

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 11 2011-03-18

Garage Sale

What's in *your* closet?

Sutter's Mill

Thar's gold in them pages!

Pump It Up

The truth about exercise

Plus:
Maghreb Voices, Cruiscin Lan,
From Where I Sit, and much more!



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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.



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



Stuff and Nonsense

Natural disasters can inspire a lot of deep feelings and emotions—gratitude, empathy, anger, confusion, solidarity. And definitely the inspiration to turn a magnifying glass on one’s own life.

Looking at the photos of the aftermath of Japan’s tragic earthquake/tsunami, one persistent thought has stayed with me: what a mess. All those houses, treasured possessions, clothes, books, papers, and must-have stuff—in an instant, all reduced to nothing. Mess. Garbage. Trash.

It suddenly struck me that all the things bursting from my own closets and cupboards are just that: one natural disaster away from the trash heap.

And that’s the truth. Add the power of nature—or even the passage of time—and all the stuff we buy and hold dear (or not) isn’t much more than a pile of waste, a big mess to wade through and clean eventually. Pieces to pick up and throw away. Meaningless clutter. Junk.

Coincidentally, this weekend I stumbled across a [blog](#) written by Béa Johnson, an advocate of the zero-waste lifestyle. This *Sunset* magazine [photo slideshow](#) is a window on their intriguing, waste-free world. But “waste-free” doesn’t merely mean reducing dependence on packaged foods. It’s a whole lifestyle, one premised on changing our relationship with our stuff.

I look at Johnson’s photos, and one thing stands out: no mess. No clutter. I somehow doubt that, even at their neatest, my closets and cupboards would qualify as clutter-free. While I’m far from a hoarder—and people insist that my house is too neat—I still look around me and see things that I haven’t touched for months. Things gathering dust “just in case” I’ll use them in a year or two. For utility purposes, junk.

To be honest, I’m not sure I could do an all-out purge like the Johnsons. There are some items I enjoy collecting—fashion and books for example—although I can certainly prune down my shelves and pass on things I no longer care for (and restrict myself to buying only items I’m sure I will use and love).

But do I need all those kitchen appliances and handy gadgets? There are a few that I use frequently, and a few make that their appearance every month or two. But then there are those once-a-year items. Sure, they’re convenient when I do use them, but is it worth storing the large ice cream maker, when its use is such a hassle that I usually put it off?

Because stuff is often more trouble than it’s worth. Many of Johnson’s readers might at first object that her ways of conserving—like canning her own tomatoes, for example—aren’t practicable for someone with time constraints. She counters that living a zero-waste lifestyle actually saves time.

It sounds counter-intuitive, but I absolutely believe her. A few years back, my family and I lived for four months in a small apartment. No car, and only a few suitcases’ worth of our “stuff.” And I remember one

striking fact: I had so much more time, simply because I had less to deal with. Less mess. Less washing up. Fewer piles to sort. Less clutter to interfere with my productivity and my ability to enjoy life.

Can I say I'm a bit nostalgic for that once again?

As I begin my annual garage sale preparations over the next few weeks, I'm going to turn a much more critical eye on my stuff. What can I live without? What clutter is holding me back? What things would I miss most if some disaster were to level my home?

And what about the future? I find it interesting that the Johnsons seem to have adopted a "4 Rs" mantra: "Refuse, refuse, refuse. Then reduce, reuse, recycle." I love it.

Because essentially, living a calmer, saner, more people and planet-friendly lifestyle is about more than just dealing with trash. It's about drastically altering the way we look at our possessions. Rather than being slaves to stuff, we can assert our control, decide what belongs in our lives, and determine to dominate our possessions rather than the other way around.

It's time for a good spring cleaning.



DID YOU KNOW?



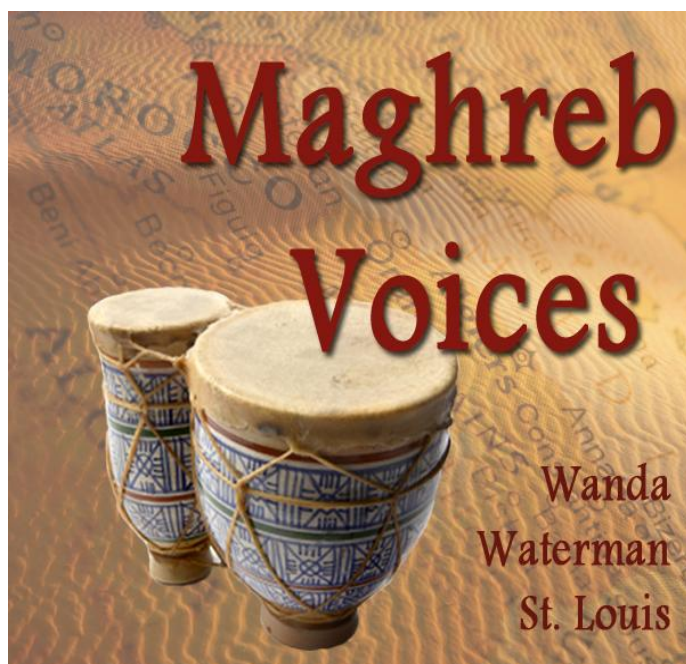
ERIC

Education majors will want to enlist the aid of the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), an "online digital library of education research and information." This web resource, which is operated by the US Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, is a fantastic research aid, particularly for students who are in upper-level classes or pursuing graduate work.

ERIC contains a "searchable, Internet-based bibliographic and full-text database of education research and information." It's the perfect springboard for beginning research. And although users need to register in order to customize the site fully, the resource itself is completely free.

It's also easy to use. Even if you're not sure of your exact search terms, ERIC sponsors a tailored thesaurus which will help you narrow broader topics to the more specific information you're looking for.

Although ERIC provides some full-text articles, and hopes to increase its collection in the future, a number of the articles in its database are only available in synopsis form due to copyright restrictions. However, ERIC provides full bibliographic and contact information for both the articles and the journals in which they appear. Using ERIC in conjunction with journal databases like those available through AU's library allows broader access to the actual articles. Regardless, ERIC greatly facilitates locating the materials necessary for any education research.



The Travelling Desert Blues Show, Part I

Have you ever gone on a sound quest? That's when you're drawn to a specific musical genre and something drives you to keep on digging through it until you find the quintessence—the performance or the recording that represents the culmination of listening pleasure for that genre.

My early music listening involved moving from one thrilling pop song to another, playing them to death until the tones finally went all tinny in my ears and had to be replaced by a new song that granted an equal or greater quantity of spurious ecstasy.

As my tastes matured, I chose favourite groups and singer-songwriters whose talent was not to be summarized in one great Top 40 hit but rather meant

to be enjoyed spread across 10 tracks of an album—an album whose tactile qualities and liner notes were to be examined and enjoyed while contemplating the music and the cryptic meaning of the lyrics.

Eventually pop and rock and folk got stale, and that's when my sound quests began in earnest. I began searching for the material that had inspired Joni and Neil and Led Zeppelin, or rather, the sounds that these performers had only hinted at.

I wish I could say that my sound quests were triumphs of taste and fine education, but when it came to music I was a shameless thrill seeker. My classical music sound quest reached the fourth movement of Beethoven's 9th; once I'd heard that, there was no more to listen to. My jazz sound quest ended in John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. You get the picture.

Finally I began to focus on the sound and structure of blues and to research the genre's history. For a long time I'd been hearing sounds that simply hinted at what I wanted to hear, like bread crumbs in the woods leading Hansel and Gretel back home. I kept thinking, *Yeah, like that, but even more so.*

It was in the record library of CKDU, Dalhousie University's radio station, that I found the culmination of my blues sound quest in the form of a field recording by a Mississippi sharecropper named R.L. Burnside. He was from northern Mississippi, often called the Mississippi hill country, which harboured a large number of musicians with a unique take on blues music.

At that time Burnside hadn't ever been in a sound studio, and so was far from the electronic experimentation that comprised his later work. It was just Burnside at home with his guitar and lots of kids clacking away on whatever could be used as rhythm instruments.

My friends didn't get this strange, beautiful music (so different from anything I'd heard before and at the same time the very thing I'd been looking for), which made me doubt my tastes and normalcy.

Years later I learned that the reason this music sounded so strange to the Western ear and what made it so different from all other incarnations of the blues was that it lacked the 12 or 16-bar structure of most blues.

Twelve-bar blues was an African-American innovation loosely based on the AABA structure at the heart of the European song tradition. Burnside's music, on the other hand . . .

Few fans of northern Mississippi hill country blues realize the origins of this delightfully different music: North African cultures in and around Mali.

Yes, Burnside was different, and it wasn't just him. There was a long-standing musical subgenre in the northern Mississippi hill country, a region whose blues forms heavily influenced but did not supplant what we now call Mississippi Delta Blues. The blues musicians of northern Mississippi played *modal* music.

What is modal music? Here's the comic book definition: modal music is comprised of one basic riff played over and over again in slightly different forms until a completely different riff, which is only repeated a few times, comes along to surprise and delight you. You could say it's a variation of the AABA form, but only if you were to

write it something like this: AAAAAAAAAAABAAAAAAAAAAAA.

How many times do you repeat the musical motif? I assume that some master's degree student has actually addressed this question, but not being a scholar, I can only guess. When I listen to modal music I can hear roughly where it should change, and the change always feels right. But if I count the number of times the first motif is played, it's never the same number—the riff doesn't change after a set number of repetitions.

As for the lyrics of modal blues songs, they're thematically similar to those of mainstream blues—the supplicant moans, the groanings which cannot be uttered, the lion's roar of love and despair—but the texts read at times like stream-of-consciousness writing. There is some repetition, usually one repetition of a long line ("Poor Black Mattie") but often three or more repetitions of one short line ("Goin' Down South"); repetition of the last line of a stanza ("Jumper on the Line"); or just one long verse, sung over the repeated riff.

The bent notes on the third and the sixth tone of the scale and the dissonant chords sound characteristically "bluesy," but the sound is a far cry from B.B. King, Muddy Waters, or Etta James, or even from Bessie Smith, whose career predated Burnside's by decades. So where did Burnside and his north Mississippi cohorts find this brave new sound?

Turns out it wasn't so new after all. When fans of this music listen to the indigenous music of east Africa, they are blown away by the echoes of northern Mississippi blues; here is that same loose modal form, the twirling, winding, mellifluous riffs, the complex rhythms, the sweetly dissonant chords, and the soft vocals so distinct from the Howlin' Wolf style so common in urban blues clubs.

The tribal regions within and around Mali have long been believed to be the African cultures most likely to have passed their musical codes to the slaves shipped to the United States, and yet not many know that the closest form of American music to Mali is the blues of the Mississippi hill country.



To be continued . . .

Health Matters

Katie D'Souza



Time for a Workout

"Dear Dr. Katie,

I always hear the phrase "Exercise is good for you." However, I'm having trouble keeping to my gym schedule because I don't have a concrete idea of exactly why this is the case! Can you please elaborate?"

Priyanka

Dear Priyanka,

Great question! Sometimes knowing what happens in our body when we perform an action can significantly change our mental approach. Let's first examine what exercise does to the body physiologically.

What happens?

Here's a brief snapshot of what happens when you exercise. Initially, your muscles use up their store of ATP (think of it as a cellular energy reserve), then begin to seek other fuel. Your heart rate increases in response. This means increased blood flow to muscle areas, and, of course, increased lung capacity as you draw greater breaths of air. Muscles give off heat as they contract, and body temperature rises as a result. Your brain also receives increased blood and oxygen supply, which in turn stimulates the production of neurotransmitters like norepinephrine, dopamine, glutamate, and serotonin, as well as specific growth hormones.

But although this sounds good, what does it all mean from a health perspective?

Heart: Increased heart rate from exercise translates into a lowered risk for both cardiovascular mortality and coronary artery disease. In other words, there's less risk of a heart attack, high blood pressure, or stroke.

Muscles: The more you use them, the better they get! Exercise helps promote reduced muscle stiffness, and also maintains the muscle mass you have. In fact, you may even grow additional muscle, depending on the type of exercise you do. Anaerobic strength training offers the potential for greater muscle mass increase than does aerobic exercise, although it brings fewer cardiovascular benefits.

Brain: Increased influx of nutrients to the brain stimulates production of beneficial chemical compounds. Neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin help moderate depression and make us feel good (hence the post-workout "buzz"). Other substances, like specific growth hormones, help stimulate neural growth, which means better brain function and possibly an increased speed in spatial learning.

Weight: Probably the most commonly known side effect of exercise is weight loss. Of course, it depends on the type of exercise (aerobic is a great way to burn fat) and the duration (a minimum of 15 minutes of sustained aerobic exercise is recommended). Of course, diet is an additional factor in weight loss.

Immunity: Moderate exercise can boost immunity. Research has shown, for example, that regular, moderate exercise can mean fewer incidences of upper respiratory tract infections. Note, however, that excessive exercise can dampen immunity—particularly when you’re trying to fight off an illness already.

Tummy Control: Who isn’t interested in a flat tummy? Regular exercise can help reduce levels of cortisol, a stress hormone that is associated with deposits of hard-to-burn abdominal fat.

Sleep: Physical exercise during the day contributes to better sleep at night. This could be due to lowered cortisol levels (high cortisol usually creates disturbed or unrefreshed sleep patterns) or the positive effects on brain serotonin levels (serotonin is converted to melatonin at night, promoting no-wake sleep). But don’t exercise right before bed, since it may actually keep you awake!) If you have insomnia, the best time to exercise is four to six hours prior to your intended bedtime.

Feeling Young: It’s not a myth—research does show that exercise can make you feel younger. Plus, regular physical exercise translates into more agility and less stiffness as you grow older.

But a caution . . .

As with everything, moderation is key. Excessive exercise is rarely beneficial from a health perspective, and is often catabolic (destructive to the body). Additionally, those with angina or other serious heart conditions or breathing conditions such as asthma, should use caution regarding exercise. Always speak with your health care provider prior to beginning an exercise regimen.

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.

CLICK OF THE WRIST: Ready, Set

Every time a disaster strikes, we’re reminded that emergency conditions—whether an earthquake or a tsunami or a city-wide power outage or a house fire—can happen anywhere. And regardless of whether a disaster will actually affect us in the future, being ready just in case is never a bad idea. This week’s links offer some tips for sensible emergency preparedness.

Armed with a Plan

Nothing in an emergency situation is going to be simple. What if there are additional environmental hazards? What if your family is scattered across town when disaster strikes? The federal government recommends preparing an emergency plan so that everyone in your family will be on the same page. This site links to a form that will automatically generate your personalized emergency plan, or you can print the PDF and fill it in on your own.

Disaster Kit

Having a disaster kit on hand isn’t only for conspiracy theorists; many national and local governments recommend supplies sufficient



to keep you going for at least three days (since in an emergency it can take that long for help to arrive). This checklist, from the state of California, will get you started.

Food Safety

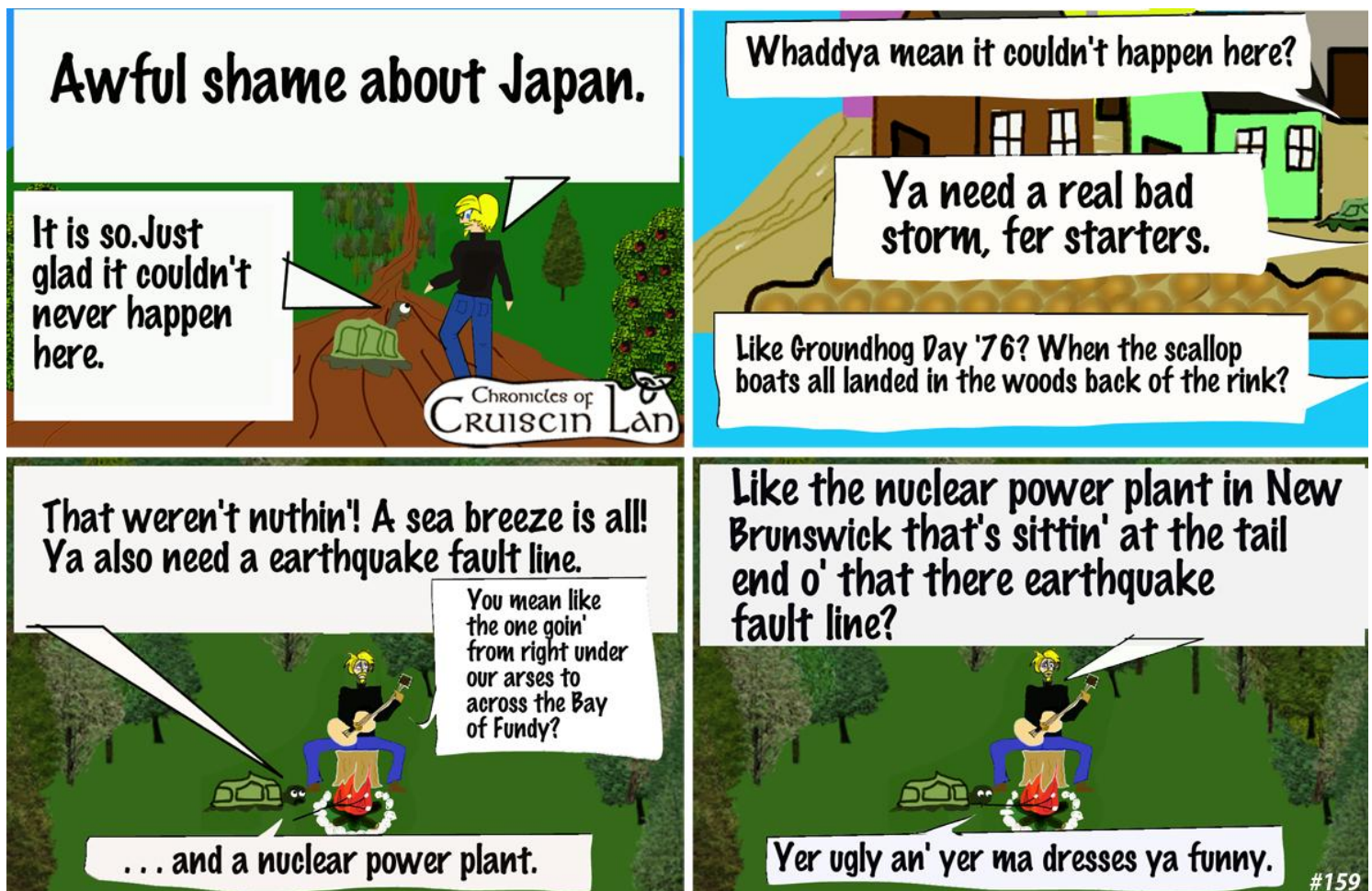
It doesn't take a large-scale disaster to affect our food storage—just a few hours without power can suffice to do some damage. This fact sheet, from the USDA, lays out how to tell if your refrigerated or frozen food is safe after a power outage, and when it needs to be discarded. It also details how to ensure that shelf-stable food is safe to consume following a fire, flood, or similar emergency situation.

Little Details

What disasters should you be particularly concerned about in your area? What to do in the event of a specific emergency, like a flood? What about odd situations, like chemical spills? The Government of Canada's Get Prepared campaign has the answers (and recommends printing your local information and including it in your emergency plan).

CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman St. Louis





From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Thank You

It is impossible to watch the footage of Japan's tragic disaster without saying a prayer. The lost souls and their survivors need our prayers. Those injured or awaiting word on missing loved ones need our prayers. Those left to rebuild their lives, homes, communities, and country will need our prayers for strength and courage.

And it is impossible to comprehend the magnitude of this event without saying a prayer of thanks for our own lives. The bitching and moaning I've done this winter makes me ashamed. Temperatures of -35 with the wind chill, record snowfalls, and dark, dreary days try one's patience, mental health, and fortitude but they rarely kill anyone. This prairie girl understands and appreciates anew the blessed life we lead in Canada. We are enjoying a politically stable government that protects and provides for us, a climate without extremes, and all the opportunities we can grab. We are safe in every sense of the word.

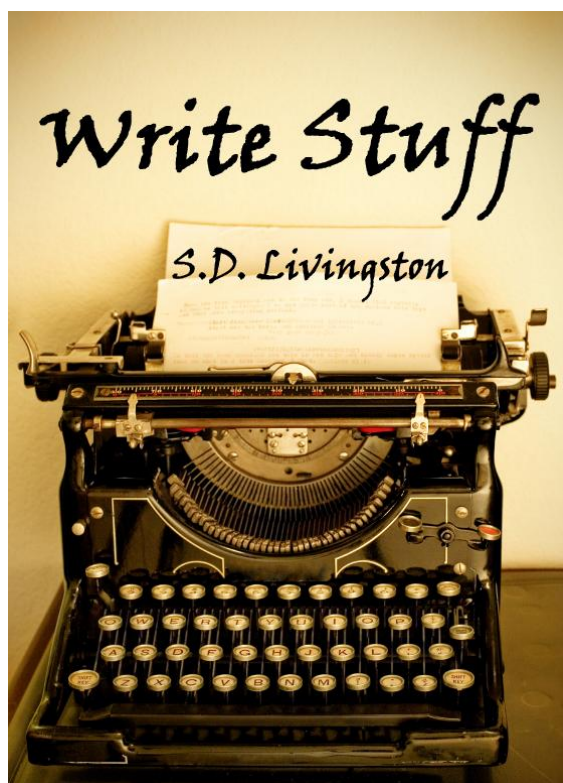
Counting blessings becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. One blessing begets another. Gratitude and appreciation are catchy. So in that vein, we say "Thank you" to God or our genes or Lady Luck that our health is good. We're not going for chemo. We're not losing our faculties to Alzheimer's disease. And even when we have challenges or are going for treatments, the odds are in our favour. Medical research, growing awareness, and a climate of open sharing have shown us we are not alone, no matter what we face. Together we are stronger.

Next our inventory takes us to our friends and family, those people who, despite knowing all our deepest, darkest, worst qualities, love us anyway and will go to the wall for us. Naturally we reciprocate because we, too, want to be on someone's blessing list. These are the people who call us when we're down, put their well-chosen words into cards, and take our side against a sometimes cruel world. After good health is there anything more vital to our

well-being than someone to love and someone to love us? Didn't think so.

If we allow ourselves to continue counting, we can be grateful that we are not Charlie Sheen or Gadhafi. We are glad we can rail against the government without chaining ourselves to a tank or becoming target practice for the militia. We haven't endured a lifetime of corrupt dictatorship where succession is guaranteed by bloodlines instead of elections.

Finally, we thank our blessed life for the chances we get and keep getting to live, work, contribute, excel, and fulfill our potential. We can stumble, fall, flame out, and start all over again—because no one is counting and there is no limit to fresh starts. So when we feel sorry for ourselves because our foundation feels shaky or we're nearly upended by a wave of disappointment, we can say a prayer for those who really suffer. Then breathing a whispered "Thank you" might be a good thing, from where I sit.



Gold Rush

In 1848, James Wilson Marshall found some gold flakes in the American River at the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California. His discovery sparked something more astonishing than the gold itself: the idea that anyone, regardless of class, education, or capital, could become a self-made success—maybe even overnight. Today, there's a similar fever sweeping the hills of self-publishing. Just like the heady days of Sutter's Mill, plenty of fortune seekers will come away empty-handed. But those long-ago prospectors hold some valuable lessons for writers determined to make it in today's literary gold rush.

Between 1848 and 1849, the non-native population of California soared from eight hundred to some 100,000. That's an increase of more than a thousand per cent. The rise in self-published titles isn't that high, but the growth is still staggering: a 181 per cent increase between 2008 and 2009. As *The New York Times* reported, Bowker bibliographic company listed 764,448 titles produced by self-publishers and microniche publishers in 2009. (To give some perspective, traditional publishers produced 288,355 titles the same year.)

Whether they decide on e-books, print on demand, or full-on self-publishing (in which the author sources everything from editors to cover stock), some writers are simply in it for the adventure. They've joined the fray not necessarily because they expect to stumble upon an enormous gold nugget lying in a stream, but simply for the thrill of seeing their name next to the word "author," be it digital or on paper.

But that thrill soon wears off and a new realization sets in. Writing is a job. It's work. Not as hard as panning in bone-chilling water all day, but it can be as much of a nine-to-five slog as most other jobs. To finish a book or collection of short stories is exciting. You've proven you can do it. To keep producing a steady stream of decent words is another ball game entirely. Anyone who's ever decided to put a daily blog together can attest to that. Not even selling your book to a real live New York publisher can turn out to be all that glamorous.

For those writers, the best advice is not to spend next year's seed money (or savings) on a short-lived thrill. Plenty of vanity presses will happily take thousands from you. Sure, you'll have a stack of books in your spare room. And a Big Six publisher might actually swoop down and offer you a million dollar advance. In the early days of the California gold rush, people really were digging gold out of riverbeds with spoons.

But those days quickly ended as more and more miners swarmed the landscape. Bestsellers or mining bonanzas, there are only so many genuine motherlodes to go around, so don't bet the farm.



Even for writers who are old hands at mining words, there's still an element of luck. No, I'm not saying success is a total crapshoot. Publishers and agents have talked long and hard about the importance of professionalism, skill, and a polished manuscript, and they're right. Yet just like a query letter can simply land on the wrong agent's desk on the wrong day (and be rejected even if the book is brilliant), self-publishing carries an element of chance.

"Following trends and learning the business is smart. Getting distracted by another writer's success isn't, so . . . pick up your shovel and get back to work."

Suppose you've written the best vampire teen romance in the history of the world. You've buffed and polished it until it's shinier than a gold tooth. You just know they'll make a Hollywood blockbuster out of it and, author ego aside, it really is that good. But the week before you self-publish, a major blog declares that vampire stories are dead. The market's moved on and the next big thing is cozy British mysteries. Readers and reviewers get busy discovering emerging new mystery authors, and your blood-sucking masterpiece is left to wither like a vampire at high noon.

If you think that's discouraging, try being a miner toiling next to the claim that held the largest gold nugget ever found, one that weighed 195 pounds. Self-publishing isn't immune to the element of chance either, but if you're going to make it you need to be prepared to focus on your claim, not that of the writer next to you. If your vampire novel was really that good, it's probably because you spent a lot of time and effort honing your craft. Following trends and learning the business is smart. Getting distracted by another writer's success isn't, so give yourself a limited amount of time to stare in awe. Then pick up your shovel and get back to work.

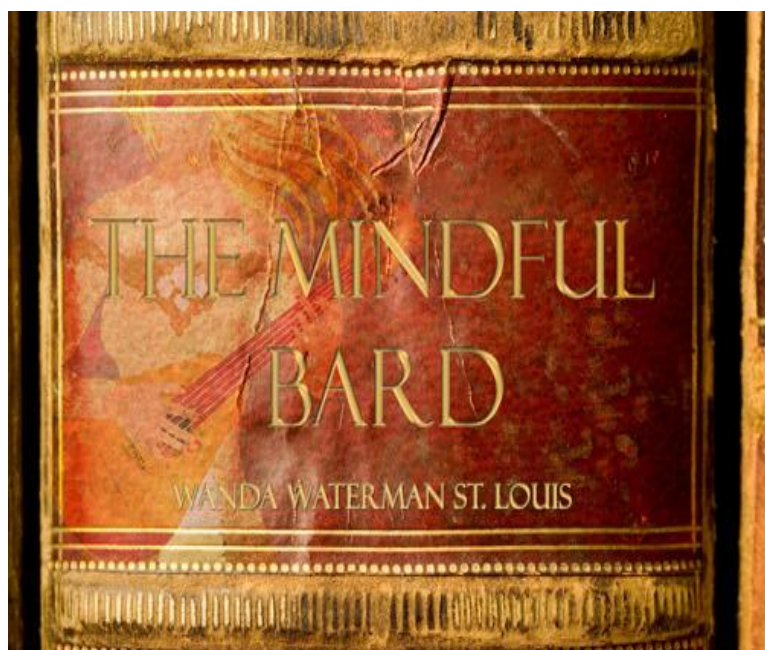
In the end, the one thing that self-publishing and the gold rush have in common is opportunity. Not everyone has the same connections or resources (many established authors have a fan base already waiting), but the playing field is perhaps more level than ever before. And just like the gold rush, that may or may not last.

When Americans from the east coast rushed across the Sierra Nevada Mountains in 1849, many foreign miners were shoved off established claims, either through extreme taxation, discriminatory laws, or outright violence. Later, big corporations moved in and extracted the gold the smaller miners didn't have the equipment to reach. As the new self-publishing landscape matures some lines are bound to be erected, however permeable. Perhaps a communal recommendation system will evolve. That might mean authors signing up at review sites, or it may take another form. No one knows for sure.

For now, though, famous names and unknowns are free to stake their claims next to each other on the same virtual shelves. Whether you measure success by the amount of money you earn or by the devotion of a small number of loyal readers, it's important to keep in mind that the prospectors who did strike it rich were often the ones who kept on digging.

To paraphrase an old mining adage, you can be a million words away from ten readers—or ten words away from a million.





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

Film: *Waiting for Superman* (2010)

Genre: Documentary

Director: Davis Guggenheim

Screenwriters: Davis Guggenheim, Billy Kimball

“A child which appears reasonably happy may actually be suffering horrors which it cannot or will not reveal. It lives in a sort of alien underwater world which we can only penetrate by memory or divination.”

George Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys”

No Teacher Left Behind

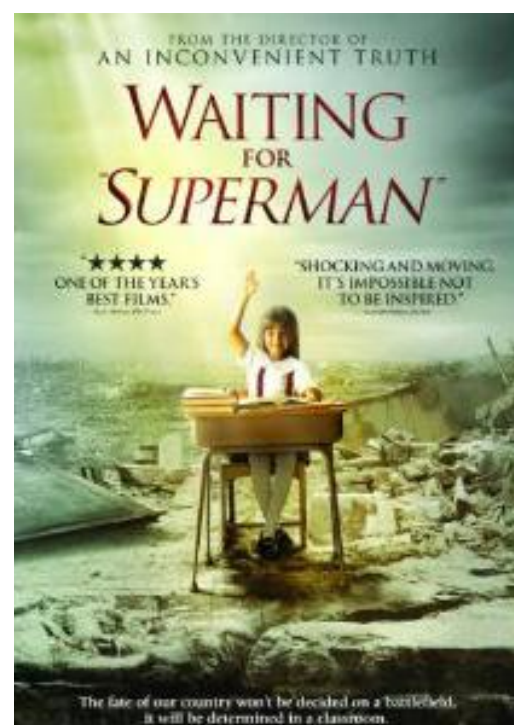
At the beginning of this deeply engaging story about a very prosaic subject, education reformer Geoffrey Canada describes how he felt as a child upon discovering that Superman did not exist. The weight of this knowledge became crushing when he realized that no one was coming to save the people in his community from lives of poverty, frustration, and hopelessness.

The film takes us from American public education as a democratic ideal to American public education as a system in decline. It also brings us from the idealistic beginnings of teachers’ unions to the present day, where the union leaders often defend the right of some teachers to be lazy, irresponsible, and even criminal in the exercise of their duties.

Waiting for Superman follows families from several social strata as they journey toward a better educational experience. They are willing to go to any length to see that their children at least have the chance to succeed in a country that simply does not provide most children with a good education (despite inflated school budgets that give only half the results they attained decades ago).

Up until the 1970s, American public schools were among the best in the world, possibly because for so long the US pioneered public education. And the American public school system has produced some of the best minds this world has known. So why are American students now ranked so low in comparison with students from other developed nations?

A common prejudice sees failing schools as an affliction of poor



neighbourhoods, yet the film shows that failing schools are an epidemic and that the posh suburban schools are likely to be as ill-equipped to prepare children for university as are inner city schools in violent neighbourhoods. It's even suggested that failing schools *create* failing neighbourhoods due to a high dropout rate that spawns growing populations of unemployable youth.

"The notion that a teaching job is a right and not a responsibility is a demonic parody of democracy, a perversion of the ideal of equal access to education. Yet at the moment America appears powerless to challenge it."

A central problem is underperforming teachers and the utter inability of anyone to sway the teachers' unions' stance that every teacher is created equal, that a Mr. Garrison is as entitled to tenure (which is nearly impossible to take away) as a Mr. Chips. Contracts originally designed to protect teachers from arbitrary dismissal slowly morphed into fortresses for the incompetent.

This is pretty atrocious. The union member ideally seeks solidarity not only to achieve basic safety standards and a fair return on work, but also to be given the power to protect and advocate for those they serve. Thus nurses will strike to protect their jobs in the event that they have blown the whistle on incompetent or abusive doctors, and accountants can be protected in the event that they must testify to a boss's shady business

dealings. The notion that a teaching job is a right and not a responsibility is a demonic parody of democracy, a perversion of the ideal of equal access to education. Yet at the moment America appears powerless to challenge it.

But it's not like everyone is sitting on their hands. Charter schools—institutions run on public money but independent of local school boards—are an important new development. These schools are free to improve teaching methods, to continue employing only teachers who teach, and to dispense with tracking systems that arbitrarily hand many students the dirty end of the educational stick. But only one in five of these charter schools is producing good results, and competition is fierce; families sit and wait for a lottery to decide whether or not their children will have a future.

This film gives a powerful and poetic salute to the love of some parents and the drive and giftedness of some children, up against a system which, in the words of Washington, DC school superintendent Michelle Rhee, is "all about the adults." These are families watching their futures decided by lottery. You can practically hear the hearts breaking.

Waiting for Superman manifests four of *The Mindful Bard's* criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it poses and admirably responds to questions having a direct bearing on my view of existence; 2) it stimulates my mind; 3) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 4) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Play Book

The divide between academics and sports is often vast. And although both are important for a well-rounded education, frequently one is sacrificed at the expense of the other. Not so for one hockey coach, though—he’s using his cred as team leader to encourage his players to score in the wide world of reading.

As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), the Shediac, N.B.-based Shane Doiron has begun a sort of book club for his hockey players, a group of nine and ten-year-old boys.

Doiron conceived the idea based on “his own regrets at sidelining reading while he pursued a hockey career.” While in university, he discovered that his reading skills were too poor to understand his textbook—later realizing that if someone had encouraged him to appreciate literacy, things might have turned out differently.

He has high hopes for the team. After hockey practice, Doiron, the boys, and a few volunteer dads gather in the locker room to read and discuss the latest books, which the boys choose from a selection he offers. The novels are exciting and kid-friendly, “almost all of them about hockey and adventures.” The team breaks into small groups, which enthusiastically talk about what they’ve been reading.

The boys are responsible for keeping up with the reading, and they’re doing it gladly. And along with the socialization and the literary aspects, they’re also developing reading skills, which is translating into better grades at school—and a better future.

Around the World: Lost City

Last week, we saw just how easily nature can destroy cities and alter the landscape. Scientists and archaeologists suggest a similar scenario as explanation for the demise of the legendary city of Atlantis, long-lost and known mostly from historical accounts.

However, Atlantis’ secrets may not be entirely locked in the past. In fact, experts believe they may have found the lost city’s location. As the CBC [reports](#), scientists are investigating marshlands north of Cadiz, in the south of Spain, after noticing “space satellite images showing unusual features.” Based on the evidence so far, it’s believed to be “the best possible candidate for the location of Atlantis.”

A team of researchers has been using radar, satellite imagery, and other technology to determine whether the marshlands hold the remains of the legendary city. Already, there’s some light being shed: “readings suggest the presence of a communal oven and possibly canals.”

Additionally, the team has “discovered a series of mysterious memorial cities in central Spain, seemingly modelled on Atlantis, leading them” to the conclusion that survivors of Atlantis built new settlements in a style similar to their original home.

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.



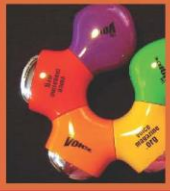



For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

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

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Technology
Fun Items
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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.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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