

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 19 2011-05-20

Locked Out

Accidentally on purpose

World Window

The Quest for Meaning

Written By Me

Get published!

Plus:

*The Mindful Bard
From Where I Sit
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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FICTION

Adam Thackeray



Exits and Accidents

The black pinstripe suit has been carefully placed across the foot of his bed. The dry cleaning tag pinned to the inside collar bears a date from the previous decade—the same date, Eugene remembers, that he had returned to the jeweller's with Helen's wedding band and the accompanying receipt of sale.

The shirt and jacket still fit well, but the pants are a problem. Eugene holds his breath, tugs hard at the zipper, and fastens the top button with some difficulty. He slouches in order to see himself in the full-length mirror and wonders absently if pleats are still in fashion.

Finally, he smooths back a few thin strands of hair and adjusts the glasses on the bridge of his nose. The lenses are smudged, but he does not bother to wipe them clean. Nor does he bother to put on his shoes.

It doesn't matter now. He is ready.

The razor blades are in a drawer under the bathroom sink. He rips the package open and takes one of the blades between his thumb and forefinger. He drops the remaining blades to the floor, showering the ceramic tiles with a thousand tiny metallic *pings*.

He eases into the tub. The water is warm, and the loose fabric of his pant legs wavers like ghosts against his thighs. He holds the blade to his wrist, marvelling at how the flawless steel edge reflects the light. He expects the pain to be swift and clean, something akin to a paper cut. But despite his calm, his heart begins to beat heavily in his chest—a relentless, aching rhythm that resonates in his throat and at the base of his skull.

He is ready to draw the blade down when, suddenly, he notices a sound that he had not heard during the evening's preparations. Faint, just beneath the *drip drip drip* of the faucet: music.

Music.

Through the walls, from the apartment next door, he can hear the strains of jangling guitars. The Beach Boys, perhaps, or some unbearably cheerful group singing about surfing, or girls, or surfing girls. As much as he tries, he cannot block out the music, and his focus begins to drift. He can no longer concentrate on the task at hand.

"Oh, for Pete's sake," Eugene cries. He pulls himself from the bath, his drenched suit clinging to his body. He slips and slides across the tiles, narrowly avoiding the mess of razor blades scattered over the floor.

He tears open his apartment door, storms into the hallway, and hammers his fist on the door of apartment 2B. He waits for a moment, listening for footsteps. A radio announcer taunts him from the other side of the door. He hammers at the door once again, louder this time. Then, dripping onto the hall carpet, he stands and waits. Under his feet a damp, dark circle is now spreading.

But still there is no answer.

Soon, though, the song changes and he hears the muted reverberation of “Crimson and Clover” drift from the blaring radio. The song washes over him, pulls him under, and he decides to finish what he has started.

He moves toward his apartment door, his socks squelching with every step. Not until he grabs the handle does it occur to him that the door is locked and that he has left his keys in the apartment, on his bedside table. He can almost see them sitting in the little china dish, the only wedding gift he had decided to keep.

A rumbling escapes his throat, and he raps his forehead against the door. He stands there for a while, eyes cast down on the worn threshold, thinking.

Then it comes to him.

The rooftop.

Of course, he has considered it before. It has always been a “plan B,” of sorts.

The rooftop.

From behind the door of 2B, Eugene can still hear “Crimson and Clover” looping toward its conclusion: *“Crimson and clover, over and over. Crimson and clover, over and over . . .”* It will be the mantra for his remaining moments on earth.

He moves for the door at the end of the hallway. The stairwell will lead to the rooftop, but will it be open? He has passed by the door on many occasions, each time wondering if it might be locked. But this time he tries the door, and the handle turns for him.

“Crimson and clover, over and over . . .” He shoves the door open and makes his ascent.

When he reaches the rooftop exit, he finds the door wedged open with a small block of wood. He steps out onto the roof, tripping on the block of wood and knocking it out of place. The door slams shut behind him, leaving him stranded in the night.

So much the better. There can be no going back.

Then a voice startles him from the darkness. “I put that block there for a reason,” it says coldly.

Eugene spins on his heels to see the vague outline of a woman standing next to him.

“The door locks from the inside, otherwise,” she continues. Her annoyance is not subtle.

“Sorry,” Eugene says lamely.

There is a long silence, followed by a cool breeze. Eugene shivers in his wet clothes. “On occasion,” he says, stumbling over his words, “I can be somewhat . . . accident-prone.”

“Apparently so,” she says.

Eugene’s eyes begin adjusting to the dark, and he can see that the woman is wearing a bathrobe and slippers. She is slim and pretty, with mussed, shoulder-length hair as fair as her complexion. Her left arm

hangs at her side, seemingly useless, and in the available light he can see that there is a long, vertical scar just below her left eye.

Eugene marvels that even with the anger and anxiety clouding her features, she is still beautiful. If she lives in the building, he has never noticed her before.

“And what do you suggest we do now?” she asks.

Eugene has no answer for her. He begins to hammer on the stairwell door, desperately trying to communicate with the world of the apartment. His fists grow numb. No one comes.

Eugene offers her a weak smile, and then shoves his fists into his pockets.

They pass the time looking up at the night sky; they listen to the faint strains of traffic that emanate from the streets below. Eugene finds himself grasping for something to say to her, but the night has been too strange.

She shatters the silence. “I like to come up here and look at the stars,” she says.

Eugene watches her, admiring her profile as he listens.

“My son was a stargazer,” she continues. “He talked about being a scientist: an astronaut, maybe. And he could have done it, too. He was very bright.” She puts her good hand delicately to the scar under her eye. “But he died on New Year’s Day.”

“I’m sorry,” Eugene mumbles.

“My husband moved to Vancouver soon after,” she says. “I suppose he needed the distance and the mountains to separate himself from it all.”

Eugene opens his mouth to speak, but he can think of nothing else to say other than, once again, “Sorry.” And so he says nothing at all.



“I look at the stars and hope to see my son there,” she says. “But I haven’t seen him yet.”

They are silent for a time until finally she turns and looks Eugene up and down. “You’re all wet,” she remarks.

“Yes,” Eugene says.

She stares, waiting for an explanation.

“I . . . ah . . . slipped in the tub,” he says finally.

At first she can manage only stunned silence. Then she laughs—a high, staccato trill she attempts to stifle with her good hand. The sound is sweetness to Eugene, and he laughs with her.

And suddenly the tension shatters, and they both begin pounding on the

stairwell door in mock terror.

“Help!” the woman cries. “Somebody help us! Anybody! Please!”

“Save our souls!” Eugene chimes in.

They pause, breathless, laughter playing around their faces. The woman smiles at Eugene and then extends her hand.

“Sophie,” she says. “I’m in 2B.”

Eugene is at a loss for a moment. Then he smiles and takes her hand firmly in his own.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Dancing with the . . . Scientists?

With the finale of the popular hit show just around the corner, people are becoming increasingly interested in *Dancing*—and in dancing. But dance isn’t all glitzy visuals; there’s a lot of science behind all that moving and shaking, and dance is just as elemental elsewhere in the world (or universe) as it is in the ballroom. The following links might help you appreciate the beauty and art of dance all the more.

Have a Ball

Dancing pendulums? It’s hard to think of such a prosaic item as having artistic qualities, but that’s exactly what happened when a team of Harvard researchers put together a set of pendulums that, when released, created an intricate and mesmerizing dance. NPR has the video demonstration.

Strength and Balance

We all know it takes more than sparkly costumes and fancy footwork to make a good dancer. This ESPN clip describes some of the science behind dancing—including how the dancers’ muscle use is akin to that required from other athletes, like basketball players and pole vaulters.

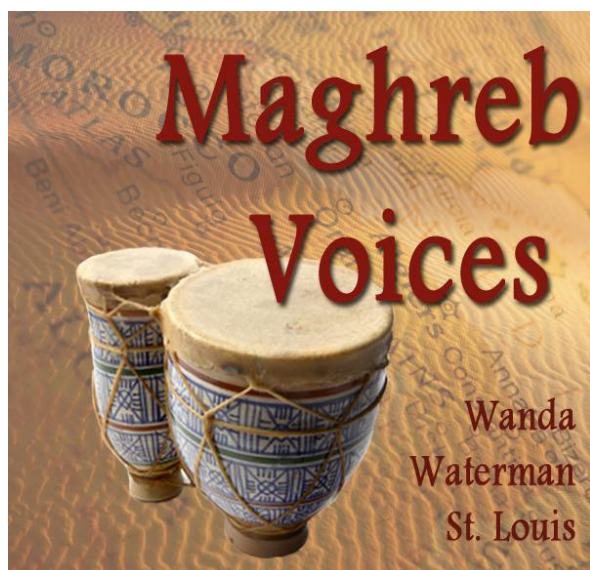
Reach for the Sky

How about dancing with the real stars—or perhaps their co-dwellers in the sky, the planets? This month, four of the brightest planets in our solar system are visible close together, grouped in what *Sky and Telescope* magazine calls “fascinating and ever-changing patterns.” Click for a video of the planetary “dance,” as well as instructions on how you can view the celestial spectacle yourself.

Shake Those Tail Feathers

Previously, scientists thought that the ability to dance—move in time with the beat—was exclusive to humans. However, a few years ago studies of parrots overturned this concept. NPR has the fascinating video—and a discussion of what this means for biology, neuroscience, and what we know about mimicry.





Out From Behind a Thousand Windows

Book: Tariq Ramadan, *The Quest for Meaning: Developing a Philosophy of Pluralism* (Penguin 2010).

“The goal of the journey is the journey itself . . . poetically put, it is a journey that takes us far away, and back to ourselves. In order to find there our being, a liberated ego, God, reason, the heart, or the void. But always, always, tenderness and love.”

Tariq Ramadan, from the introduction to *The Quest for Meaning*

Imagine a massive block of apartment buildings looking out onto a lovely park. Amazing plants grow in the garden, amazing creatures sport in the lake, and myriad birds circle the sky and land in the lush trees. But because the tenants won't leave their apartments, they can only see this world from behind their windows.

Each window is designed to allow a distinctive view of the garden, and although the tenants in each wing of the apartment complex agree roughly on what they see, there are deep ideological conflicts.

But if these tenants were to turn their backs on these windows, descend the elevator, and go outside to actually *look* at what it is they think they have a handle on, the differences—not all, but most—would fall away. It's kind of like Plato's argument in *The Republic*: the true philosopher is the one who turns his back on the shadows in the cave and goes outside to see what's making those shadows.

Now that we see that this garden is in fact Ramadan's metaphor for reality—and the building a metaphor for religious pluralism—what are some of the questions within this reality that we can't seem to agree on?

For starters, who or what is God and with what faculties should we be addressing the questions of his existence, his nature, and his demands? How should we treat each other? How are we to negotiate the terms of a new liberty without letting go of the richness and freedoms afforded us by our finest traditions?

Ramadan, a Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University, is clearly a master of both Eastern and Western ideas, with profoundly original insights into both. He addresses each question in meticulous detail, pointing out the hazards and necessities of working out the terms of pluralism to build a society in which multiple points of view can safely coexist.

The Quest for Meaning could not have come at a more appropriate time. It appears on many world fronts that human survival depends on dialogue, on reaching consensus on a few key issues, both within religions (tensions between fundamentalists and moderates can be deadly) as well as between them.

The Quest for Meaning is a significant and vital contribution to a debate that now concerns, in one way or another, every being on this planet, and the insights within it are as rich in compassion as they are in wisdom. Ramadan's arguments are, as always, exquisitely worded paragons of reason and clarity.



Adventure Show Seeks Techno-Dependent Students

Erin Ottosen, for *Open AU*



Operation Unplugged wants to send you into Canada's great outdoors.

Are you a student who loves being plugged into the Internet, social media and all manner of techno-gadgets? If so, a new TV show wants to take them all away from you . . . and reward you generously.

Operation Unplugged, a six-episode TV series that will air on the Travel and Escape channel, is unplugging eight post-secondary students from their techno-vices and whisking them

away on an outdoors competition this summer.

The eight students cast for the show will have all their travel expenses paid, and they'll also earn \$1,000 a shoot week plus a \$4,000 bonus.

The competition will take them from coast to coast on a tour of Canada's national parks, and they'll be guided by Alan Bishop, a world adventurer who has also served as a producer on *Survivor* and *The Amazing Race*.

You may be the perfect candidate for *Operation Unplugged* if you're what casting associate Marilyn Fabrizio calls "techno-dependent."

"Techno-dependent means you are techno-obsessed and cannot bear the thought of being unplugged," she says.

You must also be:

- 18+
- enrolled in full-time higher education or career training for the fall
- available for up to five weeks in a row this summer
- outgoing

Applicants must answer a questionnaire and submit photos and a video. The application deadline is May 27. For more information, please visit the *Operation Unplugged* [website](#).

Originally published in *Open AU*, May 16, 2011. Reprinted with permission.

AUSU and *The Voice* wish all the best to our students in Slave Lake.

Our thoughts are with you during this difficult time.



From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Love List

More, “Canada’s magazine celebrating women over 40,” is a content-rich, timely, relevant magazine covering issues of interest to the mature female. As much as I enjoy it, it’s impossible to read any publication cover to cover, and this one is no exception. I cherry-pick those articles and features that speak to me at that precise moment.

So reading “More Connected,” the letters page, is out of the ordinary for me. Yet for the past two issues I have found myself reading and enjoying the section. It seems that in the February/March issue (before I began subscribing), someone wrote a “Love from A to Z” letter to the magazine. In it she identified 26 different loves from A to Z. Since then other readers have contributed their own lists.

Because I hate to be left out of anything fun, I drew up my own list. (In the context of this column I have a bit more space to elaborate, and I took it.) I hope it inspires you to put pen to paper or digits to keyboard and compose your own version.

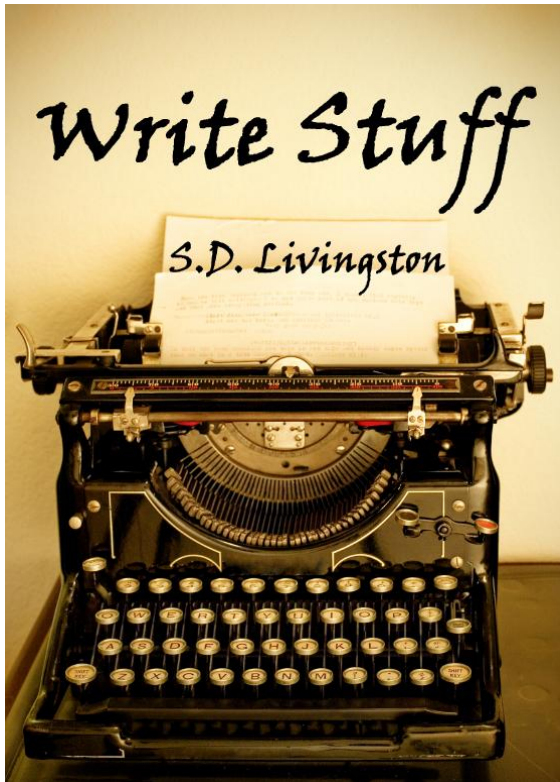
Without further ado, the list: Aubergine colour palette, artist’s pigment, aurora borealis, alstroemeria; Books of all kinds, babies’ soft skin and bright eyes, Bernie Siegel, blueberries, birch trees; Chocolate-covered almonds, Canmore, Carrie, cordless phones, chaise longues, cushions; Decorating books/magazines/TV shows, dill, Dodge Super B, digital camera, dream home; Excellence, energy, Enya, education, Edo Japan; Fossil watches, flea markets; Greg and grandson Grady, gold (the colour and the precious metal), gourmet food, a general practitioner I trust; Hilary, handbags, Halifax, hummingbirds,

HGTV; Ice cream, iPhone, investments, irises, Internet; Jewellery, journals, Julia Cameron; Knowledge, kindred spirits, kibitzing; Laptops, leather gloves, lilies, lottery tickets; and Mangoes, Merrells, and moolah.

How are you doing so far with your list? It takes reflection, creativity, and value judgements. (Am I bad for choosing moolah instead of mankind, or Fossil instead of fresh air or friends?) If you are so inclined you could add some fun: lists of people, lists of food and drink, lists of book titles only. You get the idea.

Now for the second half of the alphabet: Newspapers, naps; Orthotics, office supplies; Parents (thanks for the DNA!), peonies, passports, Post-It flags, Pachebel’s *Canon in D*, public art, plane tickets, pillows, prescription sunglasses, Pantalok; Quiche, quotation books; Roy (best friend and hubby), retreats, rolling luggage; Statuary, stationery, starry nights, skirts, scarves, San Jose del Cabo, sunshine, Scrabble; Travertine, tax-free savings accounts, throws, tote bags, Therese Bugnet roses; Urban Barn, ungulates, urbanism; Vases, vitamins, Venza; Walking down our road, watercolours, Words with Friends, weddings, words, words, words; Xylophone, Xerox; Yanni, yogourt, yard, Yak (long distance phone plan), and finally Zucchini cake, zero debt, and zigging and zagging.

Without intending to, I’ve created a long, alphabetical gratitude list. Anything that raises awareness, gives me pause, offers a challenge, and allows some tongue-in-cheek fun is all good. I can see why the exercise captivated *More* readers and led to list after list. Doing yours now would be good, from where I sit.



Indie World of Publishing, Part II: So You Think You Can Publish?

So you want to be a writer. Better yet, a *published* writer. The good news is that you have the power to make that happen—at less expense and to a wider audience than ever. The bad news? Well, that depends on what your version of a self-published home run looks like, but there are plenty of pitfalls to watch out for. In Part II of this series, we'll take a look at some resources to guide you on your way and, just maybe, save aspiring indie writers time and money.

Let's suppose you've got a glimmer of the world's best self-help book floating around in your head. Or you've just finished your Great American Novel and can't wait to introduce it to the world. Either way, the most valuable nugget of truth you'll find is this: self-publishing is not a get-rich-quick scheme. Sure, fine. You already know that. Except maybe, just maybe, *your* book is different and it will serendipitously land in just the right person's hands . . .

So I'll say it again. Self-publishing is *not* a get-rich-quick scheme. Which is why you need to be straight with yourself about your reasons for doing it. If you just want a few copies of your travel memoir to share with friends, you'll probably find some of these cautionary links valuable. On the other hand, if you're in it to build a career, you might want to bookmark some of the industry-related sites and set aside some serious reading time. (And if you've still got dreams of instant Hocking-esque success, don't forget she'd been honing her skills and collecting rejections for nine years before hitting it big.)

No matter what your publishing goals are, one of the most valuable sites you'll find is the [Writer Beware](#) blog. It's written by A.C. Crispin and Victoria Strauss (along with occasional guest bloggers), and they're not fooling when they say the site “shines a bright light into the dark corners of the shadow-world of literary scams, schemes, and pitfalls.” Read it. Search the archives. Keep reading. At the very least, you could save yourself from falling into the pit of a [vanity press](#).

Which brings us to the subject of pay to play. These schemes aren't new, and they all have one thing in common: the “publisher” makes its money by charging writers exorbitant fees for services and, in a lot of cases, obligating the writer to buy dozens of copies of his own books. They run the gamut from premium publishing packages to [vanity anthologies](#), but the bottom line's the same. They make their money off writers, not book sales. Unless you're prepared to throw thousands of dollars away on overpriced services of dubious quality, run.

So what's an aspiring indie author to do? There are plenty of options and they too have a common element: just like reputable agents and publishers, they take their cut from actual book sales, not writers' pockets. If you're still not sure of the difference, this [Writer Beware post](#) explains it clearly.

Before we start dropping names here, there's an important distinction to make. Publishers typically take all the financial risks. They pay for acquisition editors, copy editors, cover design, publishing, and so on. If

you're going to self-publish, it's not unreasonable that those costs now belong to you. Legitimate editors, artists, and layout and conversion providers get paid. Period. They're professionals providing service for a fee. But vanity presses often lure writers with veiled promises of the "inside track" that comes with premium packages, never mind the need to buy thousands of dollars' worth of your own book. A good editor or proofreader does just that, with no promises or obligations beyond a job well done.

"Self-publishing is not a get-rich-quick scheme . . . you need to be straight with yourself about your reasons for doing it."

When it comes to getting your book in front of readers, the big name (for now) is Amazon. Although the landscape's shifting, they still own the lion's share of the market, and they offer two relatively simple and cost-free ways to publish. The first is Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) and the other is CreateSpace, which is print-on-demand. Say what you will about Amazon's cutthroat business approach, they've created a pleasant user interface and host friendly, well-moderated community discussion boards.

Two notes about this distribution channel. The first is that CreateSpace offers a Pro Plan option for \$39 US, but everything I've seen in the community points to the cost being worth it, especially since it translates into higher royalties.

The other note is for non-US writers. Amazon (and other US sales channels) don't have a choice and must withhold 30 per cent for the IRS unless you provide a special US tax number. The process is a little convoluted but definitely doable—I got one with minimal hassle—but here's the trick: you need a signed paper copy of a letter from the distributor, and I've yet to hear of a writer that's managed to finagle one out of Amazon. On that point, KDP scores a fail.

And that brings us to Smashwords. If you're seeking broad e-book distribution without the trouble of managing individual sales channels, look no further. Smashwords founder Mark Coker has made it remarkably painless to get your books into Sony's Reader Store, Apple's iBooks, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Diesel Books, and into mobile e-reading apps like Stanza and Aldiko. Can you negotiate your way into several of these channels yourself? Yes, but if you'd rather spend your time writing than submitting invoices and creating a variety of formats, giving up a share of royalties might be worth it.

Again, a couple of things bear mentioning. Much like KDP, Smashwords doesn't dictate what should or shouldn't be published, short of some rules about offensive content. So don't be surprised to see some dreck if you land on the homepage, but don't let that turn you off either. Like indie titles in general, you'll find some absolute gems among the muck—and Smashwords lets you filter by bestsellers and highest rated. Where Mark and the Smashwords team score high is their honesty about what to expect, their suggestions for marketing, their transparency via regular site updates, and their willingness to send that all-important US tax letter once your royalties hit the \$10 mark.

One of the final names I'll mention is Lulu. Much like Amazon's KDP service, Lulu's an established player and lets you self-publish everything from novels to photo calendars. It's a print-on-demand service, and unless you opt to pay for their upgraded services it doesn't cost you, the publisher, a thing.

That covers the main bases; now you've got your homework cut



out for you. But if you're serious about building an indie career, there are a couple of other sites you can't afford to miss. One is [The Book Designer](#) blog by Joel Friedlander. He generously shares decades of experience in his articles on everything from cover design to editing, and your time will be well spent.

When it comes to the realities of earning your daily bread as an indie, you'll get a refreshing dose of it from [JA Konrath](#) over at his blog, *A Newbie's Guide to Publishing*. Don't say you haven't been warned.

Next week, we'll look at some of the places indie writers and readers gather. In the meantime, if you're still not convinced that publishers and agents often reject quality writing, take a minute to check out this [*Guardian piece*](#) on how Lionel Shriver's "widely rejected manuscript become a best-selling, prize-winning novel, then a book-club favourite and now the toast of the Cannes film festival."

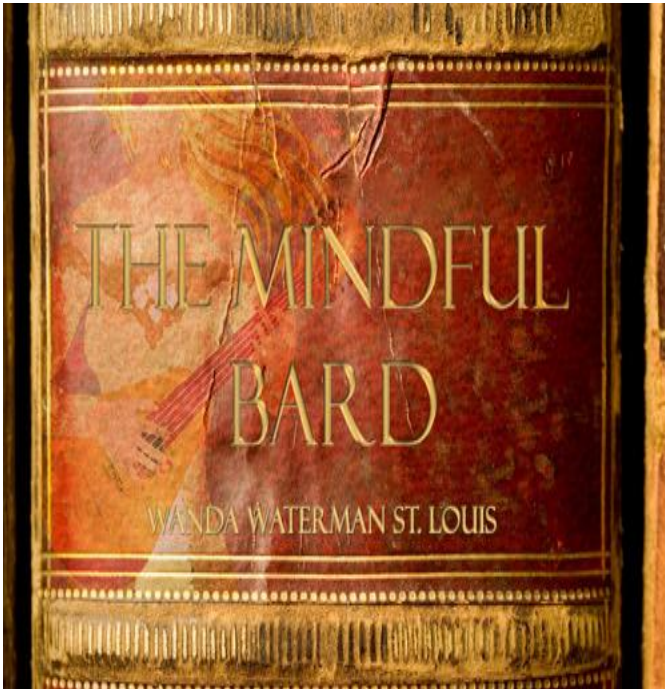
And don't forget the emerging trend among publishers to wait for indie books to climb the charts before making an offer. Like Corvus, which just acquired seven titles by a self-published writer.

Write on.

CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman St. Louis





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

Album: Rose Laughlin, *House of Memory* (Ramblin' Rose Records 2011).

Beauty Reclaimed

"Beauty reclaims

The desert of my heart

With springs

That quicken into streams

Of joy; where thoughts,

Like homing swallows, dart

Through watered reaches

Bright with dreams."

Marie Barton

Folk music tends to be one of those things that is easy to do, but hard to do well. Although the song structures are typically simple and repetitive, they usually have emerged from of old and have carried with them shreds of their mysterious beginnings. And then, of course, folk music has always been a vehicle for describing political struggles, important historical events, great loss, and grand *amours*. Even the newer songs are still part of the old traditions and so can't quite escape the essential weightiness of the genre.

So how to do it well? By going deep; in other words, by exploring the material, picking that one amazing song and living it, steeping yourself in it, and then singing it alone until it becomes a part of you and carries a piece of you with it into its next incarnation.

This is how Rose Laughlin has managed to build a small body of exceptional recorded material comprised of thoughtful interpretations of standard folk repertoire, sprinkled with the odd show tune and original composition.

In a throaty, vibrato-rich voice she explores the cracks and crevices of well-chosen songs and manifests hidden meanings by means of meticulous timing and attentiveness to lyrical content.

The poem quoted above, written by Marie Barton, sums up a key component of the Mindful Bard aesthetic: the healing, renewing, engendering power of beauty. This album provides that kind of oasis of tranquility, ripe with surprises while serene with grace.

*"I believe in baby
steps, and then
bam, one day,
you're actually
where you set out
to be."*

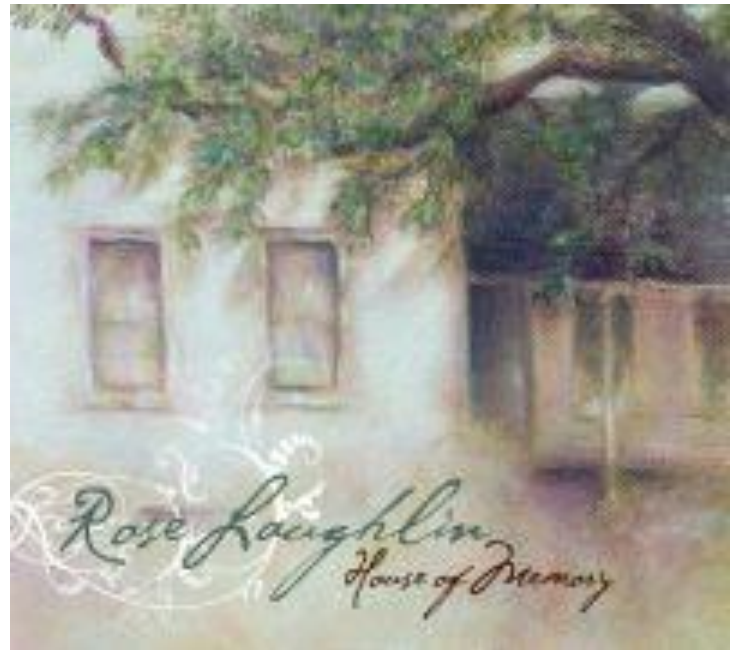
Rose Laughlin

These are just a few high points from the album: a life-affirming “Broom of the Cowdenknowes,” a unique rendition of “Suzanne,” Rose’s original composition “House of Memory,” and a thrilling, pulsating “Pastures of Plenty.” She’s included more Celtic songs here among the American gems than in her 2008 album *The Chicago Sessions*, and has given them amazing new interpretations that remain true to their past.

The arrangements are every bit as inspired as the singing, and it’s clear these musicians are ardently loyal to Rose’s vision.

Such a career is always a work in progress, dependent on a scrupulous mindfulness. In a *Voice* [interview](#) last year, Rose explained her gentle but rigorous work ethic: “I am continually learning and trying to stretch myself in small ways. I believe in baby steps, and then bam, one day, you’re actually where you set out to be.”

House of Memory manifests six of The Mindful Bard’s [criteria](#) for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 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; and 6) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.



DID YOU KNOW?



Watch Convocation Online

Mark your calendars for June 9-11: Athabasca University’s Convocation ceremonies are just around the corner. If you’re unable to travel to Athabasca to participate in the festivities, if your special friends and relatives can’t make the trip to support you in person, or if you’d just like a preview of your own future graduation, there’s good news: AU’s website will be webcasting live footage of the Convocation ceremonies.

Coverage starts at 11:45 am MST on each day. For more information, or to watch live, visit AU’s [Convocation web page](#). You can also view footage from last year’s ceremonies, as well as browse photo albums of previous AU grads.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Adopt a Bee

Bumblebees may be a crucial part of the agricultural and natural cycle, but few urban and suburban dwellers are happy to discover them lurking around the front porch. Fear of stings (and of insects in general) prompts many to exterminate bumblebee colonies despite the long-term benefits of their presence. However, a new program in Calgary may offer a solution that keeps both residents and bees on good terms.

As the CBC [reports](#), a local “bee advocacy group” is pioneering a “new foster program” that will allow unwanted colonies to be moved without being destroyed.

The program, which will be staffed by volunteers from the Community Pollinator Foundation, seeks to “try to find new homes” for the displaced bees.

Professor Robin Owen, of Mount Royal University, told reporters that bees “really won’t do you any harm unless you threaten them directly.” In fact, the professor added, bumblebees “are extremely beneficial.”

The new program will allow the threatened insects to carry out their important role with minimal disturbance to both bees and homeowners.

Around the World: No More Mr. Clean

Now that the warm weather is coming back, we’re often consumed by a desire to spring clean. Drapes are washed, floors scoured, furniture dusted. Every last speck of dust and dirt is banished from the remotest corners of the home. But is this a mistake?

As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), all that cleaning may be “counter-productive,” in fact reducing the air quality in your house.

As recent study discovered that “household dust actually purifies the air by neutralizing harmful ozone.” While ozone is vital in the upper atmosphere, at lower altitudes it “is a pollutant that can damage our lungs.”

It’s not even a matter of that old-fashioned notion of a peck of dirt. Rather, it’s the dust containing remnants of shed human skin that does the air-clearing trick. Squalene, a compound found “in the oils of our skin,” neutralizes ozone in the air—up to “15 per cent,” according to the study.

Despite the benefits of dust, however, it can still compromise the air quality of “allergy-sufferers.”

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.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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