

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 27 2012-07-13

Here Comes the Sun

The scary side of sunscreen

Easy Reader

To catch an error

Art Thief

Throwing stones

Plus:

*Gregor's Bed
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.



SO YOU WANT TO BE A BETTER WRITER

Maxie van Roye



Typos

You write an essay. You proofread it, twice. But when you get it back from the prof, it's marked up with all sorts of "careless errors" and typos that you know you should have caught.

How could you have missed them?

It's a phenomenon that's caught the attention of linguists and experts in recent years, but back in the 19th century Mark Twain captured it best: *"You think*

you are reading proof, whereas you are merely reading your own mind; your statement of the thing is full of holes & vacancies but you don't know it, because you are filling them from your mind as you go along."

To get a bit more scientific, there's a unique experiment, which the Medical Research Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit of the University of Cambridge describes [here](#): if you scramble English words a certain way, they'll still be readable as a whole, even if on their own they look like gobbledygook.

The meme itself is controversial, although scientists admit that we really don't know just what happens in the brain when we read "jsut" as "just." However, it does speak to a truth: When we read something, we tend to capture the bigger picture rather than the minutiae of words, essentially filling in these "holes & vacancies" without even knowing it.

This means that we'll automatically compensate for typos and errors as we read. It's particularly a problem in our own work, where our mind already knows what the sentence or paragraph is trying to say.

So how to deal? Traditionally, writers have tried a number of methods to try to catch small errors before sending a document. Stepping away from the paper for a day or two—to distance yourself from the words you've written—is one way to freshen the way you read and review it. Getting a second person to review something you've written is even better.

Some proofreading experts recommend printing a hard copy rather than trying to review on a computer screen, as our brains scan pixels and print differently. My personal favourite tactic is to take a day or two's break from the writing, and then review it by reading it aloud, *with expression*. While I might sound a bit silly to the other people in the coffee shop, forcing myself to enunciate the words I've written is a huge help in discovering when I've made a typo, used a double word, or forgotten to delete something I'd changed earlier.

It's probably impossible to catch every little error we'll ever make, but the fewer we leave remaining, the more solid our writing will be. Try a few of these proofreading tips and find the one that works best for you.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman

**Hauschka, Part II****Rhythms of Stability and Freedom**

Hauschka is the alias of German pianist and composer Volker Bertelmann. Classically trained from childhood, he used his percussive piano skills to play whatever genre happened to appeal to him. Hauschka worked with pop bands, notably hip-hop group God's Favourite Dog, before launching a solo career in which he explored the possibilities of experimental music, altering his piano to acoustically replicate the sounds of other instruments. He recently recorded an album of improvised music, Silfra, a collaboration with famed American violinist Hilary Hahn.

Read the first part of this interview [here](#).

The Care and Handling of Improvisatory Skill

Hauschka has always improvised. However, he adds, “the *Silfra* album was the first time I made a complete improvised record with someone else.”

Such a demanding artistic practice, one requiring long-term training and preparation—as well as the time and space to enter an almost altered consciousness during performances—would be impossible without the right conditions. So does Hauschka depend on chance or strategy for his musical performances? He answers with alacrity, “I use both!”

It's doubtful, for example, whether Hauschka could have developed his prepared piano technique had he not, from an early age, had the leisure to hang out and experiment to his heart's content. These days he's always busy, but luckily he still has what he needs to go on with his many creative pursuits.

“I need a quiet room and no disturbances,” he says. “I like the most when my family and my fiancée are around. We all eat together and I like to have a certain rhythm that brings stability and freedom into my life.

“To improvise well, you need a place where you feel secure and people around you that you can trust in terms of their opinions of your performance. It's also important for me to have daylight rooms and not too busy places. I need a good grand piano with a great sound.”

“The essential thing in form is to be free in whatever form is used. A free form does not assure freedom. As a form, it is just one more form. So that it comes to this, I suppose, that I believe in freedom regardless of form.”

Wallace Stevens

Working on *Silfra* . . .

Silfra (aptly named for the geographic location in Iceland where the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates meet) was recorded at Valgeir Sigurðsson's Iceland studio in Reykjavik. Of working with the American violinist, Hauschka says, "Hilary is a great colleague and wonderful musician. It was great that I had the chance to record with her in a great place in Iceland, but also that we could meet for two years to try things out. There was no pressure to actually release anything. Things unfolded step by step and I liked that a lot."

. . . and then Touring it

How do you tour an improvised album? The studio recordings can't exactly be copied, and to try to do so would go against the spirit of the original tracks. As Hauschka explains, on tour he and Hahn are "only playing with themes from *Silfra*—the rest is completely new." This makes each concert an event that can't be repeated.

"Hilary and I decided to put the main focus on the atmosphere in which we created the record rather than performing the pieces one after each other," he says. "It's a risk, but we can grow with it; we can learn even better how to create on the spot."

On the Horizon

Hauschka's next project is composing a soundtrack for a documentary by filmmaker Yaël Reuveny: *Schnee von Gestern* (a German phrase meaning "old hat"), about her family in Tel Aviv.

He's also working on a new album of recordings with local musicians in Nairobi, Kenya.



VOICE HOLIDAY

Summer is in full swing. How will you be spending your holidays? At the beach? Sightseeing in the city? Or just curled up with a cold drink and a good novel?

Here at *The Voice* we'll be taking a brief break, too, while we refocus, recharge, and get ready for the next step for *The Voice Magazine*. We're working to make some big changes to the magazine's layout and delivery to keep up with the latest developments in technology and news sharing.

The Voice will be on hiatus from July 23-27, so there will be no issue that week. We'll be back to our regular publishing schedule with the August 3 issue. Meanwhile, keep sending in your comments, letters, and submissions. We always love hearing from our readers!

HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza



Sunny Day

Dear Dr. Katie,

I worry about sunscreen every summer. I know it's important to use it to prevent skin cancer, but are the (unpronounceable) ingredients in sunscreen okay for me and my young children?

Angela

Dear Angela,

You aren't alone in the sunscreen dilemma—many of us have similar questions. Although the majority of ingredients in sunscreen were originally classified as “safe” by the FDA, recent research seems to show differently. Let's start by looking at what's typically found in commercially available sunscreen.

Ingredients

Oxybenzene absorbs the sun's ultraviolet rays, but it's a definite no-no for anyone looking for a healthier sunscreen. Recent research shows that oxybenzene is absorbed through the skin, causing hormone disruption and cell damage.

Another questionable ingredient is *retinyl palmitate*. A form of vitamin A, it's actually been demonstrated to induce skin cancer in mice. Although these results have yet to be duplicated in humans, some prefer to avoid it entirely.

Some sunscreens contain *zinc* or *titanium oxide* as a substitute for oxybenzene. These act as physical barriers to sunlight, reflecting the light away from your skin and minimizing the chance of sunburn. For sun protection, zinc is a healthier choice than oxybenzene.

Octyl methoxycinnamate is a common UVB-filtering ingredient, but like oxybenzene, it's not the best choice for your skin. In fact, skin absorption of this chemical has been correlated with premature skin aging, definitely an unpleasant side effect.

The SPF Connection

What is the SPF (sun protection factor) of your sunscreen?

Although a very high SPF (like 50 or 85) sounds like better protection than a more moderate SPF rating, that's not necessarily the case. In fact, once the rating hits 30, the protection level does not increase significantly. For instance, an SPF of 15 usually blocks 93 per cent of UVB rays, and an SPF of 30 blocks 97

“Although a very high SPF (like 50 or 85) sounds like better protection than a more moderate SPF rating, that's not necessarily the case . . . a very high SPF, with associated higher levels of toxic chemical ingredients, may not be worth it from a health perspective.”

per cent; but an SPF of 50 only blocks 98 per cent of UVB rays. In other words, a very high SPF, with associated higher levels of toxic chemical ingredients, may not be worth it from a health perspective.

The Dilemma

So what should you do? Sunscreen is important if you'll be outdoors, since sun damage can predispose you to skin cancer. Even on a milder scale, sun-damaged skin leads to premature aging. Using a sunscreen is not harmful in and of itself; rather, it's the ingredients that can cause health concerns. Fortunately, in the last few years, several "natural" sunscreens have appeared on the market. These can be purchased at your local health food store and at some grocery or department stores as well.

For more information on the healthiest sunscreens available, check out this [report](#) by the Environmental Working Group.

Dr. Katie D'Souza, ND

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.



GREEN LIGHT



How Healthy Is Your Sunscreen?

Protecting yourself from harmful UV rays is essential to good skin health, but many sunscreens on the market contain toxic chemicals that are damaging both to your health and to that of the planet.

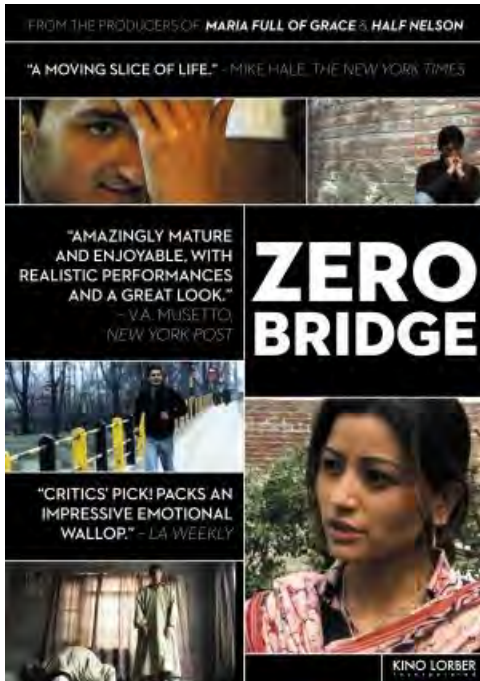
Fortunately, there's an easy way to determine the safety of the sunscreen you've got in your cupboard. Advocacy organization Environmental Working Group (EWG) has just published its annual [Sunscreen Guide](#), and it's easy to use; just run a traditional search or scroll through brands and types. There are ratings for 1,800 sunscreens and SPF lip balms, moisturizers, and makeup.

You can also read their [report](#) to find more detailed information on their findings, and (for a small donation) download a summary to take with you when you go sunscreen shopping.

If all the information seems overwhelming, take it slow: this [summary article](#) is an excellent start.

GREGOR'S BED

Wanda Waterman



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

Film: Zero Bridge (2011)

Director/Screenwriter: Tariq Tapa

Cast: Mohamad Imran Tapa, Taniya Khan, Ali Mohammad Dar

Genre: Art House, International

*"Mother tells me 'Happy dreams!'**An' takes away the light,**An' leaves me lyin' all alone an' seein'**Things at night."*

Eugene Field

Bani is trying to teach one of her zombielike sisters how to play chess, but the sister's eyes keep drifting back to the television set, where a Bollywood musical is blaring. As Bani is patiently explaining how each piece can move, she's compelled to keep reminding her sister that she can watch the show later.

Eventually Mother snaps, *Don't you have some housework to do? Stop wasting time and go make the rice!* Bani sighs, picks up her chess game, and rises to her feet, leaving her mother and sisters sitting like slugs on the carpet, staring mindlessly at their televised fantasy world.

Dilawar is rejected by his adoptive mother when she starts having babies of her own. She sends him off to live with his uncle, who can't stop making him feel like an indentured servant even as he preaches moral rectitude. Dilawar remains hopelessly in love with his adoptive mother, writing tender missives to tell her he's doing well in school. In real life, though, his days are crammed with plastering bricks and mortar, entertaining tourists, picking pockets, and doing homework for high school kids for pay.

This last vocation shows us how intelligent the boy is in spite of having been removed from school by his uncle, who wanted help with his masonry work. Under better circumstances, Dilawar might have been a teacher or a lawyer.

This impressive feature debut by director Tapa is set in Kashmir, a region disputed among Pakistan, China, and India, and this fact alone serves as a potent symbol of how conflicting colonial forces can oppress and psychologically dismember the occupants of a parcel of ground.

Among the film's characters, the colonialism has been deeply internalized; all of the protagonists' friends and family members appear to be completely egocentric, their energies desperately devoted to getting ahead at someone else's expense.

The extreme close-ups and jittery movements characterized by small handheld DV cameras, the muted colours, the interesting visual details, and the social commentary artfully and subtly expressed in every scene place this film squarely in the realm of the best Indian New Wave. This subgenre, known as Parallel Cinema in India, developed as a kind of antidote to the commercialism of popular Indian movies. The scenes are brilliant examples of a gritty realism that is deeply metaphorical.

Dilawar, for example, is witnessing the harvesting of a white chicken. The bird is docile but becomes slightly agitated when the butcher gently covers its head and saws it off at the neck with a large knife. The chicken's body is still struggling, as chicken bodies are wont to do, as the skin is removed.

Dilawar watches thoughtfully, because it's himself he's seeing in this chicken. Those who have more power than he does daily deprive him of the use of his head; ignoring his mild protestations, they continue to exploit him until there's nothing left.

The bridge where Dilawar is not permitted to wait or pass both begins and ends the film. I'm reminded of the Mayan concept of zero; unlike our concept of the zero as signifying nothingness, in Mayan belief the zero was the portal through which all things emerged. In *Zero Bridge* the bridge is both a wall and a way out.

"It is because nations tend to stupidity and baseness that mankind moves so slowly; it is because individuals have a capacity for better things that it moves at all."

George Gissing

DID YOU KNOW?

AU's Advising Services

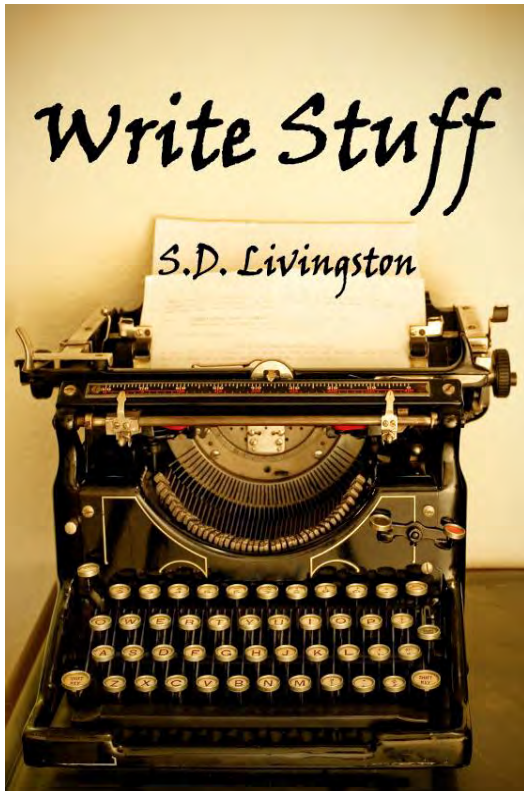


For first-time students, program selection and planning are significant undertakings. But even if you're well on your way to earning that degree or certificate, it's important to revisit and revise your program plan continuously to keep up with changing interests and circumstances.

It's easy to get bogged down in the confusing swirl of prerequisites, program requirements, and transfer credit. Fortunately, AU's Advising Services is there to help.

The advisors, who are available by phone, email, and in person at one of AU's Centres, "can assist you in areas ranging from clarifying your undergraduate program requirements, to helping choose the next course for your program of studies." They also can answer your questions about "university regulations and procedures" as well as "transfer credit evaluation." Special academic advising is also available for specific programs.

For more information, visit the Advising Services [page](#), or fill out the [online contact form](#).



Glass Houses

For all that the Internet is awash with porn, dubious medical advice, and trolls, it can also be an unflinchingly moral place. Cross the unspoken ethical line and the masses will brandish their digital pitchforks without mercy. A recent case in point saw FunnyJunk get its share of jabs, but no one seems to have noticed the glass houses that got shattered in the process.

There's no doubt that FunnyJunk deserved its online trouncing. As the *Globe and Mail* noted, the site hosts "'funny pictures' from around the Internet." In other words, it doesn't host original content. Instead, it gathers traffic by reposting other people's work—including that of Matthew Inman, creator of the highly popular site The Oatmeal.

If you haven't seen it, The Oatmeal features Inman's edgy and starkly funny opinions in comic form. It might not be to your taste, but wherever you stand on the site's artistic merits it's got one huge asset that FunnyJunk doesn't: original content.

When Inman got tired of seeing his original work reposted hundreds of times on FunnyJunk, he wrote a blog complaining about it. To its credit, FunnyJunk removed some of the stolen work. But it also left hundreds more of Inman's images on its site.

So far, this was nothing that doesn't occur daily on millions of sites. Then FunnyJunk lurched stupidly across that unspoken ethical line. In June, they demanded that Inman pay \$20,000 "for having complained about having his own work stolen for someone else's profit."

That's when Inman cleverly turned the tables. He informed FunnyJunk that, instead of caving to their ludicrous demand, he would raise the money and donate it to charity. He posted his mission on his site and readers leapt to his defence. It took just 64 minutes to raise the first \$20,000. Within 24 hours the total had reached \$118,000. By June 21, and with four days still to go in the fundraiser, the total hit over \$203,000, as *The Guardian* reported.

Inman chose two charities to split the funds between: the American Cancer Society and the Natural Wildlife Federation. According to *The Washington Post*, the lawsuit against Inman was dropped in early July.

And in this tale lies the curious dichotomy of online behaviour. On the one hand we are eager to add our voices and denounce the villain. In this case (and in countless similar ones online), the thief steals from the creator toiling over his keyboard or digital paint box, and gains from that creator's work. We're ready to tweet, post, blog, or donate to defend the creator's right to his intellectual property; property that provides a living for the person who made it, as surely as if he were shingling a roof or fixing your computer.

On the other hand, though, we're just as eager to steal that person's work ourselves. Sites like FunnyJunk aren't roundly ignored. Instead, they get millions of hits a day—and it's often the users who are showing up with their digital pockets full of words and images they felt justified in lifting from other people's sites.

Still, that doesn't stop us from enjoying such sites. Book, music, and movie piracy are rampant too, but the general reaction when publishers or studios try to protect their rights is a huge thumbs-down. Perhaps it's because in the case of The Oatmeal, readers could identify with Inman. He's an individual, a person with a name.

Yet when it comes to the millions of stolen movies and books that flow onto our laptops and e-readers, we don't see the creators as individuals. We conveniently forget about the thousands of people who work as gaffers, screenwriters, lighting crews, cover artists, electricians, carpenters, research assistants and makeup artists—all individuals who pay their bills and buy their kids' birthday presents from the paycheques our purchases support.

"I can't help wondering what the odds are that every single person who donated, tweeted, commented, or blogged about FunnyJunk's business methods hasn't "hosted" stolen books or music on their own computers or TV screens."

Did the good guys win in Inman's case? Yes, but I can't help wondering what the odds are that every single person who donated, tweeted, commented, or blogged about FunnyJunk's business methods hasn't "hosted" stolen books or music on their own computers or TV screens.

Perhaps, if those screens shattered as easily as glass houses, thousands of writers, musicians, and artists like Inman wouldn't have to go to such lengths to defend their property in the first place.



S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel Kings of Providence. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).

THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Album: The Carolina Chocolate Drops, *Leaving Eden* (2012)

Musicians: Dom Flemons (four-string banjo, guitar, jug, harmonica, kazoo, snare drum, bones, quills), Rhiannon Giddens (five-string banjo, fiddle, kazoo), Adam Matta (beatbox, tambourine), Hubby Jenkins (guitar, mandolin, five-string banjo, guitar, bones), Leyla McCalla (cello)

Genre: Folk/Americana/Old Timey

Invoking the Glory-Beaming Banjo

Sound quests are among the most fascinating of journeys—you never know where you'll end up or what you'll be doing at the end of one. Dom Flemons arrived at traditional Southern string band music via a long musical exploration that began with a period of collecting Bob Dylan albums from the '60s. Rhiannon Giddens came to the same musical subgenre from a classical career that included several operatic roles. She also dabbled in English contra dancing and had a stint in a Celtic band.

These are the kind of cultivated people who populated New Orleans after the Civil War. Were it not for the Jim Crow laws, they might have simply merged with the white upper crust and contributed to the high culture that already existed. Instead they were compelled to channel their refinements into "low" culture, eventually spawning a myriad of new musical genres, including jazz. In the course of all this, the United States developed one of the most vibrant popular cultures in human history.

The two founding members, Flemons and Giddens, have now made it a five-member (and sometimes more) string band with fiddle, cello, guitar, and three kinds of banjo (including the gut-strung minstrel banjo which I'd never heard of before now) as well as the jug, the bones (like castanets), the quills (like a pan pipe), and the kazoo. Their performances include flatfoot dancing.

The Carolina Chocolate Drops' repertoire sprouted from the early 20th-century folk tunes and string band arrangements of songs from the Piedmont region of the Carolinas, much of it harking back to 19th-century minstrel shows wherein fiddles and banjos figured prominently.

Is there a pattern here? Last week I reviewed *Akal*, an album by the Moroccan group Ienzaren, led by Igout, a master Moroccan banjoist playing in the *Ahwach* and Gnaoua styles of North Africa. This led me back to my own sound quest, a perennial exploration of the influence of slaves from northwestern Africa on American music and how parallel musical traditions developed in Africa and the Americas.

Coincidentally, while visiting my folks in Canada recently, I retrieved my two dusty old banjos from the attic and brought them back to New Hampshire to play at our Friday night gatherings.

We had discovered early on that we were all devotees of the Carolina Chocolate Drops. When we realized we'd now have both a five-string and a tenor banjo among us, we decided to start learning some of their songs. "Cornbread and Butterbeans" rolled off our tongues like we'd sung it all our lives; it's the kind of song that's easy to do at home when you're having fun, but hard to do well if you let your ego get in the way.

Which makes you wonder how a group of such deeply gifted and rigorously trained musicians can pull it off so well. The Carolina Chocolate Drops are creative intellectuals dedicated to preserving a priceless past by keeping it alive with innovative approaches uniquely their own. Yet not for a moment do they sound like prima donnas; nor is there an ounce of the commercial veneer that renders so much of traditional repertoire false and hollow.

They sing the kind of song I heard growing up: the music of Aunt Nellie on the spoons and Uncle Paul on the hambone and Mom on the autoharp. My experience was not so different from that of rural boomers all over North America, and much of the style and aesthetic of these homely tunes was revived by folk singers of the 1960s—luckily, or they might have faded from awareness.

"When you want genuine music—music that will come right home to you like a bad quarter, suffuse your system like strychnine whisky, go right through you like Brandreth's pills, ramify your whole constitution like the measles, and break out on your hide like the pin-feather pimples on a picked goose, when you want all this, just smash your piano, and invoke the glory-beaming banjo!"

Mark Twain

I've heard white folk singer versions of so many Drops songs that I was surprised to even discover they had originated in African-American communities that sooner or later abandoned them. The hard times evoked by these songs were just too painful a reminder to black musicians, who by the 1960s had embraced urban musical genres like soul, rhythm-and-blues, jazz, and funk. I remember hearing an African-American musician in a radio interview saying he hated the word "blues" because for him it evoked all that was nasty, brutish, and short about the life of the African-American.

But full circle we've come at last, and here we have a band that's not only composed of superlative black musicians passionate about this quite narrow segment of traditional American folk music, but that also has the chutzpah to give itself a name that's dangerously close to a racial epithet. Their 2010 Grammy-winning debut album was called *Genuine Negro Jig*, the title alone a supremely confident flipping-of-the-bird to political correctness.

Another beautiful thing about this music is that it brooks none of the ethnic boundary lines that in spite of their absurdity we've allowed ourselves to accept. The Drops just keep on mixing genres the way normal musicians have done for millennia. They remain true to the original—and incredibly thrilling—*bricolage*

quality of American folk music, while performing the supreme political act of forcing politics to bow its head to art.

So give it a listen; it can only do you good. The music and themes of bare-bones roots music like this are rooted so deep in human consciousness that they can effectively engender authentic and profound art.

Leaving Eden manifests three 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; and 3) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom

CLICK OF THE WRIST

The Air We Breathe

Air is necessary to life, sure. But sometimes the air we breathe is actually a danger to us; this is often particularly a problem in the summer heat, when humidity and high temperatures mix with chemicals in the air to create an airborne cocktail that assaults our lungs. Click through this week's links to find out more about the quality of the air you breathe—and what you can do about it.

Air Quality Health Index

What's the quality of the air in your locality? This Government of Canada page provides access to the Air Quality Health Index for your region.

Bad Air Day

Polluted air isn't good for anyone, but for some it's even more dangerous. Click here to determine whether you fall into an at-risk category (and whether you're experiencing symptoms of particular sensitivity to air pollution).

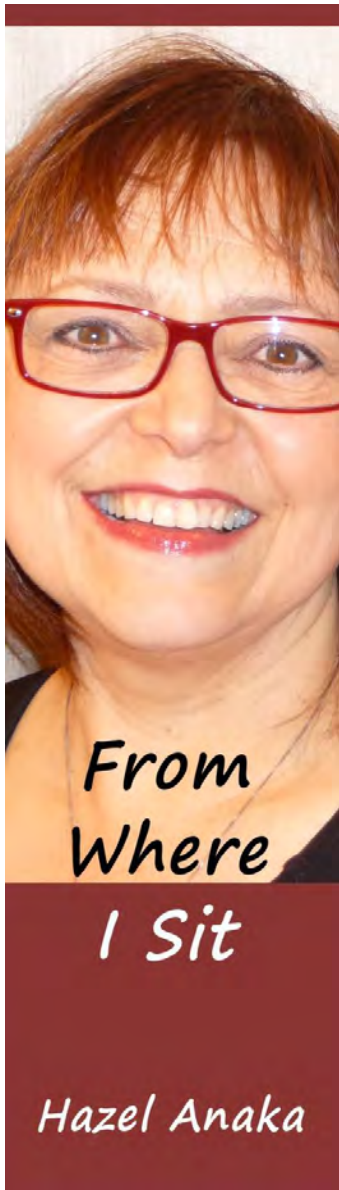
Solutions for the Home

What toxins are lurking inside your home? Our "Health Matters" columnist investigates—and offers natural solutions for purifying your air.

An App for That

If you live in—or are travelling to—the US, you might want to download this app onto your smart phone. Created by the American Lung Association, the app provides "life-saving updates on your local air quality" and gives tips on "how you can help fight for air."





Let's Make a Deal

After years of being patient and understanding, I snapped. I asserted myself. I made my case. I pointed out unfairness. I stated an ultimatum.

Damned if it didn't work.

The only way you can buy another damn trailer is if I get my kitchen renovation.

Now the mature Hazel knows that the flat deck trailer, end dump gravel trailer, and grain trailer are all deductible business purchases that help directly and indirectly with income generation and efficiency. Buying a second used Volvo tractor unit was also *probably* okay, too.

But the observant, cynical Hazel knows that the farm/trucking business can suck up all the available money you have—and then some. At between \$30,000 and \$40,000 a pop, these trailer purchases are adding up. Next he wanted a clam or belly dump trailer to add to the repertoire. It's supposed to enable him to take on more gravel hauling jobs.

Let's be clear: I don't begrudge a man his toys, especially if they help him make money. What puts me through the roof is taking second place, settling for less, tippy-toeing around a guy who gets mad when the word renovation comes up.

We all know attitude is everything. If you choose to think about the old wiring, the mess, the cost, the time it'll take, and the need to fit this huge undertaking into an already busy life, then yeah, it's a turnoff. If you focus on the fact the house could be better, more functional, and more attractive, the project suddenly becomes worthwhile. If you look at it as a way to make the wife happy and yourself house-proud, then when can we start?

I may not have the technical skills or strength to do all the hands-on stuff. What I do have is the stamina and attitude to be the go-fer, the holder, the encourager, the job site cleaner-upper. I have creativity, product knowledge, and the willingness to ask questions and think outside the box. I've studied design books and watched HGTV for years.

I'm also a realist. I told Roy I'd rather live with a subfloor for six months than wait for the perfect (read: never) time to begin. I know projects don't go without a hitch or get completed in the space of a TV episode. We will not have a cast of thousands to get the reno done in two days or two weeks or two months. We can't make a silk purse out of a 60-year-old house, but we can make it beautiful and functional for our everyday needs. We can make it a space we're proud to invite family or friends to see.

Roy and I shook hands on the deal. We have cabinet plans ready and help lined up. No surprise, then, that I've emptied cupboards and begun prepping for demo. Can't risk a change of heart, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Medicinal Maggots

Maggots: the vultures of the invertebrate world, and then some. These fly larvae—which can make even the most sanguine of us shudder—are seen as disgusting pests. And yet they recently saved the leg of a 59-year-old Toronto resident.

As the *Toronto Sun* [reports](#), Wacław Tyszkiewicz had been hospitalized with a “raging, flesh-killing infection in his right foot, caused after he attempted to remove a piece of calloused skin with a blade.”

Because Tyszkiewicz is diabetic, his body was unable to fight the infection successfully. The hospital had attempted treatments like “medical disinfectants, gels, minor surgery,” but “the infection was spreading.” Doctors were considering amputation in order to remove the “swollen, bloody and blackened mess of dying flesh” before the infection could consume his body.

First, though, specialists decided to try one last option: using a blow fly maggot treatment to allow the larvae to “eat the dead flesh.” The controversial biotherapy treatment required special government clearance and had to be carefully monitored, but it worked: the maggots “[saved] his leg from being amputated.”

A grateful Tyszkiewicz is now “[thinking] positively about (maggots),” he told reporters.

Around the World: Baby Baggage

No liquids. No aerosols. Size limits. Airline baggage regulations have become increasingly burdensome, with scanners taking issue with even harmless water bottles. But maybe there’s a reason; after all, recently a couple attempted to sneak their baby through security, carefully stowed in their carry-on bag.

As the *Daily Mail* [reports](#), the couple, travelling from Egypt to the United Arab Emirates with their five-month-old baby, had been “held at immigration as [the] child did not have a visa.” Wishing to avoid the weekend delay, the couple “decided to make a run for it,” put the baby into their luggage, and headed toward security.

Security staff, however, quickly spotted the outline of the baby when its bag went through the x-ray scanners. Police told reporters that “When customs officials saw the baby inside the bag at the X-ray scanner, they were stunned.”

Immigration woes aside, the couple has now been “arrested and charged with endangering the baby’s life,” since the child “could have been exposed to the dangers of radiation.”

AUSU UPDATE



AU Students urge candidates to improve university funding

AU students are concerned about the financial health of Athabasca University and the effect of recent news stories on the reputation of the AUSU membership.

A recent CBC report notes that in recent years the university has made a series of reserve draws to cover budget shortfalls, draining the once \$30-million reserve fund.

Tuition and fees at AU, meanwhile, continue to increase despite the concerns of AUSU that education is becoming increasingly unaffordable in Alberta.

“I’m very concerned about AU’s financial situation,” says AUSU President Bethany Tynes. “AU is increasing student fees, observing hiring freezes, denying sabbaticals, delaying projects, and downsizing their offices due to a lack of available funds. We don’t want to see the quality of our education diminish.”

“At the same time,” Tynes continues, “I am confused by AU Board Chair Barry Walker’s comment to the CBC that AU is ‘in a very sound financial position,’ as the concerns we’ve noted do not support the notion that we’re financially sound.”

Chronic underfunding of public post-secondary education is a factor in AU’s financial stress. AU students have lobbied Alberta in recent years to address the shortfall; our members call on the candidates in Alberta’s provincial election to make post-secondary funding a priority in their platforms and to ensure that all Alberta universities are funded equally and sufficiently. Public post-secondary institutions need a reliable, predictable funding model that provides sufficient base operating funds to support a world-class education.

Athabasca University Students' Union is the largest students' union in Alberta, representing nearly 40,000 undergraduates annually.

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

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