returned and concluded my studies.

Expressing an Inner World

Singing hasn't changed me; it has rather completed me. It's never been a tool for winning recognition through a career but rather reflects my implicit need, my absolute way of expressing my inner world. But my music studies have taught me how important discipline and total devotion are for anyone who decides to enter this field; by means of them I became a "soldier."

My only official recording is *The Nightingale of the Emperor*, an opera for children by [Lena Platonos](#), based on H. C. Andersen's fairy tale (LYRA Records).

Mesmerizing Musical Experiences

It was a moving experience when I attended a recital by the legendary German mezzo-soprano Christa Ludwig at the Roman Odeon of Herod Atticus underneath the Acropolis, where she magnificently performed *Winterreise* by Franz Schubert, and also when I attended a concert by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau in Konserthuset in Stockholm, where he performed Gustav Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra.

I've been deeply moved whenever I've attended my beloved friend Markella Hatziano's numerous operatic performances and concerts here in Athens, especially when I had the chance to see her performing in Berlin (as Amneris in Verdi's *Aida* in Staatsoper Unter den Linden under Zubin Mehta) and London (as Didon in Berlioz's *Les Troyens* at the Barbican with the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Colin Davis). It's an indescribable feeling to be part of a very enthusiastic audience in a foreign country and to watch someone you love being glorified on stage. It's even stronger than being on stage yourself.

Four Centuries of Songs

Four Centuries of Songs is a "living" project, meaning that it has been the hub of my individual concerts in recent years. The idea is to combine under the same umbrella a selection of the different sorts of classical and non-classical songs I truly love to sing. Together with my permanent collaborator, the pianist Maria Neofytidou, we've been presenting a variety of music *tesseras* belonging to a spell of four centuries, from the Renaissance up to our times, forming a multicoloured mosaic that might attract an audience consisting of either initiates or accidental listeners with no special knowledge or liking of such music.

My favourite songs are any songs speaking to my heart and appealing to my aesthetics. It might be an Elizabethan lute song, a baroque madrigal, an oratorio aria, an aria *antica*, a *lied* by Schubert or Schumann, a Neapolitan *canzonetta*, a song by Gershwin, Bernstein, Lloyd Webber, Jerome Kern, or Sergio Endrigo, or a musical pearl by my favourite contemporary Greek composer Manos Hadjidakis.

Continued next week . . .

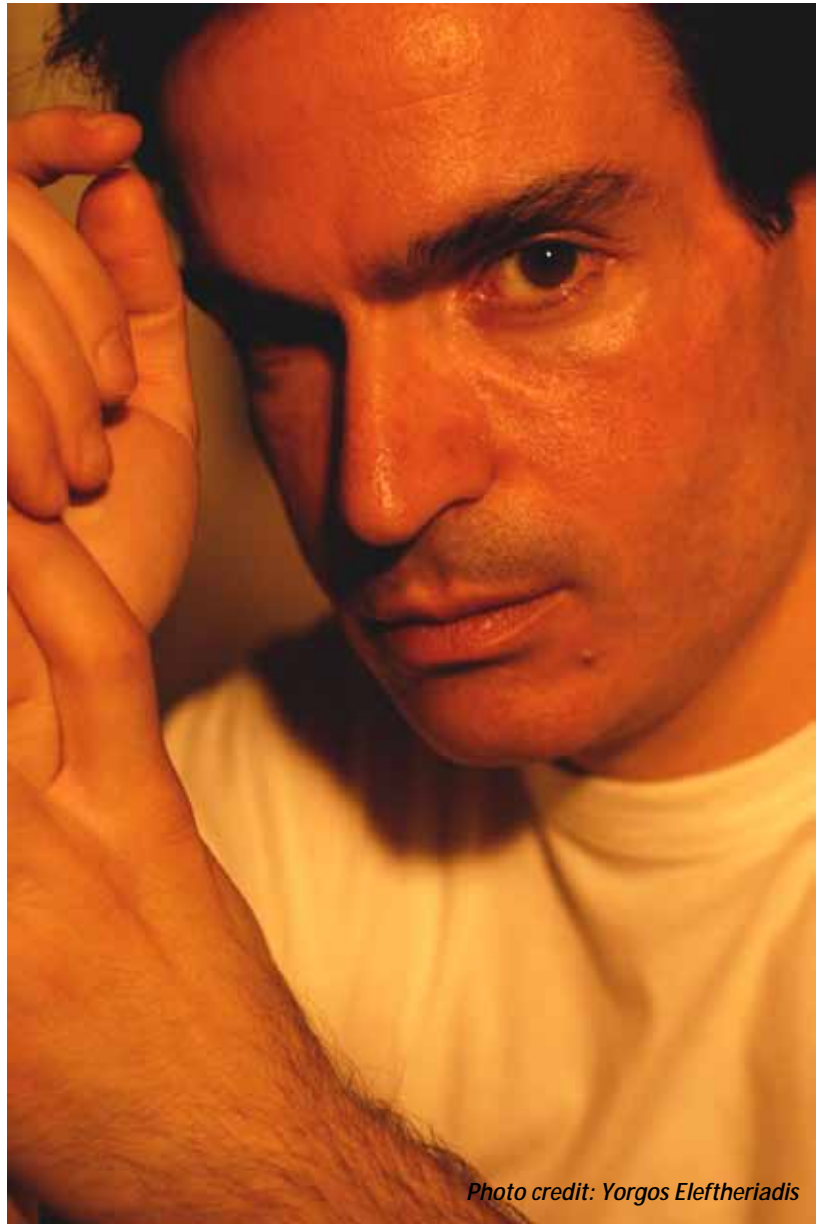


Photo credit: Yorgos Eleftheriadis

AU OPTIONS

Bethany Tynes



Joining a Club

One of the most common struggles faced by distance learners everywhere is isolation: the feeling that you're alone in your studies. Often, it's nice just to have someone in a similar program or situation to talk to, and that's where student clubs can help.

According to the AUSU website, "outside of education, one of the most important aspects of university life is the people you meet, the sharing of ideas, and the friends you make," and this can be even more important for the distance education student than the traditional university student,

"because they lack the context of physical connections with others."

To help AU students form these important connections with others, there exist a number of student clubs and societies ranging from those "of an academic flavour," such as the AU Psychology Students' Society or AU Business Students' Association, to those "concentrating on religion, sport, ethnicity, culture, or anything else that you desire," such as the AU Student Moms Club or AU Gay Students' Society.

These clubs are led by interested student volunteers, and are provided by the students' union with a free website, email address, and private forum. Club chairs are also permitted to apply to AUSU for additional funding for special projects. And while a current list of existing student clubs can be found on the AUSU website, students who don't find a group that appeals to them are always able to contact the union about forming a new club.

According to AUSU Policy 7.05 - Student Clubs, students interested in creating a new group "shall contact the executive director with a proposal which shall contain the title of the proposed club, a definition of the club membership, and the subject or special interest area that a club will represent," and if no such club currently exists, the executive director will give the student their blessing to seek additional members. To become an officially sanctioned AUSU club, the student must present a list of the forum usernames of 10 AU students who are interested in joining, as well as the name of one other student willing to serve as a chair of the group.

Andrea Buck is an AU student who has been active in the Student Moms Club since 2004. "I found out about the SMC shortly after I joined AUSU.org online," she says. "I noticed it was one of the few listed clubs at that time on the forum, so I clicked on it and sent an email to join!"

One thing that frustrates Buck about clubs in general is "the lack of participation in certain clubs," explaining that some are often "very slow. People start them with enthusiasm but there is never any discussion on them, and I find it hard to keep them going."

Buck says that she does enjoy, however, "being able to seek parenting advice from others [in the SMC forums], as well as the feeling of being connected to my school and my peers, since distance learning can be somewhat isolating at times . . . I really enjoy all the ladies in the SMC; they are so supportive and wonderful. I am grateful to be a part of the group! It really does feel like a close-knit set of friends when we get chatting, and I feel blessed to be a part of it!"



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Compromise Shouldn't Be One-Sided

Dear Barb:

I have been dating my boyfriend for almost a year. We get along great for the most part. Most of the problems that we do have revolve around him wanting to do things with his male friends. He watches a lot of sports, which I don't mind too much, but I don't like all the time he spends golfing and playing pool, etc. We have arguments and one of us walks out.

I have always been the one to do the reconciling. After I convince him we can work things out he agrees to reconcile, although nothing ever changes. I want a person I can build a life with and I feel like he is building relationships with his buddies rather than me. My problem is that I really love him and want the relationship to work out so I keep hoping things will improve after we reconcile, but it never does. Help! I need some advice!

Donna

Hi, Donna. People don't change. They can change some of their behaviours, but only if they are motivated to. Since you have always been the one doing the reconciling, I think you are sending the message that you're accepting his behaviour in spite of what your words are telling him.

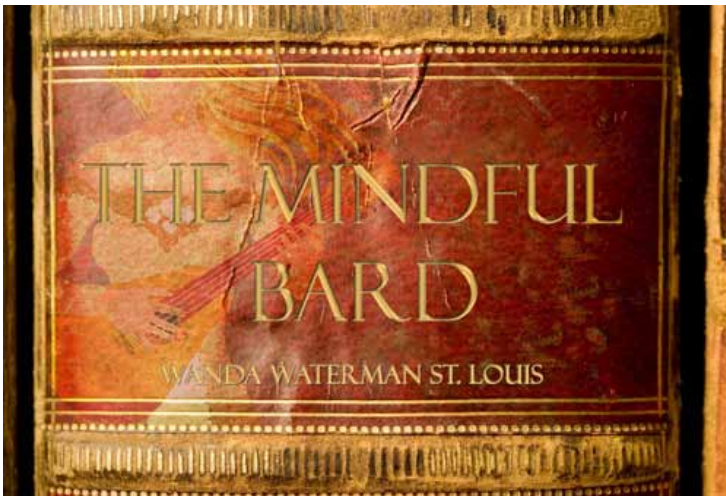
Perhaps after these disagreements or breakups, you need to let things go and see if your boyfriend makes a move to reconcile. If he does he will probably come up with a compromise. Remember the old saying, "If you love someone set them free. If they come back it is true love; if they don't, it never was love."

If he doesn't do anything to reconcile, as hard as it is you are going to have to accept the fact that this is who he is and what he likes to do and decide if you want to continue the relationship.

It sounds to me like this is not the kind of relationship you want. Some men prefer to fulfill their companionship needs with other men rather than with women. For these types of men, women fulfill different roles in their lives, one of caretaker and intimate partner for the most part. I think you want a relationship where you and your partner fulfill all areas of each others' lives. Although you should keep in mind that everyone needs to spend some time doing things with other people besides their partner, I guess the important factor here is how to balance this time in order to keep both parties happy.

I hope I was helpful. Good luck, Donna.

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.



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

Book: Muriel Barbery, *Gourmet Rhapsody*

Translated by Alison Anderson from *Une Gourmandise*, 2009

Publisher: Europa Editions

The Sweet, Slow Unveiling of Our Magical, Delectable Planet

"The only word that mattered to me at the time was terroir—but today I know that a terroir exists

only by virtue of one's childhood mythology, and that if we have invented these worlds of tradition rooted deep in the land and identity of a region it is because we want to solidify and objectify the magical bygone years that preceded the horror of becoming an adult."

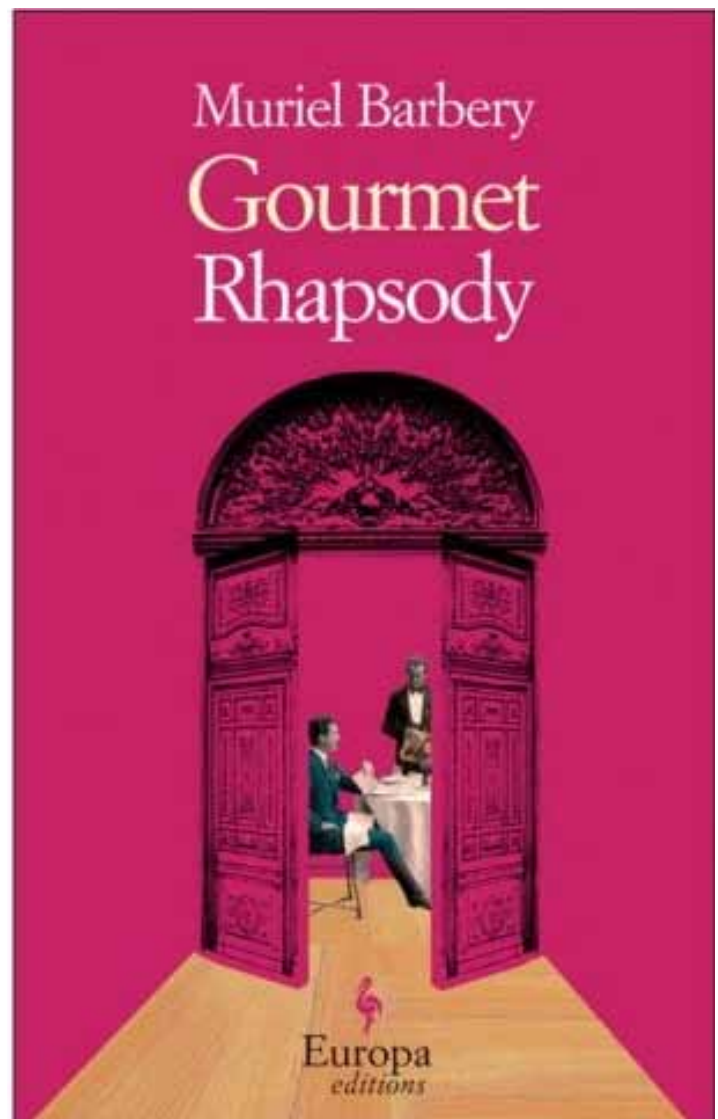
Muriel Barbery, *Gourmet Rhapsody*

A Dalmatian whose furry dappled crown smells of warm brioche and plum jam, a thoroughly splendid luncheon at a farmhouse in the Normandy countryside, the sensual pleasure of basic homemade mayonnaise . . . A series of Proustian memories unfold for internationally lauded food critic Pierre Arthens as he lies dying.

What is the elusive food that Arthens craves on his deathbed? He takes turns reminiscing about his most divine experiences with food as friends, family, and servants describe their own ambivalent feelings toward a man who in spite of the gift of his genius to the world has, like Leonard Cohen's beast with his horn, torn everyone who has reached out to him. His nephew Paul observes that here is a man who has rejected all of the human beings in his life and is now in the process of rejecting all of the food that he ever loved.

If you are a lover of good food you will nearly swoon with delight at the artful descriptions of food tastings in this marvellous little novel. If you aren't a food lover then it's hoped that this book will make you one.

At the end of every brilliant rhapsody on some divine food or drink Arthens, right up until the end,



dismisses every flavour with something like this: *Yes, that was spectacular, but it's not the thing that I am craving now.*

Arthens's food reminiscences, like Shakespeare's Cleopatra, create in himself and in the reader a hunger where most they satisfy. Barbery swaddles these experiences in the most enchanting literary *terroirs*, spectrums of sensibility as lovely and complex and soul-satisfying as the rural French landscape is to a bottle of fine burgundy, a fully rounded sensory experience culminating in the ecstatic gratification of the nostrils and taste buds. In the end all of these experiences point to a deeper reality.

It isn't long before you ask yourself if this is a book about food so much as a book about writing about food, or even about writing in general. The writer is keenly aware of the creative urgency of the attempt to capture fleeting experience in words, knowing that the words at least will outlast the ephemera of feeling, carrying with them a whiff of the essence of a joyful passing moment, and in the end often becoming more beloved than the moment itself.

Pierre asks himself what men live for if not bread. Jesus (quoting Deuteronomy) reportedly repudiated his accuser by saying that man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And thus, in this sidelong reference to an ancient text, Barbery lovingly references her vocation by asking the question that leads us back to words, the *terroir* of experience, the swaddling bands of civilization itself.

Gourmet Rhapsody manifests nine of The Mindful Bard's criteria for books well worth reading: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it confronts existing injustices; 3) it makes me want to be a better artist; 4) it gives me tools which help me be a better artist; 5) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 6) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 7) it is about attainment of the true self; 8) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; and 9) it poses and admirably responds to questions which have a direct bearing on my 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. If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.

DID YOU KNOW?



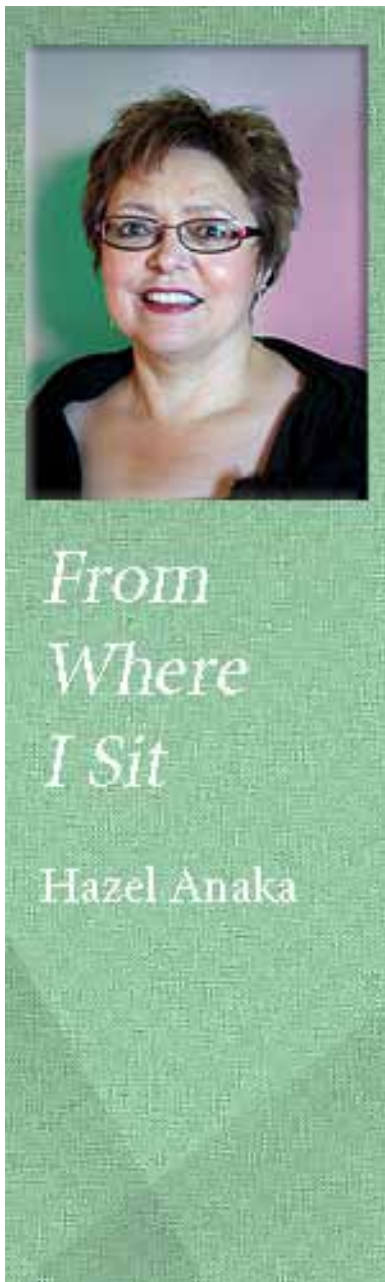
New Look for AU Library Site

The AU library is one of the most popular services with students, and it's about to get even better. On March 15 the library launched a new interface for their online catalogue, and the beta version has been available to users since February.

The fresh new homepage is easy to navigate with links to all the resources you need, including a list of new library materials.

And don't forget to check out the Web 2.0 link, where you'll find things like AirPAC, which lets you search the AU library catalogue from a wireless device; the AU library Facebook group; Zotero, a Firefox extension to help you "collect, manage, and cite your

research sources"; and much more.



Back to the Source

When the rigours of daily life grind you down and the bad news-good news ratio is running about eight to one; when the *losses* column is now in two volumes and the blessings list fits on the back of an envelope (and a small one at that!) it's time to take drastic measures. It's time to go back to basics; to go back to the source. What else is there when nothing makes sense; when the signs don't look promising; when we're talking about health and the ability to earn a living?

Despite news items about the rebounding economy, too many continue to be un- or underemployed. Despite (and indeed because of) the mild winter and negligible snowfall, there is reason for concern if you are a farmer or a gardener or a firefighter. There is *no* soil moisture. Ditches are dry. Sloughs are non-existent. Grass is tinder dry.

What are you supposed to think when you learn a neighbour had *symptoms* in January and is now two surgeries into a fight with stomach cancer for his life? "They got most of it." What is the appropriate thought process when a sister says "they biopsied the tissue and found precancerous cells. Four or five years from now they would have shown up as breast cancer"?

It isn't possible, for me anyway, to not think about the implications for her daughter and for me—that whole wretched familial connection. How do we adjust to the realization that our favourite, energetic, hard-working handy guy with extreme pride in workmanship is sidelined with heart disease and is now pacing his activity around short daily walks? Or when you see the slowdown and deterioration in yourself and one you love?

Today after my walk I got some perspective into these thoughts. I leaned back onto the chaise lounge on our patio and studied the clouds, listened to birdsong, felt the April breeze lift my hair and flush my cheeks. There were no thoughts of the work to come in the flower beds and yard. There was no melancholy. Or particular joy.

There was the silent prayer of gratitude that comes unbidden when surveying God's handiwork. There was the calm knowing that despite what is going on "out there" in the economy and with the collective health of family and friends, there is a cycle and a season and an immutable predictability to life and death. The birds know what to do. The trees and flowers and weeds do too. Oh sure, some of them may be fooled by the faux spring-like conditions and get pummelled by a late snowfall. But they will do their damndest to follow nature's programming despite drought or setbacks or discouragement. There is a lesson for us in that.

Some of the wisdom and insight in Betty Jane Wylie's *New Beginnings: Living Through Loss and Grief* must have seeped into me while I devoured it last week. I feel calmer, more accepting, more well-equipped to deal with life's inevitable losses. Making that connection back to nature, back to the source, is part of the acceptance process, from where I sit.

Sister Aurora

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

#35

I'm not surprised about SHANE acting like a jerk.

I just can't believe a FRIEND would try to rip off my boyfriend! Even a boyfriend I can't stand!

You don't deserve him! I'd know how to treat a guy like that. And I wouldn't let this come between us.

GASP!!

Give me back my phone!



AU's People and Places

Dr. Dianne Conrad

Dr. Dianne Conrad is the Director of AU's Centre for Learning Accreditation (CLA), and is "responsible for all operations of the Centre." The CLA manages "AU's Prior Learning Recognition (PLAR) process in all its entirety," Dr. Conrad says. "That includes day-to-day operations, marketing, budget, staffing, design and delivery, research, and representing CLA interests both internally, within AU, and externally, with the greater communities,

provincial, national and international." Dr. Conrad also sits on "the provincial PLAR stakeholders' committee, as well as representing AU at national conferences concerning PLAR."

"I should explain what PLAR is, because I'll bet a lot of your readers don't know about it," she notes. "PLAR stands for prior learning assessment and recognition, and it's a process that permits learners to use their experiential learning (life learning, on-the-job learning, etc.) into university-level learning for assessment toward their university program of study. Each program sets a maximum number of PLAR-possible credits. CLA mentors help learners through the process."

Students can learn more by visiting the [CLA website](#).

"PLAR is a great deal for mature, conscientious AU learners who want to turn life experience into university credit! It saves huge amounts of money and time," she says. "It's not a cakewalk, but we help you all along the way. The process is also very self-enlightening, since you have to reflect on your past learning. It's well worth a try, or at least read our web site."

Dr. Conrad first came to AU in 2005 to be the Director of CLA. "I was Acting Director for a bit before that, 'acting' at a distance from where I was living at the time, in the Maritimes," she explains. Dr. Conrad also serves as the Director of the Bachelor of General Studies program, a position she has held since 2005.

"I have an office at AU Central in Athabasca and an office in my home in Athabasca. I usually put in a five-day week in the office and also work from home as necessary," she says. "The job is very busy, with a lot of meetings and commitments both within the university and outside of it, and I also travel a lot for work."

"One of the best things about my job is that it's so varied and autonomous," she says, but when asked about an "average" day on the job, Dr. Conrad says it could go something "like this: Arrive at our lovely building in the aspen forest of Athabasca at around 8:30 a.m. and settle in to responding to emails from colleagues and students from around the world. Explain PLAR and how it works to anyone who asks! Help my staff with their questions on how best to advise PLAR learners. Dash out to attend a meeting for one of the many committees I sit on. After lunch, grab a few minutes to work on writing any number of PLAR-related documents—reports, analyses, a piece for publication. Take some phone calls from colleagues at other universities who are wondering how to implement a PLAR system. Respond to output from the provincial PLAR advisory group on how to move forward with an Alberta agenda. Then work on putting together a PowerPoint presentation for an upcoming workshop or conference, either describing what we do at AU or explaining the prior learning process in theory. More emails, more phone calls, more staff consultations, more meetings—and I'm done for the day!"

"I like to 'build' the process—so I enjoy developing tools and procedures to make our system better," says Dr. Conrad. "I enjoy research time, but it's hard to find it in a normal day. (Right now, I am on research leave, working on a federally funded PLAR project.) When I work with students, it's really satisfying to see them 'get' the PLAR process, and understand more about themselves and their learning. And I really like interacting with CLA staff—we're a great bunch and I have lots of fun."

What does she do outside of work? "Nothing. I work all the time. Just kidding, sort of, but my work does take up a lot of my time. I have other work-related interests, and I also teach an online graduate course for an American university. I research and write for publication. When there is spare time, I work outside in my garden in the season. I like to grow lilies. I dabble in poetry. I also enjoy camping, hiking, and kayaking. I am trying to find the time to become more involved in local community activities, like restoring our historically designated old train station. I also travel a lot for pleasure, and my children live elsewhere, so I have to travel to visit them."

In future, Dr. Conrad looks forward to "more work, more travel, more writing. I am trying to arrange to travel the Trans-Mongolian railway, from Moscow to Beijing. I am also trying to write a novel (isn't everybody?) but I have discovered that I'm not that good at writing fiction!"

"I really appreciate the chance to work at AU and do the work we do, at a distance, with learners from all over the world. It's the best job I've ever had, and I hope it's the last one I have!"

CLICK OF THE WRIST – Under the Volcano

Volcanoes have been a source of fear and fascination for millennia. They've spawned books and movies and even tourist adventures. From towering mountains to ocean floors, we take a look this week at the mighty power of volcanoes.

Dining Atop a Volcano - Some people think snagging a spot in an exclusive restaurant is a challenge. But how about dinner atop an active volcano? Iceland's Fimmvorduhals volcano, in the middle of the Eyjafjallajökull glacier, erupted on March 21, and one couple accepted an invitation to dine there—on a meal cooked on the hot lava.

Volcanoes - This *National Geographic* primer takes you on a historical tour of volcanoes, "objects of terror and fascination since the beginning of human time." Today, there are some 550 active volcanoes around the globe, with "500 million people living in their dangerous shadows."

Undersea Volcano - According to this video, much of the ocean floor has been formed by volcanic activity. In fact, 80 per cent of volcanic eruptions take place underwater. This incredible video gives a glimpse of molten lava flowing across the sea floor.

Pompeii - On this site, the Discovery Channel takes you to a summer day in A.D. 79, the final day of Pompeii. In one spot, the idyllic town of Herculaneum, a surge of molten lava and boiling mud "hurled down on the beach area, covering the seven miles to the coast in about four minutes." You'll also find amazing videos of modern-day volcanic eruptions, and a quiz to see if you could have escaped Vesuvius.

Volcano Webcams - There are webcams for traffic and puppies and birds' nests. So why not volcanoes? This clip offers a look at five of the most popular volcano webcams around the world, from Hawaii to Alaska. The clip includes URLs for all the webcams, so you might be lucky enough to see some lava.

AUSU UPDATE



Annual General Meeting – Your Say about Our Way

AUSU will be holding it's annual general meeting on Tuesday, April 6th, at 5:00pm MST by teleconference, free to you from around the globe. There is one planned change to the bylaws as well as the presentation of the annual report that tells you where AUSU is and some of the things that may be in store for the future. The AGM is where AUSU can change its Bylaws, and last year several changes to the Bylaws were brought from the floor. Since our Bylaws define, among other things, who is a member and how much money the *Voice* receives, these are things that definitely concern you. We hope to see you there!

AUSU Election!

As you've probably already seen on our front page, the AUSU Election became an AUSU Acclamation, because only nine eligible members ran for seats. Out of those nine, only eight were accepted by the membership to sit on Council. Those eight are:

- Ashley Seely
- Barb Rielly
- Bethany Tynes
- Joel Benitez
- John Palmer
- Kim Newsome
- Sarah Kertcher
- Toni Fox

They will be taking office officially as of April 14th, so wish them luck and let them know what issues are important to you!

New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners – Arrived!

Finally! People have already started receiving the new planners in the mail, and we're currently shipping them out as fast as the orders come in. Full of useful information about AUSU, writing styles, course grading, great finds online for your studies that you may not have known about, as well as having places to write down your phone numbers, keep track of your assignments, and, oh yeah, a year's worth of calendar to plan out your schedule too. We'll give one free to each AUSU member just for the asking.

Remember, though, we only print a limited number of these each year, so when they're gone, they're gone.

Let 'em Know who Represents for You!

AUSU logo mugs, hoodies, USB keys, and much more are all available for sale from our office. Also, used locks can be purchased at half price! Check out our merchandise catalog on our front page. You should check out our hoodies in particular—made in Canada and 100% bamboo, we're offering them for just barely over our cost, and they're both durable and comfortable.

And if you have new little ones in your family, or know somebody who does, check out our baby onesies. Made by American Apparel, these onesies are high quality and let folks know your kids are growing up to great things as a "Future Graduate of Athabasca U"

AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union – Not really an Update

Some things resist change. We're still waiting for a response from the Tutor's Union as to when we might be able to meet with them to discuss ways that AUSU and the Tutor's Union can work together to ensure that students are getting the contact they need. Unfortunately, they haven't yet replied, so we're stepping up our campaign to get in touch with them. If you want to help, the next time you're talking to your tutor, ask them if they know when the Tutor's Union will meet with AUSU so that the groups can work together on common issues.

Our statistics we've been collecting from the forums and your calls show that issues with tutors – specifically the amount of time taken for marking assignments and exams are your number one concern. Help us help you.

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.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: MP says Canada's top judges must be bilingual

An MP wants all of Canada's top justices to be bilingual, but critics say language shouldn't come ahead of legal competence.

NDP MP Yvon Godin introduced Bill C-232, which the [CBC](#) reports "would make it mandatory for Supreme Court judges to be able to understand both official languages without the assistance of an interpreter."

Godin represents a New Brunswick riding that is almost entirely francophone. As he told reporters, "We want the judges to be able to, when he get appointed to be know both languages, to be able to understand what the other person is saying."

The private member's bill is now in the Senate, and it passed the House of Commons with a 140 to 137 vote. The Liberals, the Bloc Québécois, and an Independent MP supported the bill, but the Conservatives voted against it.

As one critic pointed out, legal competence should be the primary concern, and even organizations like the United Nations use translators. John Major, a Supreme Court of Canada justice for 13 years, told reporters that the bill "misses the point. As we all know, Canada is a country that is governed by the rule of law, and the most essential fact necessary to preserve that is to have the most competent people, regardless of language skills, sit on the Supreme Court."

By focusing on the criteria of language, Major said, the emphasis would be "on linguistics and not on the rights, obligations, duties of the people involved in the process."

In Foreign News: Marriage rates falling in Germany

Germany has long had a low birth rate, and its marriage rates are now in sharp decline as well. According to [The Local](#), the number of men staying single for life is 40 per cent, with the number of single women rising to a third. Those figures are double the rates of 30 years ago.

The marriage rates were tracked by the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB). As one BiB researcher told reporters, "Germans have lost their enthusiasm for marriage." In the former West, only 14 per cent of women and 24 per cent of men remained unmarried for life in 1980. Today, those numbers are 30.5 per cent and 36.2 per cent respectively.

The shift was even more pronounced in the former East German states. Thirty years ago, just 12 percent of men in those states stayed single for life. That rate is up to 41 per cent today. For women, rates over the same period rose from 8 per cent to a current high of 31.8 per cent.

The change doesn't seem to be an aversion to the concept of marriage itself. Instead, one sociologist noted that a lack of job security was making people wary of the long-term responsibilities that come with marriage and parenthood.

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

www.voicemagazine.org

The Voice is published every Friday in html and pdf format

Contact *The Voice* at voice@voicemagazine.org

To receive a weekly email announcing each issue, see the 'subscribe' link on *The Voice* front page. *The Voice* does not share its subscriber list.
Special thanks to Athabasca University's *The Insider* for its contributions