

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 03 2011-01-21

### Fork in the Road

Journeying through time

### Too Toxic

Time for a cleanse?

### Books and Big Biz

Topping the charts



*Plus: Maghreb Voices, The Mindful Bard,  
From Where I Sit, and much more . . .*

# CONTENTS

## WELCOME TO THE VOICE PDF

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

## Features

In Review: Nobody, Somebody, and Us .....3

## Articles

Health Matters: Time for a Detox .....5

Maghreb Voices: Night in Tunisia, Part II.....7

## Columns

From Where I Sit: That's Just Not Nice.....9

The Mindful Bard: *Winter's Bone* ..... 10

Write Stuff: Off the Charts ..... 12

Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan ..... 13

AUSU Update ..... 15

## News and Events

Notice: AUSU General Meeting .....8

Click of the Wrist ..... 11

Did You Know? ..... 13

International News Desk ..... 14

## From the Readers

Letters to the Editor .....2

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

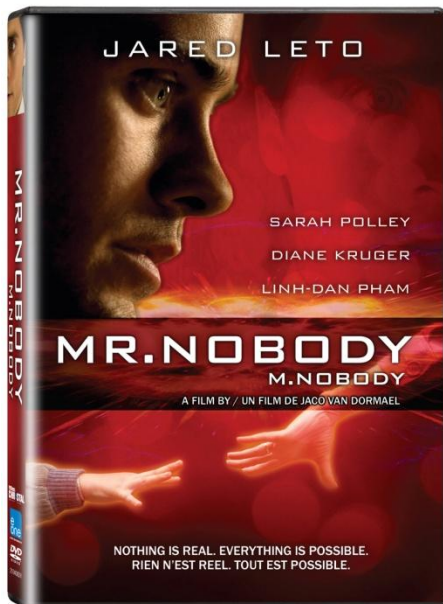
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## EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



*Photo courtesy of eOne Films.*

### Nobody, Somebody, and Us: *Mr. Nobody*

What happens when what will someday happen exists parallel to what could have happened? When what didn't happen is interspersed with what still could be?

Existentially confused? Oddly enough, that can be a good thing. In *Mr. Nobody*, Belgian filmmaker Jaco van Dormael takes on heavy questions of existence, choice, and consequence, and weaves them into a fragmented yet seamless tale of life, love, and loss. It is the story of Nemo Nobody: a child with a special gift of foresight and at the same time an old man with an elder's share of hindsight and wisdom.

Far in the future (2092), Nemo is 117 years old and the last of the mortal humans. As the new immortals watch Nemo's final days on some futuristic reality television program, a journalist and a psychiatrist seek to understand Nemo's true story of choices and wisdom.

Over a hundred years earlier, young Nemo has reached a crucial point in his life: his parents, on the verge of separating, insist that he choose between them. This monumental decision (cruel enough for any child, let alone one who can see the future) is the crossroads from which several paths fork out into the distance.

From that point, flashbacks and flash-forwards are joined with sideways glimpses into the ever-changing futures branching forth. In some ways, the weaving in and out of time and reality are reminiscent of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. But while Vonnegut's use of the flashback-flash-forward technique mirrors his hero's own mental journey, *Mr. Nobody's* starts and stops and ins and outs mirror the thought process and understanding not so much of Nemo as of the viewers.

And that's the key to *Mr. Nobody*, because the film's beauty lies in its outside application. It's not a movie you should watch alone, since doing so would lose so much. Rather, it's one that generates a lot of discussion, a lot of tangents, and a lot more existential back-and-forth argument than you'd usually see outside of a room of philosophy professors.

Our discussions jumped from Schrodinger's cat to the ten-dimension theory of the universe to prayer to *Back to the Future* to September 11 to the essence of reality to *A Brief History of Time*—at that was after just the first 10 minutes!



*Jared Leto as Nemo Nobody.  
Photo courtesy of eOne Films.*

In some ways, the film embodies two theories of existence, one belonging to the young Nemo and one to the old. Young Nemo wants to know and control the future; since he believes knowledge and seeing are key to existence and reality, he wants to see and know all, to make each choice the one that will bear him the most happiness in the end.

Yet for all the emphasis on choice and consequence, human beings often face helplessness as we look to the future. Because our own futures are not entirely dependent upon our own choices. We can't completely chart and control our destiny, because we're united in minute and mysterious ways to every single person on this planet.

Ironically, the older Nemo has seen much of the randomness of life taken out of human existence, now that the secret of immortality has been discovered. Yet he feels that when everything is predictable, sewn up, and controlled, life becomes boring, and living untenable. In one scene, future Nemo wonders whether he's really alive; in another, his obsession with recalling his myriad choices is whether he lived fully present in his past. And in many ways, he's right; because sometimes, the bigger choice is not the decision-making itself but how we choose to live it out.

Despite the rapid flitting in and out of time and possibility, the viewer remains engaged, and that's largely thanks to the solid performances of the cast. Jared Leto's Nemo Nobody is a sympathetic hero whose dilemmas resonate with our own, and the supporting cast—particularly his three possible love interests (Diane Kruger, Sarah Polley, and Linh Dan-Pham)—is compelling and believable.

The film's themes are supported by some really effective cinematography. Well-placed visuals of converging and diverging train tracks and falling water droplets give a nod to significant events in Nemo's past(s)—while reinforcing concepts playing out in the present. Yet it's artfully done, just subtle enough to enter the viewer's consciousness without overpowering it.

There are some nice cultural nods too; for example, one recurrent musical theme is “Mr. Sandman,” which is the first song *Back to the Future's* Marty heard when going back in time to 1955. And Nemo's uncanny ability to see the future, yet inability to get those around him to believe him, is reminiscent of the mythological Cassandra.



**Jared Leto and Diane Kruger in *Mr. Nobody*.**  
*Photo courtesy of eOne Films.*

So what is the exact relation among choice, chance, and consequence? The movie never really tells us. And although normally I prefer a neatly sewn-up conclusion, this film's charm is that it's anyone's story.

One reviewer put it best: “a lot happened and a lot didn't happen.” But which is which, and to what extent, and why, is ultimately less important than how he—and we as viewers—arrived there. And what the viewer takes away from the experience is not the story of a man's life, but the complexity of human existence.

Certainly, it's a film that will have viewers talking, discussing, and pondering its themes and story long after the final credits have rolled.

## HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza

**Time for a Detox**

It's mid-January. Christmas is over, and so are the holidays. And although many of us are back at the work-and-school slog, our minds feel refreshed from our break time. But do our bodies feel the same?

***What are we missing?***

Traditional First Nations societies strongly believed in taking time to rejuvenate the body several times a year. They would carefully eat only foods whose medicinal properties offered a promise of rejuvenation, and drink health-promoting liquids. This reinvigoration process was actually a detoxification process, or detox, during which elimination of bodily toxins was optimal. And the results? Positive for health!

***Why a detox?***

Waste material is a normal by-product of our bodies' minute-to-minute cellular functioning. Usually it's eliminated, and life goes on. However, in addition to the waste material generated by our own bodily processes, the majority of us have a daily brush with external toxins.

Take that polluted air you breathed while in transit on the way home. Or that litany of unpronounceable ingredients boldly printed on the packages of those microwave dinners you just heated. Air, water, food—these are just a few sources of potential toxins entering our bodies.

And this is precisely where a detox comes in: to counter-attack those toxins besieging our bodies.

***How does it work?***

The basic principle behind any detoxification strategy is that the liver is one of the body's major organs of detoxification. In fact, on a daily basis, the liver is hard at it—filtering, separating, removing, and generally detoxing on a small scale.

The liver has two phases, or strategies for detoxification. In Phase 1, toxic substances are broken down into a more manageable form. Sometimes this means that the partially broken-down toxin is re-created into an even more toxic substance, and sometimes it means the opposite. It depends on the chemical. However, Phase 2 doesn't discriminate: toxic or nontoxic, it wipes them all out of the liver and en route for satisfactory elimination!

Problems arise, though, when the toxins entering our bodies exceed the liver's ability to process them. We end up with a toxin overload, but there's a solution: an external detox.

***Who shouldn't?***

As always, there are some who should exercise caution when considering speeding up detoxification through an external means. Pregnant and nursing women should wait; and individuals with genetic diseases or

autoimmune diseases should not attempt a detox unless under the guidance of a licensed health practitioner.

### *How do I . . . ?*

If you're hoping to kick-start your body's detoxification process right away, here are some options. Remember, when beginning your detox, it's not necessary to start with a huge bang! You can start out gently, using some of the simplest options listed below, and gradually ease into a stronger detoxification protocol.

- **Lemons:** Squeezing half a lemon into a glass of warm water every morning is a simple, yet refreshing, way of greeting your liver and gallbladder "good morning." If you're hoping to start your detox gently, this one's a good beginning step.
- **Foods:** Certain foods increase the liver's activity and help it dump those toxins faster. Try incorporating one to two servings of cabbage, Brussels sprouts, or beets into your daily diet. Eat them raw for maximum benefit.
- **Kits:** Most health food stores offer a selection of "detox kits," which are essentially several herbal or homeopathic formulas combined in an easy-to-use kit. The results are powerful, but if you've never done a detox before, you should use one of the gentler methods to start out.

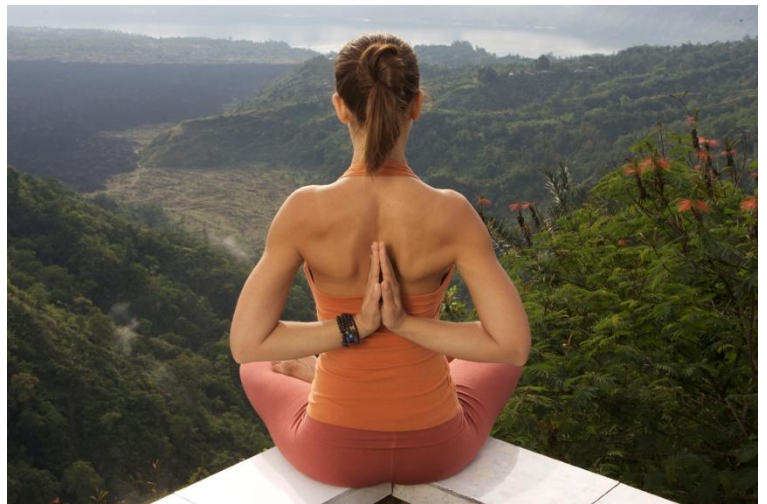
### *Beyond the body*

A good detoxification process needn't stop at the physical, either. In fact, it shouldn't; holistically, human health is a product of physical, mental, and spiritual health. If one component is lacking, we can't be truly healthy.

What better time to clear our mental-emotional self than when we're already concentrating on the internal processes of our bodies? Detox that small aggravation: just let go! Detox that bitterness: dig it up, and journal it on paper to release it. Detox that unforgiveness: meditate, sit quietly, or write a letter.

This month, let's aim for total, deep-down-inside health to start off 2011: let's strive to be healthy physically, healthy mentally, and healthy emotionally. Start your all-body detox, and good luck!

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



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





## Night in Tunisia: The Inevitable Eruption of a Long-standing Unrest, Part II

*"When people decide to live, destiny shall obey, and one day . . . the slavery chains must be broken."*

Tunisian poet Abu Al-Qasem Al-Shabi

*"I think that every free person who really loves this country has to fight injustice and corruption. I think this is also my duty. I really love my country and believe that we Tunisians deserve a better living. We deserve freedom. We deserve the right to express ourselves freely and to live in a better situation."*

Leena Ben Mhenni, [blogger](#) and assistant professor of linguistics at the University of Tunis, in an

interview with Wanda Waterman St. Louis.

(Read Part I of this series [here](#).)

If we'd been paying attention, we might have seen it coming. Take a generous portion of shameless high living on the part of the governing class and its family members; add a large number of educated young people with nothing to look forward to but hunger and shame, stack that with decades of brutal silencing, and you have all the makings of a spectacular uprising.

One source of fuel for the revolution was a disclosure in WikiLeaks outlining the excesses of consumption by Tunisian President Ben Ali's daughter Nesrine and her husband Sakhr, whose domestic life bore a bizarre but telling similarity to that of Al Pacino's drug lord character in *Scarface* (right down to the pet tiger).

Western ignorance was another catalyst. Ben Ali had a reputation among international human rights groups of banking on supportive Western countries (he'd been lauded in the West for combatting Islamist extremism, for being an ally in Bush's war on terrorism, and for championing women's rights) to look away while he gradually turned Tunisia into a police state.

All this tinder needed was a spark, and unemployed university graduate Mohamed Bouazizi provided that—literally—when he lit himself on fire in Sidi Bouzid after the police confiscated his vegetables.

What was responsible for the success of the so-called Jasmine Revolution? The protests of strong trade unions have been cited as one effective vehicle for change, and the whole idea of worker solidarity parallels the transnational ethnic solidarity now being manifested in other Arab countries in response to Tunisia's struggles.

I'm reminded of an event from my days as a government worker here in





Nova Scotia. When another workplace in the same sector went on strike, the employees in that workplace risked much, suffered much, and were castigated in the media, but in the end all boats rose together. To avoid further strikes, the province was forced to change the collective agreements of all workplaces in that sector.

They fought, we all won.

We tend to identify with those in the same boat; we honour their martyrdoms and share their victories. In ancient Rome, once a slave revolt was successful, it became impossible for other slaves to accept their fates. Similarly today, citizens of other Arab countries can hardly keep silent. Algerians are now protesting the same wealth disparity and corruption that plague Tunisia, and Egyptians are calling for an end to Mubarak's three-decade autocracy.



Governments can no longer afford to be complacent, callous, or elitist for fear of sharing Ben Ali's humiliation. The fat cat will find it a little harder to steal the tidbits from the mouse's table, and if he does manage to steal the food, he can't expect to squelch the mouse's shrieks of outrage. At least not in a world that includes online social networks.

Much has been said about the role of social media in the Jasmine Revolution. As much as the Ben Ali regime tried to crush the popular voice with media blackouts and illicit hacking, the voice of dissent ballooned quickly. No matter how many journalists were jailed and murdered, news got out—showing how much the dictatorial tactics of the past are out-of-touch with the new cyber world.

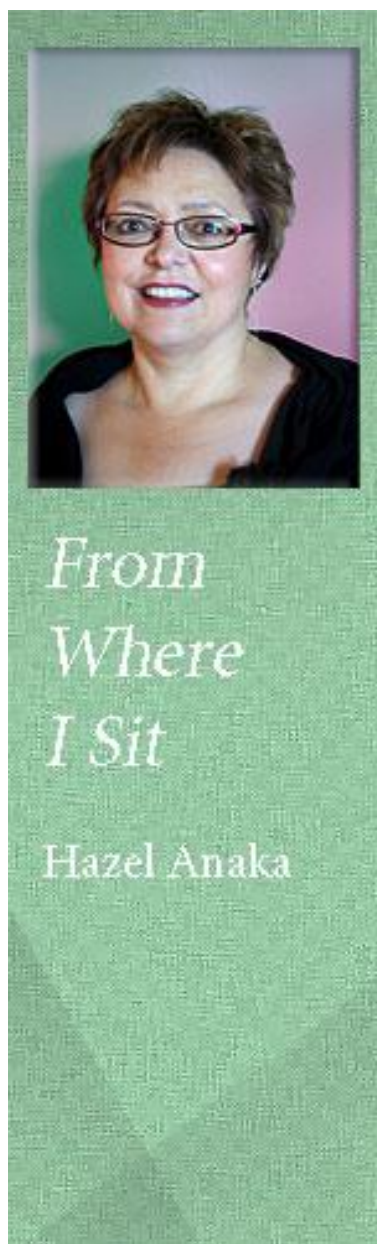
As much as Western media has demonized the Arab world, the Internet has organically facilitated greater understanding—hence support for worthy causes—simply by making it easy for ordinary people to quickly disseminate information with each other, and for those from the West to communicate with those the Middle East. Our stereotypes look ridiculous when we come face to face with the goodness of others, and our presuppositions are absurd once we begin to talk to real people about the real events of their daily lives.

Such a freedom is not to be taken lightly. Technologies of oppression can be developed fast and no doubt are being developed now. Cyberspace remains a territory very much in need of grassroots vigilance.

*(This three-part series will be continued next week.)*

## NOTICE: AUSU GENERAL MEETING

AUSU will hold its annual general meeting on Wednesday, February 2, 2011, at 2:30 pm MST (4:30 pm EST). The meeting will be held via teleconference; all currently active students may attend. Students living outside Canada may also dial in to the teleconference, but please inform AUSU in advance if you'll be calling from an international location. For further information or to reserve a line, please contact AUSU at [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org).



## That's Just Not Nice

Roy and I left January 3 for a week in the sun at San Jose del Cabo, Mexico. Our window of opportunity for a warm getaway was closing quickly because of his county responsibilities and a rapidly filling meeting schedule. For me, it was a case of now or never as my contract work on a visitors' guide was ramping up and a huge event coordination job was set to go into overdrive.

As we packed and made arrangements, I developed a cold sore. Okay, throw some tea tree oil into the suitcase. The day before we left, I woke up with a sticky, itchy eye. Off to emergency we go to find out I have an eye infection. Luckily there's room in the aforementioned suitcase for a minute but very expensive bottle of eye drops. Instil three times a day for five days. The other one looks red, do that one too. Okie-dokie.

The flight was good. Actually, any flight that doesn't require flotation devices, air masks, or searching for the black box is a good flight. Way to go, WestJet! It was our second trip to this particular resort, so we felt at home. The weather, while cooler than the last time we were there two years ago, was still about 50 degrees warmer than what we left, so what's not to like?

We noticed that our resort and the two neighbouring ones we visited seemed less busy than last time. It seems the global recession, lingering concern over the H1N1 panic that began in Mexico, and possibly the timing so soon after Christmas explained the smaller numbers. Shopkeepers confirmed that business had suffered over the past couple of years.

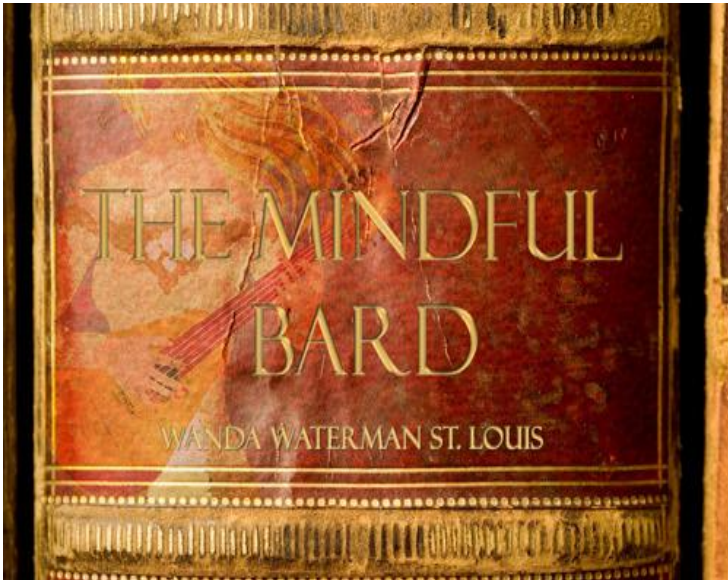
We did the Cabo highlights day excursion, rode the local bus to historic downtown San Jose several times, did some shopping, did some chillin', did some reading. One afternoon I had a massage at the resort spaaaaah. I still can't decide if I prefer a pina colada, a mai tai, a banana sexy, or a rosa maya. It's painstaking scientific research, but someone had to do it! We visited the tequila museum in Cabo and did some tasting. Did you know the

good stuff doesn't taste like kerosene?

The food selection offered lots of authentic Mexican favourites, fresh fruit, fish, and seafood. Cabo is the marlin fishing capital of the world, after all. Our dinner at the Italian à la carte restaurant featured an octopus appetizer and seafood soup. Personally, I'm a little put-off by a shrimp looking back at me, but the broth was tasty. The entire meal was masterfully prepared and artfully plated. Tiramisu to die for.

News of a foot of snow at home sped up psychic re-entry into our real lives. From sandals to snow boots in mere hours just isn't right.

Another good flight home except for the unknown tourist with the silent but deadly refried bean flatulence lasting most of the four-and-a-half-hour journey. I suspect my restless seatmate, who made umpteen trips to the loo. Now that's just not nice, from where I sit.



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

DVD: *Winter's Bone* (2010)

Director: Debra Granik

Screenwriters: Debra Granik, Anne Rosellini

Starring: Jennifer Lawrence, John Hawkes, Kevin Breznahan, Dale Dickey

### The Sweet Dignity of Human Anguish

*"In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet and say to us, 'Make us your slaves, but feed us.'"*

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

The teenaged Ree is an archetypal wise child, quiet and sombre, with a composure born of wrenching circumstances. She never takes out her anger or frustration on her family, and is always patient, gentle, and loving to her younger siblings and her almost catatonic mother.

Ree's absent, drug dealing dad is on the lam. He's put up the house and land for his bail bond. Trouble is, he's missed his hearing and disappeared, and Ree is about to lose her home—and hence her family, which will be split up if they have nowhere to live. In her wisdom, Ree appeals to the sanctity of blood ties in an effort to get what she needs from the criminal family relations who surround her like barbed wire.

Her desperate drive to keep her family together on their land slowly reveals itself as a touching need for parents, and the sense of emptiness, chaos, and vulnerability that their absence breeds. Here is a young girl forced to abandon her own needs in order to stand in for people she can never really replace.

How did Hollywood manage not to ruin something so precious? And when this script was being pitched to production companies, to what vacuous blockbusters could they compare it?

The visuals alone are dumbfounding. The winter landscape is richly desolate, and for the interior shots, it's like Shelby Lee Adams was told to keep on doing his thing but capture it all with colour cinematography.

There's no lily gilding in this portrayal of the rural ghetto. The scenes aren't sanitized by a removal of worn-out commercial products like trampolines, satellites, skateboards, MP3 players, and kitchen mess, but the artistic resolve has resulted in a film of jarring beauty, crowded with telling images, like the cement garden ornaments of happy children playing in the yards of people who've sold their souls.

This is consumer culture's gruesome fallout, the place where old toys go to die but where you've got to kill squirrels if you want supper





tonight.

There is a heart-wrenching moment when the little brother picks up Ree's tooth—broken loose by fist-happy thugs—and gently places it in a jar of water for the tooth fairy.

Commercial interests exploit natural resources and despise natural beauty, and everyone in the moneygrubber's wake turns evil. In the end the land itself cries out against the demise of the splendid peasant life that has been stolen from it.

And where to from here? the film seems to ask. The banjo remains, but no one knows how to play it. Yet in this moment, survival and family cohesion are enough to build a new life, whatever that new life might be.

*Winter's Bone* manifests seven of The Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it stimulates my mind; 3) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 4) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 5) it makes me want to be a better artist; 6) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; and 7) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity (Cybiont).

## CLICK OF THE WRIST: Time for a Break

It's only been a few weeks, but already the Christmas break seems very far in the past. Worn out by the January blues, blahs, and weather, we're dreaming of another holiday. Good news: now's the time to start planning the spring break trip you've been thinking about since the temperature first began plummeting last fall. Here are some good travel planning resources that are worth checking out.

### Know Before You Go

Great deal on a decent room, or overpriced, flea-infested dive? Booking hotels in advance is no longer a hit-or-miss game, thanks to TripAdvisor. The site contains member reviews written by ordinary travellers whose experiences can help guide you to the right choice for you and your travelling companions. TripAdvisor also contains member reviews of tours, restaurants, and other attractions, so you'll be able to plan your days and your nights.

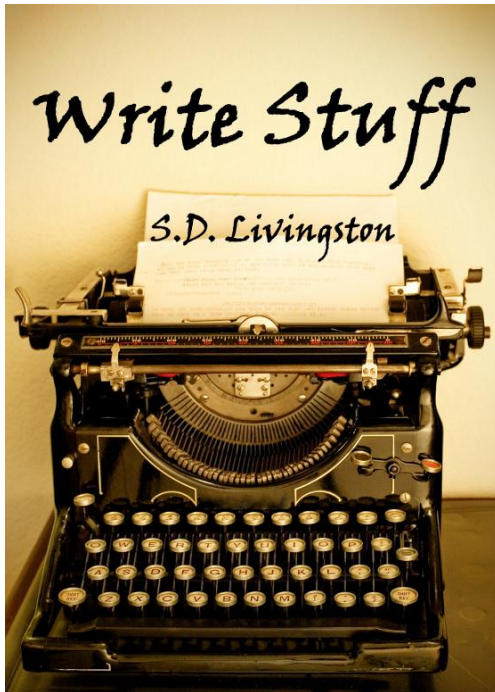
### Before You Die

*1001 Places to See Before You Die* and its companion book, *1001 Places to See in the U.S.A. and Canada Before You Die* are sure to get you bitten by the travel bug. It's entertaining reading for armchair travellers, and a go-to resource for your next trip.

### Learn to Fly

ITA Software, whose booking software is used by airlines such as Air Canada and American Airlines, also has a public airfare search matrix. Users can input a date range and see a month-at-a-glance matrix of airfares for their chosen departure and arrival locations. Although you can't book flights, it's easy to take the information over to an airfare booking site or an airline's website.





## Off the Charts

“Taste has no system and no proofs,” wrote Susan Sontag. She may have been right in theory, but the reality is that the system for controlling popular taste has been happily chugging along for decades now. Whether it’s major studios green-lighting film scripts or music execs choosing the next big thing, books, movies, and songs come to you through a meticulous filter of market research, committees, and sales projections. Now, that system’s being turned on its head—and pop culture might never look the same again.

Take *The New York Times* bestseller lists, for example. They’ve long defined the popular literary landscape and, because they’re based on sales, readers definitely shape those lists. But who gets to decide which books make it onto bookstore shelves—and into those readers’ hands at the cash register?

A striking similarity between the bestseller lists of 1955 and 2011 holds the answer. Titles have changed, authors are different, but almost without exception the hits arrive via major publishing houses. Today, it’s Knopf, Bantam, Putnam, Doubleday, Hachette Group. Half a century ago, the lists were heavy with names like Doubleday, Houghton Mifflin, and Prentice-Hall.

For better or worse, having venture capital meant that publishers controlled who got inside the literary gates and onto the shelves. Readers had plenty of options, but those options were ultimately restricted to the books that editors (and their accountants) deemed worthy of hitting the presses. For every masterpiece that made it through the vagaries of the system, it’s certain that others missed out by a whisker.

But now, as technology allows anyone become a publisher, the question is what will those bestseller lists look like in 2055? Never mind the image of a kid in a candy store. We’re agog at the threshold of the entire mall, marvelling that we get to pick anything we want. If popular culture reflects a nation’s character, what will we choose to say about ourselves now that the gates have been flung wide?

It isn’t a question of genre or even of quality. A lot (okay, most) self-published books could stand a few good rounds with a dictionary and *The Elements of Style*. But we’re talking purely about taste here, not technical or even artistic merit.

That’s not to say readers haven’t held the reins in the past. Classics like *The Joy of Cooking*, *Spartacus*, and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* got their start thanks to readers, not publishing houses. But before the digital revolution, few authors had the cash (or the storage space) to self-publish, so readers still relied mainly on publishers’ opinions when it came to choice.

Now, that choice is ours. E-books and print-on-demand mean that any writer can make her work available. Personal websites, social networks, and sites like YouTube let everyone from indie filmmakers to musicians to comics find an audience.

Perhaps, as the bestseller lists and top music downloads evolve, we’ll be horrified at the picture they’ll paint. Maybe the truth is that our collective tastes run more to mac-and-cheese than fine dining. But oh, isn’t it glorious to have the choice?

## CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

**DID YOU KNOW? Field Study Opportunity**

Interested in ethno-cultural studies or biodiversity? Appreciate humanitarian efforts? Enjoy travelling? How about experiencing all three—and earning university credit?

This May, AU students have the opportunity to participate in a “unique field study opportunity” in Borneo. In addition to receiving field lectures, students will either “participate in an ethno-ecological study with the Wehea Dayak” people while helping with “community development projects,” or “join a scientific team conducting the first comprehensive biodiversity study of the Wehea Forest.”

Participants can earn up to eight university credits for the field study.

The trip, which is sponsored by Ethical Expeditions, will cost US \$5,500, which includes “university credit, all meals, accommodation, internal travel and educational materials.” Airfare to Balikpapan, Indonesian Borneo, is the student’s responsibility, as are other travel-related expenses.

Applicants should be “passionate about preserving biological and cultural diversity” and be “interested in the complex issues facing the island of Borneo.” There is space for up to 12 students to join the study. For more information, contact AU anthropology tutor [Janelle Baker](#) or visit the Ethical Expeditions [website](#).



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Snow Plow

With the cold temperatures and heavy snowfalls across Canada last weekend, it's no surprise that many vehicles veered off the road, crashed, or got just plain stuck in the snow. Tow truck, anyone? But one school bus driver near St. John's, Newfoundland, found his own solution: teen power.

As the CBC [reports](#), the bus driver became stuck in the snow during a storm in Conception Bay South, Newfoundland, one afternoon late last week.

But instead of putting in a call for help, the "driver reportedly asked [the high school] students . . . to help push his bus up a snow-covered hill."

The record-breaking snowfall in the St. John's area reportedly caused "difficult" driving conditions, particularly for large vehicles.

But the school district is less concerned about wintry weather and more about student safety. As district CEO Ford Rice told reporters, ". . . that shouldn't have happened . . . student safety is our utmost priority."

The bus driver has been suspended "pending the outcome of an investigation."

### Around the World: Southern Getaway

Tired of the cold? Dreaming of a vacation in a more southerly location? Next winter's trendiest new destination is about as far south as you can get: Antarctica.

As *The New York Times* [reports](#), the Antarctica tourism market is heating up in time for the centennial of Amundsen's and Scott's expeditions to the South Pole (December 2011 and January 2012, respectively).

In anticipation of the anniversaries, "hundreds of . . . tourists, adventurers and history buffs" are shelling out \$40,000 or more to participate in the festivities at the South Pole.

Tours vary according to the taste of the explorer: while some will fly directly to the Pole and others will arrive by truck, a few adventurous ones "intend to ski the exact routes of Amundsen and Scott, reading the explorers' diaries daily and blogging about the experience." There will also be concurrent ski races, although they'll follow different routes.

Training for the experience will be an experience in itself; for example, those who plan to race can attend a training camp in Norway, where they'll practice "jumping into ice holes and learning to negotiate crevasses."

Veteran adventurers warn enthusiastic travellers that the South Pole is "not for novices." Regardless, it's pretty good publicity for a locale Amundsen once called "an awful place."

## AUSU UPDATE



### Convocation 2010

AUSU wishes to congratulate this year's graduates, whether attending Convocation in person or by distance. We wish you the best of luck in your future pursuits. You are an inspiration to all AU students!

### AUSU Executive Election

AUSU has recently held its internal election for the Executive. We wish to congratulate Barbara Rielly (President), Bethany Tynes (Vice President External and Student Affairs) and Sarah Kertcher (Vice President Finance and Administration) on their election and thank those that ran for their willingness to serve.

Internal elections are being held to determine committee membership and we expect that all will be in place shortly. Our new Council is taking its bearings and has already begun to set the direction for this term.

### Student Issues

AUSU recently completed a compilation of reported student issues covering a two year period; all issues were recorded in such a way as to ensure that student information remains protected and private. This effort confirmed what we long suspected; that tutor problems were the single biggest issue faced by our students (56 of 120 complaints).

Outdated course materials and errors in texts continue to be reported as well as were exam issues, slowness of the transfer process, and the scantiness of information in School of Business FAQs. Over that two year period there was a decrease in the number of complaints about student financing, exam request problems, difficulty registering in more than six courses, and materials shortages for courses. Kudos to AU for improving in those areas. Now if we could only get the Tutors' Union to the table . . .

### 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.



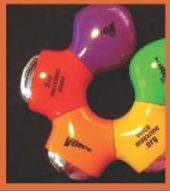



For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

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.

**AUSU**  
Representing AU  
Undergrads

# Student Gear

2009 merchandise

Clothing  
Technology  
Fun Items  
Home Decor

**Fostering the Student Community**

AUSU and Voice gear is intended to support your studies and help you feel like part of the AU student community. Suggestions for new items are welcome. Contact our office with any questions.



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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

## THE VOICE

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