

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

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Lawyers Logging In

A blogger writes the wrong

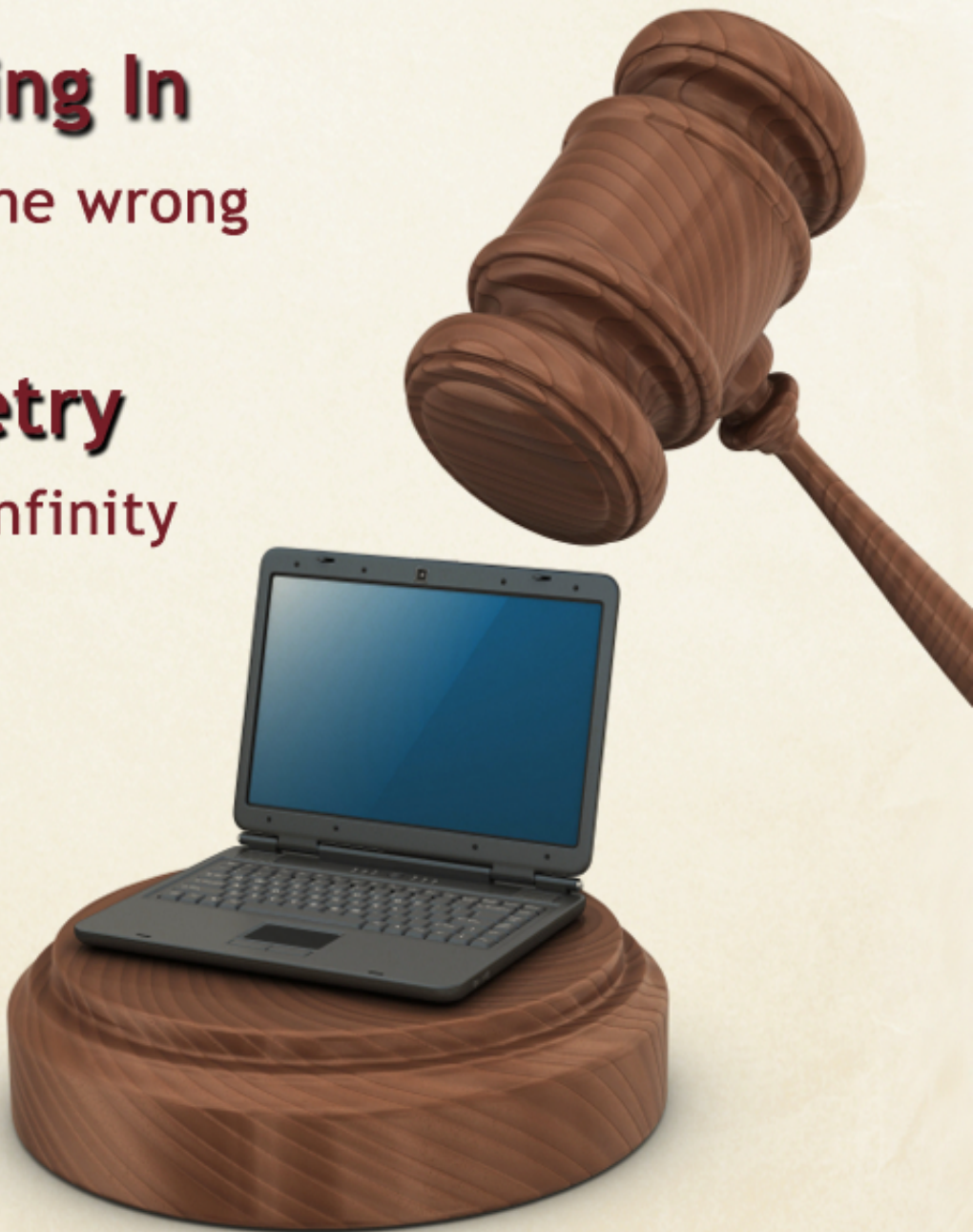
Music and Poetry

Freedom, chaos, infinity

Ghost Tales

Foulksrath Castle

*Plus:
Health Matters
From Where I Sit
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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THE HAUNTING OF FOULKS RATH CASTLE

John Buhler



This Halloween the spirits of the departed will once again walk the land during the night's trick-or-treating. Apparitions will dart from door to door, and small ghosts and ghouls will abound in touristy "haunted houses." But what of the real legends of haunting? Places where the dead are said to make themselves known to the living? Let's explore one such place: an Irish castle known as Foulksrath, an imposing structure that I visited during the spring of 2000.

Scattered about Ireland are the remains of as many as 3,000 castles. Most of them were not built by the Irish, but rather symbolize oppression and domination by a foreign presence. For that reason, many of these structures have not been maintained, and some were even purposely destroyed. Their remains stand on lonely cliffs, in the middle of fields, along highways, and even in towns and cities. In some places, only a single wall remains, or perhaps one might find a part of a courtyard invaded by yew trees, gorse bushes, and weeds.

Foulksrath castle, in the southeast corner of Ireland, had also been neglected and in fact was scheduled to be destroyed when An Óige, the Irish Youth Hostel Association, purchased it in 1946. Once a symbol of the overlord's wealth and power, the renovated castle found a new life offering cheap accommodations to budget-minded travellers. That is until recently, when the costs of maintaining the ancient structure forced An Óige to put the site up for sale.

Although the word *castle* conjures up images of massive stone fortresses with multiple towers and possibly a drawbridge, Foulksrath is actually a tower-house, a smaller castle. Built around 1550, Foulksrath is nevertheless a formidable edifice that even today presides over the peaceful meadows and lush green farmland around it.

Although it is surrounded by a placid and quiet countryside, enclosed within its ancient defensive walls are said to be restless spirits, apparitions that dwell in the tower and from time to time make their presence known to visitors. Tales of these ghosts, told and retold in a variety of ways, added a mystique to the building when it was in use as a hostel. Perhaps they even helped draw curious travellers to a small and somewhat obscure castle in a rural corner of Ireland.

In one well-known legend, it is said that a gaunt and lonely looking dark-haired young lady can often be seen looking out from one of the windows. According to the story, she had fallen in love with a lowly soldier; the relationship was forbidden by her father, who locked her in the tower. However when her

father went away to war, she was left completely alone and starved to death. With her eyes forever searching the distant horizon, she waits in vain for someone to release her from her prison.

Though the story of this victim of starvation and desertion creates a haunting image, some versions of the tale rework this legend. Rather than having the lady in the tower starve to death, John Dunne, in *A Ghost Watcher's Guide to Ireland* (2001), provides us with a happier ending (and a frankly much less captivating tale). According to Dunne, a former lord of the castle locked up his daughter in an effort to prevent her from marrying a local man. With the help of a cuckoo bird, the young lady is somehow rescued from her prison, and later weds her lover.

It is intriguing to speculate whether Dunne, buoyed by contemporary events (including positive signs from the peace process in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic's improved economic situation), reflected the island's new-found optimism in his version of this story. The lovers break from the divisions, deprivations, and violence of Ireland's past and avoid a tragic end to their relationship.

"It is intriguing to speculate whether Dunne, buoyed by contemporary events . . . reflected the island's new-found optimism in his version of this story. The lovers break from the divisions, deprivations, and violence of Ireland's past and avoid a tragic end to their relationship."

Another Foulksrath tale with differing interpretations is the story of the November footsteps. Dunne also tells us about the eerie footsteps and opening door which are allegedly heard every year on a certain night in November. He doesn't elaborate further, however.

In contrast, *Haunted Castles of Britain and Ireland*, published only a couple years later, gives us a firm date for the annual return of this spirit. It also explains the alleged haunting: the noises, it is said, are associated with an older castle that once occupied the site. That castle was built in the 13th century by a Norman, Fulco De La Frene; the annual visitor is said to be the ghost of a sentry who, while on duty, was found asleep by De La Frene, hoisted up over the battlements, and thrown to his death. According to the legend the sentry, having failed in life to perform his duty, returns every November 29 to take up his post. People claim to have heard feet shuffling along the stairs and the sound of a heavy door opening.

Perhaps the differing versions only add to the eeriness of these stories—or perhaps the inconsistencies are proof that there is no truth to these tales. It is not only collections of ghost stories that report creepy happenings at Foulksrath; for example, it is also said that a BBC crew filming at the location had unusual difficulties with its equipment. Maybe there really is something spooky going on there?

In any case, during my one night at the Foulksrath hostel, I encountered no apparitions, heard no inexplicable noises, felt no shivers down my spine. Nevertheless, I am still fascinated by the ghost stories of Foulksrath: how they change and take on lives of their own, and the status that they still provide to the old tower.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman



Nazim Elnur

Nazim Elnur is a spoken word and hip hop artist. He was born in Khartoum, Sudan, where he spent his early childhood. After previously attending the American College in Cairo, Egypt, he is now studying political science at McGill University in Montreal. Recently he took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about poetry, music, and combining the two.

Lost From Recallable Memory

I have ephemeral memories of being raised in the Sudan, but other than that my childhood remains quite lost in terms of recallable memory. I went back to live in the Sudan again for a year or so around the year 2000. It's clearly worrisome that I do not remember my childhood well. I wonder if this was caused by some trauma that I repressed.

I have no doubt in my mind, however, that this dark frontier left strong legacies in the constitution of my character. This scares me, but only in the ordinary sense of man's fear of the unknown.

Quite fittingly, as African tradition holds it, most of what I know from my childhood was passed down as oral history to me. It's refreshing reading the book of your life from an almost detached perspective.

The amalgamation of what I've heard about myself rationally concludes that I was no less than a spawn of the devil. Stories of ruining weddings, spontaneously deciding to walk home alone from kindergarten, killing a cat at the age of five—which awarded me the nickname Aeetrees ("the one who has killed the Kadees [cat])—and other trouble-infested tales all sounded foreign to me. Nonetheless, they were infinitely more enjoyable to hear from the perspective of a spectator, rather than from that of the actual person involved.

Love of Words

I have no fairy tale to tell you here. From my view, I never really came to "love words" as much as I just found it natural to tamper with them. Of course, now I could more concretely and eloquently convey to you what feelings I associate with poetry—a connection with nature's rhythm, a physical manifestation of the metaphysical—but back then, fifth grade to be precise, it was much less (or perhaps more) than that.

Nazim Elnur on how poetry conveys meaning: "Its ability to be reborn, metamorphose, and evolve endlessly appeals to my obsession with infinity and formlessness . . . There is a magic in that, in the universality of it . . ."

I don't really remember when I got introduced to poetry. The reason I started writing was simply because of a Sudanese-oriented general forum called Shamarat.net, which had a sub-forum dedicated to poetry.

Reading this new form of writing could not have seemed more alien and at the same time more natural—alien because the only form of writing I had been introduced to was formal prose, the kind you see in school texts, novels, picture books, etc., and natural because I experienced a deep infatuation with poetry's ability to convey meaning.

Inherent in its indefinable forms was freedom (freedom from form and structure). This seemed to me then, and still does, to constitute a deeper connection to the chaotic, unordered, raw state of nature. The enigma of it both captivated and engaged me. Soon, within weeks, I was writing my own childish poems.

The intrinsic value of poetry itself is what truly intrigues me. Its ability to be reborn, metamorphose, and evolve endlessly appeals to my obsession with infinity and formlessness (concepts that consistently and simultaneously baffle us, challenge our perception, and belittle our human hubris). There is a magic in that, in the universality of it, which unconditionally captures my devotion to poetry.

*"I wonder if we forget to
breathe sometimes*

*Where darkness has learned
to seize our sunshine*

*The heartless are the
heartbeats of our home*

*The dove soars far from the
feeble and prone*

*And it's not coming back,
not for you or for me*

*Cuz it's not coming back 'til
the people are free"*

*Nazim Elnur, "I'm From"
(excerpt)*

Creative Conditions

In an ideal world, no conditions are needed, but any stimulation of the human experience can definitely help, emotion being usually the most cited one among artists. It's not necessarily the only one, however. I sometimes find myself equally inspired by my emotionless and detached relationship to something. Needless to say, differing sources of inspiration correspond to different artistic outcomes.

Poetry and Music

I believe poetry and music to be two sides of the same spell. The ancientness of these forms, beyond our contemporary conception, constitutes a vein that's rooted deep in the history of human flourishing. I find in both, separate or combined, a kind of time capsule of the human experience on earth and a pure reflection of such.

For me, this has a deep significance. It resembles a duty I was entrusted with: to faithfully contribute to man's experience on planet earth.

HEALTH MATTERS**Katie D'Souza****Change of Season**

Many of us may have hoped that our recent bouts of chilly, rainy weather were just a slight blip in an otherwise mild fall forecast. However, the local weather forecast seems to suggest that the daytime temperatures will remain in the single digits, and there's cold rain on the horizon, too. It seems like the chilly, damp fall weather is here to stay—along with the colds and flus that the change of season inevitably brings. It's the time of year when everyone seems to be sick. But is it necessary to fall ill every autumn?

Fortunately, it's possible to reduce your chances of catching whatever's going around. Illness often occurs in the fall because the changing temperatures and humidity create stress on our bodies. Plus, used to the summer's warmer weather, we're often forgetful when it comes to bringing a jacket or sweater to ward off the damp chill. To boost your immunity, try these three steps:

Take Your Vitamins

Maybe it sounds trite, but vitamins can be crucial to immunity at this time of year. Vitamin C is a key preventative vitamin. Unfortunately we can't synthesize it, so we depend on our food intake to get enough. Raw fruits (oranges, apples, pears, and berries, for example) can be a reliable source of vitamin C. Additionally, taking a vitamin C supplement (preferably ascorbic acid with bioflavonoids) can help boost vitamin C levels in our cells.

A word of caution: if you're counting on getting your vitamin C from food, make sure that what you're eating really does contain it! For instance, oranges contain vitamin C—but orange juice that's been pasteurized (not freshly squeezed) has been heated, and heat denatures vitamin C, rendering it less effective.

Sleep Adequately

Now isn't the time to party excessively! To develop a strong immunity, your body needs its healing sleep. Maintaining a healthy sleep pattern for the next few weeks means you should be aiming for eight hours a night, preferably from 11 pm onward.

Eat This Soup

Chinese medicine associates the change from summer to fall with a "yin" time, meaning a necessary time of rest and relaxation. Traditional Chinese medicine has crafted a soup, commonly referred to as "Change of Season Soup," which, while nourishing, also contains medicinal plants to help boost our bodies'

immunity during this time. If one to two cups of the soup is consumed daily for two weeks, it will help harmonize the yin and reduce the bodily stresses associated with changing outdoor temperatures.

It's simple to make your own Change of Season soup. You'll need three dried medicinal herbs and one fresh or dried medicinal berry (discussed below). These can be put into a broth of your choice (vegetable or chicken are fine), and a mixture of vegetables (beets, onion, or squash, for example) can be added.

The four key plants in the soup are Codonopsis root, Astragalus root, Chinese yam (*Dioscorea*) root, and Lycii berries. Each of these ingredients has a specific role in tonifying different parts of the body or in bolstering immunity to prevent disease. You'll need equal parts of each plant in the soup (about 2-3 ounces of each); they're usually available at a health food store that stocks bulk herbs, or from your local Chinatown. Alternatively, they can be located online. Cook the herbs on medium heat in your broth/stock for five hours, adding vegetables to the stock if desired. The herbs can be removed with a slotted spoon prior to serving. To make it even easier, you can take any kind of vegetable stew that you like to make and eat, and then add these four medicinal ingredients to it to make it powerful.

The soup is comforting and nourishing, and packs an immunity punch at a time when our bodies take a little more environmental assault.

Adequate rest, vitamin C, and Change of Season soup will all help you battle the common change of season illnesses. Try one, or all three, and enjoy good health while the chilly rain beats down outside!

Katie D'Souza is an AU graduate and a licensed naturopathic doctor. She currently practices 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.

DID YOU KNOW?

Open Access Week



As more and more students reject traditional learning models, a more open-minded approach to educational delivery is becoming popular. In recognition of the need for universal access to educational materials, Open Access Week was born. The event, which provides presentations, activities, and resources, is dedicated to “promoting Open Access as a new norm in scholarship and research.”

The 4th annual Open Access Week (October 24-30, 2011) is happening right now! Events include seminars, workshops, conferences, addresses, and discussions, and are hosted by universities and organizations across the globe. Many of the events are available via online delivery.

Athabasca University hosts five of the week's events; topics range from challenges arising from social learning platforms to creating cohesive learning from fractured media to the sustainability of OER. For more information on these presentations, which are being webcast, visit AU's Open Access page. The page is also a goldmine of open access-related activities and resources.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Monstrous Romance

Halloween-inspired horror: it's an encompassing genre that seems more about blood, guts, and all-out fear than sweet romance and warm fuzzies. Yet there are surprising connections between both worlds. From old black and white horror flicks to the animal kingdom to modern marriage, these links explore the coupling of romance and horror.

I Now Pronounce You Undead

Toronto's annual Zombie Walk is all about the unhappily ever after—except for one couple, whose marriage just before last weekend's event was “the city's first-ever public zombie wedding.” The bride, in full skeleton makeup, was carried in a coffin to greet her werewolf-attired groom, and the vows were a part comical, part serious, and part gruesome mix of romantic and undead ideals.

Caught in a Web

It's widely known that in a number of spider species, the females kill their male “lovers” after mating. But not all the males are so smitten that they're keen to die for love. As recently discovered, the male golden orb-weaver spider will sometimes relax the female and make her more receptive and less aggressive—by giving her a back massage before mating. *National Geographic's* Daily News site has the video.

Beyond Popcorn

Some might argue that a good horror film is a great date movie—plenty of need for cuddling during the scariest parts. But in case the connection's not close enough to convince you, check out *Scars Magazine's* list of best romantic horror movies. There are more suggestions [here](#), and of course you can't forget about the doomed romance elements in silent horror classics like *Nosferatu* (1922) and *Phantom of the Opera* (1925). Or, if animated, milder fare is more your style, check out the more recent films *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) and *The Corpse Bride* (2005).

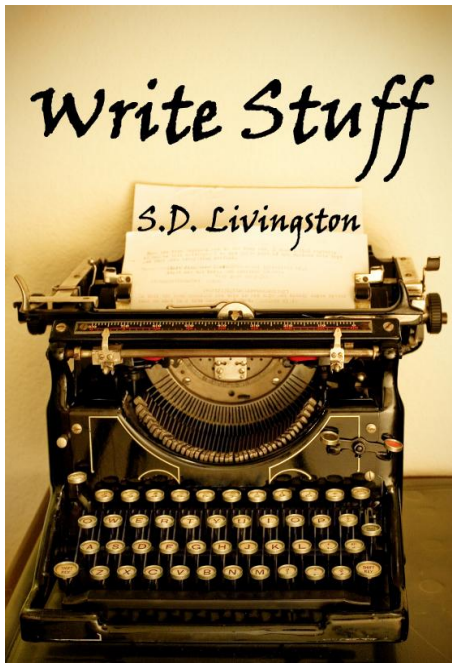


Green Light

Jack-O'-Lantern



Creating jack-o'-lanterns this weekend? Make the fun last beyond the season! On November 1, don't plastic-bag the pumpkins and put them out on the curb. If they're in decent condition—and if your weather's been cool they should be—you can roast them for cold-weather salads or steam, strain, and freeze the pumpkin “meat” for future recipes. Alternatively, since pumpkins are plant material, they can be composted. Or check with your local waste service; you may be able to put them out with the yard waste, where they'll be turned into mulch.



Legal Ease

Quick, what do trendy blogs and your grandma's self-published memoir have in common? They're both part of a revolution in the written word, a revolution that's given broad exposure to millions. It's also got us acting as our own publishers, editors, cover artists—and lawyers. That's right, lawyers, because lots of folks are now publishing with only their own vague knowledge of copyright, libel, and other legal risks. And that could leave them one real-life plot twist away from an unhappy ending.

There are plenty of ways that uninformed writers can run afoul of the law, and bloggers seem to have found many of them. Sometimes it's the information bloggers themselves post—even when the writers are people in the business of law enforcement. Take the case of a former Fairfield County, Ohio, sheriff's deputy, who posted a negative view of his boss on a blog. As this NBC article [notes](#), the deputy claimed that his right to free speech allowed him to openly voice his "concerns and opinions." But his boss (who was also the county sheriff) took a different view, claiming that the allegations were false.

The bottom line? The deputy lost his job, but vowed to file a federal lawsuit against his former boss. In this case, and many others, a little legal advice upfront might have saved a whole lot of lawyers' fees later.

In a [twist on that scenario](#), model Liskula Cohen sued Google to gain access to an anonymous blogger's identity. Google wasn't held responsible for the comments, but they owned the service that hosted the Blogger account—and ended up losing the case in court, forced to hand over records that revealed the blogger's name.

Writing a post isn't the only way you can get into legal trouble on your website; you might also be held responsible for comments you allow other people to post—or even have to prove you didn't write them yourself. In 2007, a popular blogger known as ShoeMoney was subpoenaed by a District Court in Nebraska, as an article at *Search Engine Journal* [reports](#). The subpoena wasn't for anything in a blog post. Instead, it involved a reader's comments left on the blog. But as the *SEJ* article notes, it's not outside the realm of possibility that bloggers might have to show proof, such as "IP tracking and other log file tracking methods," to prove they aren't simply posing as a reader and stacking their own blog comments.

Publishing and libel laws vary by country, of course, but in Canada even the act of posting links had the potential to spell trouble. At least it did until the Supreme Court of Canada handed down a relevant ruling on October 19 of this year. As Michael Geist writes on his [blog](#), the case of *Crookes v. Newton* "focused on the issue of liability for linking to allegedly defamatory content."

In part, the judge's ruling states that "a hyperlink, by itself, should never be seen as 'publication' of the content to which it refers."

It's a victory for common sense, but what about the tricky world of fiction? You've got a great plot mapped out, all about the inside world of Washington politics. There are crooked politicians and backroom dealings galore. To add a dash of realism you decide to use real-life characters like, say, President Obama. It's one thing to use a historical figure, but what about living people? You can mention them, but are you allowed to involve them in the action, or give them dialogue? What about lesser-known figures, like your friends and family?

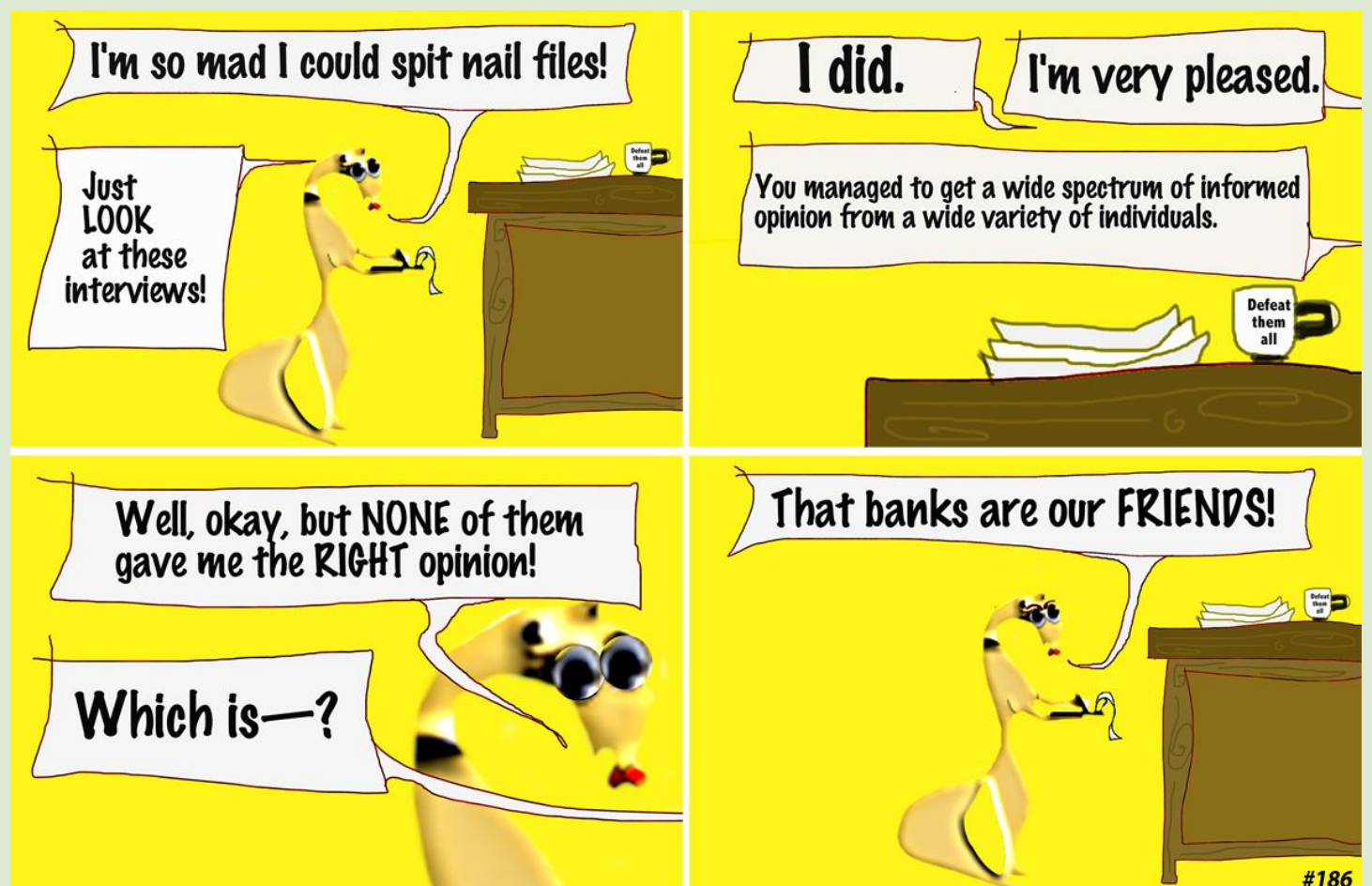
If you don't know the answer, you should definitely find out before writing your brother—or the president—into that scene.

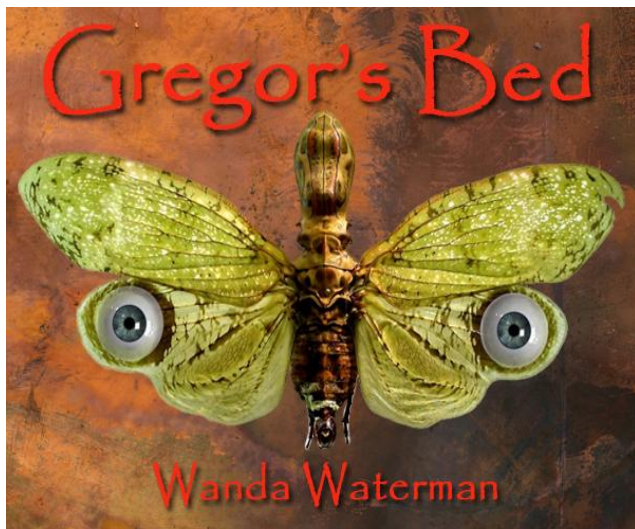
So how can you find your publishing voice without writing your own ticket to court? Get informed. The Canadian Encyclopedia has a good [primer on defamation](#), and the Electronic Frontier Foundation offers plenty of info in its [Legal Guide for Bloggers](#) (note that this only applies to US law).

It's a lot more fun to design your own book covers or choose the colours for your WordPress blog, but you should devote at least as much time to learning the basics of copyright, libel, and other issues. Otherwise, you could end up writing the final chapter in your own blogging career.

CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman





Recent Discoveries From the Realm of the Experimental and Avant-Garde

Album: Cybiont, *So much work for love* (2011)

"I loved skiing and skating by about the age of three, and by the age of four I was singing my heart out. I fell in love at six, hitchhiked for the first time at seven, got into my first and last physical fight ever at 12, had my heart broken at 14, started a band at 15, became politically engaged at 16, hitchhiked across South and Central America at 18, and then decided to start fighting for a better world."

People tell me it's time I grew up, but I think I might be too old for that now."

Cybiont, in a 2010 *Voice* [interview](#) with Wanda Waterman

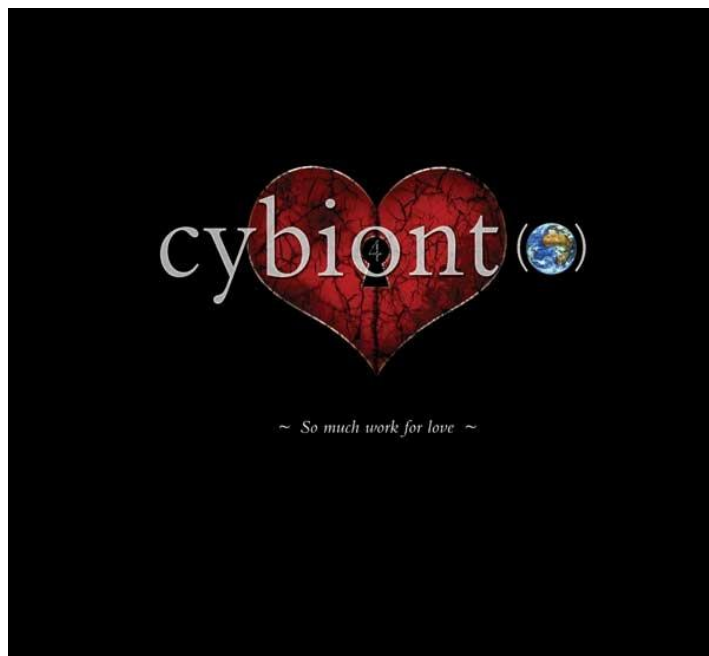
So Much Work For Love to Do—So Much Work For Me and You

I called Cybiont's last album, *Angels & Demons*, one of the most significant albums of the year. Cybiont, in an apparent act of pure spite, released an even better album this year.

A devotee of the French thinker Joël de Rosnay, the New Zealand-based Cybiont is inspired by the notion that we are about to turn an evolutionary corner and become one big organism called the "cybiont." This being, both organic and technological, would be made up of all forms of organizations and organisms—from cells to nations, from diodes to information networks, from neurons to the totality of human knowledge—and comprise a huge mind with human beings as brain cells.

If you want an idea of the general atmosphere of this album, imagine Kurt Weill, Sylvia Plath, and Laurie Anderson acting out *No Exit: The Musical* in a dank alley with industrial noises screaming in the background. Cybiont is a passionate and intense vocalist with a Scandinavian accent which would be utterly out of place with jazz standards or pop tunes, but which fits glovelike to his own unique brand of angst rock.

Cybiont as an artist really does lean on a philosophical concept for his inspiration in much the same way that hip hop artists lean on personal



experience—it provides him his *Weltanschauung* as well as his aesthetic. The *Weltanschauung* can be lifted almost verbatim from de Rosnay's work, but the aesthetic is a bit harder to define. As in Cybiont's last album, the music in *So much work for love* has a bricolage quality, a sense of being an assemblage of disparate parts, with emphasis on the harmony, equilibrium, tension, symbiosis, and reactions among these parts.

Some of the tracks, like "Music Gets Lonely" and "Waiting for the Past," are rich in a sweet, lonely sadness; others, like "Whau (Let Go)" and "Work it Out" are celebrations of the emerging reality of the oneness of everything.

Speaking of "Whau" (my favourite track on the album), I'm particularly enamoured of the playful and delightful melody and ecstatic harmony of the female backup singers, which makes a lovely counterpoint to all the irony. There's an upbeat 60s pop feel to this song but all the singers extol truth while you hear gears cranking in the background. The effect is spellbinding.

"The fundamental concepts that recur most often in biological, ecological, and economic models can easily be grouped into major categories: energy and its use; flows, cycles, and stocks; communication networks; catalysts and transforming agents; the readjustment of equilibriums; stability, growth, and evolution. And above all, the concept of the system—living system, economic system, ecosystem—that binds together all the others."

Joël de Rosnay, The Macroscope

Another lovely incongruity: amid all the deliciously gloomy utterances and minor keys comes the occasional sweet reflection that seamlessly merges the philosophy with the poetry. Like here, in the title track:

*"See that fly sitting there on the wall
Searching for what we call the human soul?
Even in hiding you can't avoid to see
That you are everything you wanted to be.
There is so much work for love to do . . ."*

This piece starts out with whole note progression that suggests Pachelbel's *Canon*, and the female voices form a precious descant.

A finished quality can be hard to achieve in experimental music because the forms are new, but when a piece sounds "polished" it's because you sense that the parts of the work are harmoniously integrated even as they eschew any externally imposed forms and traditions. This is truly the case here. *So much work for love* is a splendidly written, beautifully arranged, and gorgeously mastered set of tracks.



*From
Where
I Sit*

Hazel Anaka

Will You Join Me?

Every November since 1998, writers and would-be writers have demonstrated a unique form of insanity: taking part in National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo). Participants aim to write the first draft of a 50,000 word novel between November 1 and 30. Sometimes, through the miracle of revision, some of the output is saleable. One such story is [here](#).

This year I will be among those (pick all that apply) a) brave souls, b) desperate and blocked writers, and/or c) stark raving lunatics. I've considered it in the past and then promptly jammed out, but this year is different. Having just published a novel through Smashwords, I know just how much effort and sacrifice are involved in making it happen. While I'm about 10,000 words into a second one I'm lacking some momentum. Maybe tackling another genre and trying a new voice wasn't so clever after all? Maybe it's because I'm sidetracked by blogging and tweeting and reading RSS feeds and writing comments, all in the name of building a platform.

I'm counting on this disciplined but fun way of racking up the word count to be the kick in the butt I need. If I write every day, I need to pump out 1,666 words daily. If I miss a day or more, that number goes up. I've tried to clear the calendar of all but essential activities. All that's happening so far is a dental

appointment, a church perogy supper fundraiser, coordination of a planning session for 100 people, Remembrance Day, my son's birthday, four *Voice* columns, clocks falling back November 6, and hubby's four-day conference in Edmonton. Piece of cake.

I'm counting on the camaraderie and misery-loves-company aspect of this exercise for motivation and support. But staying strong against the time-suck of forums is critical. Maybe that could be a reward when the daily word count is complete.

In anticipation of this Big Deal I spent two good days trying to get my house in order. The visual clutter of stacks of books on every surface was getting to me. My once-brilliant system of alphabetizing by author (gee, maybe libraries are onto something) had disintegrated because I didn't build in space for new acquisitions. I culled a few titles that will make their way to Goodwill. I dusted shelves. I repeated the process in my office.

As for the writing, I have loosely sketched characters and a premise for the story. I do not have a title. According to NaNoWriMo founder Chris Baty's book *No Plot? No Problem!*, planning too much can be a mistake. He recommends no more than a week's effort.

The last days of October will be spent getting projects off my plate, planning nutritious, low-cal snacks, getting some of my music onto the iPod, and trying to flesh out my idea. A bouquet of flowers for my desk would be a nice touch. Have I convinced you to join me? It would be fun, from where I sit.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Tweets from the Field

Even with today's modern advances in farming technology, many city dwellers still think of the harvest with a pastoral, 19th-century setting in mind. But these days, farmers are as likely to be chronicling the harvest conditions online as rolling over the rust-coloured fields—and that tweeting you hear is coming from their iPads, not birds.

As the CBC [reports](#), Canadian farmers are discovering that “Twitter has become . . . a way to bridge the gap between farm and table, and connect Canadians wanting to know more about where their food comes from with the people who make their living producing it.”

Farmers tweet updates about everything from harvest conditions to what's affecting crops to how pesticides were used in the fields this year.

Livestock farmers also use communications technology to respond to concerns over “everything from hormones to antibiotic use in the dairy herd.”

Narrowing the so-called “social gap” between farmers and food consumers is a trend that fits well with movements favouring food awareness and local eating. And although the farming population is dwindling as cities grow, many urban dwellers are keen to “keep alive the connection to the land.”

Around the World: In Search of Sir Francis

Pirates in the Caribbean weren't merely a Hollywood invention. At one time, ships full of swashbucklers roamed the Caribbean seas—and their remains and those of their wrecks have lain below the waters for centuries. Now, a crew of explorers believes it's discovered the final resting place of one of the most historically famed pirates, Sir Francis Drake.

As the *Daily Telegraph* [reports](#), the “[treasure] hunters claim they have discovered two ships from Sir Francis Drake's fleet off the coast of Panama.” The famed pirate (and protégé of Queen Elizabeth) perished after an illness following an unsuccessful raid. Shortly afterward, his two ships were scuttled and sank.

Records indicate that Drake was buried at sea “in full armour and in a lead casket” in order to “ensure that no one – but especially the Spanish – would find his body.” But the treasure hunters are convinced they've located the two ships, and believe that Drake's coffin is nearby. Team leader Pat Croce told reporters that they “are 98 per cent sure” that their claims are correct.

Because the ships are in Panamanian waters they will not be surfaced, but Croce and his team plan to continue looking for Drake's remains.

AUSU UPDATE: October 21, 2011**Bethany Tynes, President****AUSU congratulates new party leaders!**

AU students are spread all over Canada and the world, but AU's funding comes from the Government of Alberta, so it's important for us, as AU students, to remain aware of political issues in Alberta. Alberta's political parties have recently undergone some transitions, as both the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties recently elected new leaders: Dr. Raj Sherman will now head up the Liberal party, while Alison Redford has been selected to lead the Progressive Conservatives. Redford was sworn in as Premier of Alberta on Friday, October 7. AUSU would like to thank all those who participated in the leadership races, and congratulate Sherman and Redford on their wins.

Councillors training to serve you better

All eight current AUSU councillors, as well as our two full-time student service staff, are currently involved in a Certified Student Leader training program through the National Centre for Student Leadership. This training covers critical issues such as successful communication, strategic planning, and conflict resolution, which we hope will better equip us to work productively together to serve the needs of our student members.

Increased student representation at AU

At most Alberta universities, two of the highest decision-making bodies are the Board of Governors, which provides strategic direction, and the General Faculties Council, which deals with academic matters. At AU, meanwhile, there has always been a Governing Council and an Academic Council—until recently! The Alberta Minister of Advanced Education and Technology has amended the Athabasca University regulations, moving AU closer into line with other Alberta universities. AU's Governing Council has now been replaced by a Board of Governors, and while this is mostly a change in nomenclature, the transformation as AU moves from an Academic Council (AUAC) to a General Faculties Council (AUGFC) will be more noticeable. AUSU is particularly pleased that undergraduate students at AU will now have two seats on AUGFC, as opposed to only one on AUAC. There will also be a reserved space on the GFC Executive Committee for an undergraduate student representative. This is great news, and will allow us, as undergraduate students, to ensure that our voice is heard within this important decision-making body at AU!

What are your course materials preferences?

AU is currently re-examining their course materials model. Currently, the cost of all undergraduate courses includes access to the necessary textbooks, and these are usually mailed directly to your door. This is convenient for many students, but many others have asked for the opportunity to look for bargains elsewhere, or to buy and sell used textbooks. What about you? How do you feel about the course materials system at AU? AU is asking students for their opinion! The question currently being posed to students is as follows:

In response to student feedback, AU is considering changing the way in which students access or receive their learning resources. Currently, all the learning resources costs are covered through tuition fees and the learning resources fee. These costs include textbooks, printed materials, access to the LMS and other digital resources, copyright fees for third party materials, and the administrative costs associated with the production of such

materials. For items that a student could purchase directly from a source other than AU (e.g., books, e-books), which of the following options would you prefer?

- To purchase materials directly from a non-Athabasca University source such as Amazon
- To have the choice to purchase course materials from either AU or a different source such as Amazon
- To purchase course materials from AU but have the learning resources fee reflect the actual cost of the materials for the particular course (for example, if the learning resources in Course A cost \$100, then the learning resources fee would be \$100)
- The status quo (a fixed learning services fee per course –currently about \$170)

Email us your thoughts and we'll make sure that they're voiced in the appropriate committee!

AU honorary doctorates

Did you know that AU bestows honorary doctorates each year at Convocation? Do you have an idea for someone you'd like to see honoured by the university? Candidates should "have distinguished themselves in education, science, the arts, public service, or other areas, and have made significant life-long contributions to endeavours consistent with the mandate and purpose of Athabasca University." AUSU has a seat on the committee that nominates and selects the recipients of honorary doctorates, so to have your voice heard, drop us an email with your thoughts!

Have you heard . . .

. . . that we still have some of our awesome 2011 AUSU Handbook/Planners available? Some of the information in these little books is priceless when it comes to helping AU students navigate the university and our services—but they're free for you, just for being an AUSU member! We even mail them right to your door. All you have to do is ask!

. . . about our SmartDraw program? We've been arranging for a licence for our students to use this software for the last few years. It lets you create detailed charts and insert them into your assignments (even ones you submit as Word or PDF documents). The company has warned us, though, that there will be a massive price increase next year, so we want to know if our students feel that the software is a help to them, or if they'd rather have us look into other options. Get your copy today, and let us know what you think.

. . . there's a new AUSU website on the way? We want our site to provide dynamic content and updates so that it's a place that you, as an AU student, WANT to visit regularly! If you have suggestions on content you'd like to see on our website, please get in touch with us to share your ideas.

. . . AUSU has scholarships, awards, and bursaries for our student members? The next major awards deadline is November 1, but some bursaries are also available year-round. Make sure you check our site for more information!

Get in touch with us

Have comments or questions about AUSU or anything in this column? Feel free to get in touch with AUSU President Bethany at president@ausu.org. You can also email our office at ausu@ausu.org or call 1.800.788.9041 ext. 3413. We'd love to hear from you!

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

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THE VOICE

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