

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 22 Issue 09 2014-03-97

Desk Essentials

Study Spacing

Priorities

The Alberta Budget

Did You Know?

Uberistic

Plus:

Primal Numbers

The Writer's Toolbox

and much more!



CONTENTS

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

Feature

Desk Essentials: *Working in Cramped Quarters* 6

Articles

Editorial: *Priorities* 3

Columns

In Conversation: *Jacob Scheier* 8

Writer's Toolbox: *Getting Possessive, Part I./* 11

Primal Numbers: *A Step Too Far* 4

From Where I Sit: *Unplug* 10

Dear Barb 15

Mindful Bard: *Echo Gods and Silent Mountains* 13

News and Events

Did You Know? 9

News Desk 5

Click of the Wrist 7

AUSU Update 17

Comics

Weird Canada: *Weird Canadian Delicacies* 16

***The Voice
Magazine***

www.voicemagazine.org

500 Energy Square
10109 – 106 ST NW
Edmonton AB
T5J 3L7

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email
voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher

AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief

Tamra Ross

Managing Editor

Karl Low

Regular Contributors

Hazel Anaka
Barbara Lehtiniemi
S.D. Livingston
Wanda Waterman

The Voice is published
every Friday in HTML and
PDF format.

For weekly email
reminders as each issue is
posted, fill out the
subscription form [here](#).

The Voice does not share
its subscriber list with
anyone.

© 2014 by *The Voice*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.

EDITORIAL

Karl Low



Priorities

On March 6th, Alberta released its 2013-2014 budget. In it, they were pleased to announce an operating surplus of 2.6 billion dollars. They are also taking on debt for capital expenditures to the tune of 5.1 billion dollars. A lot of people seem to have trouble reconciling those two facts. I don't.

If I get a loan of \$100,000 and have to pay back only \$20,000 per year, then if I'm making \$32,000/yr, I have a surplus of \$12,000/yr, even though I'm in debt.

Now, is it smarter to use my surplus to pay that debt down faster? Well then we get into interest rates. If the interest is such that every year, another \$4,000 gets put onto the debt, then maybe it is. But what if I've invested that \$100,000, and it's earning me \$6,000 in investment income? Now, in the 6 years it'll take me to pay off the entire \$120,000 (principal and interest), I'll have collected \$36,000 in investment income, \$24,000 of which goes back to service the debt, and \$12,000 of which is mine, made from their money. Of course, normally this doesn't happen, since people don't tend to lend out money if they could just invest it themselves for higher returns, but these are banks we're dealing with here, and they're not allowed to just create money for themselves, they have to lend it to other people first.

So no, having a surplus and taking more debt is not the mutually exclusive thing that many people are trying to make it out to be. No, the problem with this budget is that even with this 2.6 billion operational surplus, they are still not putting in enough money to the post-secondary system to even compensate for the cuts made last year. So despite this massive surplus, post-secondary education will still not have as much funding as they had two years ago.

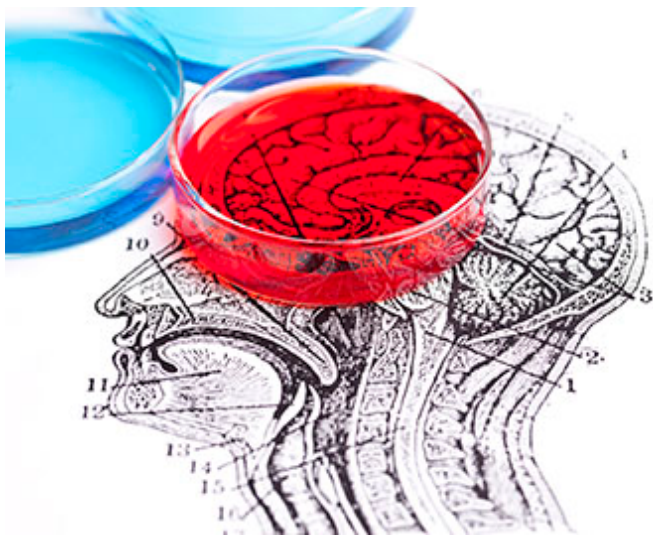
Yet this government claims it is investing for the future. It is building schools that will sit empty because of a lack of funding to staff them. It is putting money into helping universities build bigger campuses, at a time when online education is starting to take off and it is operating costs—not infrastructure costs—that significantly limit how many people our post-secondary institutions can reach.

In short, it is a system where what they've prioritized are opportunities to stand in front of people with shovels and claim, "We're going to build this," and while this might feel good and make for some suitable headlines, it will do very little to help future Albertans prepare for a more diversified economy. With warnings now coming out that oil prices may drop to 25% of their current value, forcing post-secondary education into a reductionist mode rather than an expansionist one seems extremely risky.

Certainly a lot more risky than the idea of taking on debt to pay for infrastructure.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl'.

Primal Numbers



devices are getting popular. They're cool, fun, and packed with some very advanced features that can help people get, and keep, their health and fitness goals on track.

To take just one example, the Jawbone Up is a wearable tracker designed to be worn 24 hours a day. It's a "system that tracks how you sleep, move and eat," and users can manually log workouts, food, and even their mood. Like most other wearable trackers, the Up has an app that syncs with the device. Enter your data or let the device log it for you, and personal statistics, including things like your heart rate, can be synced to the company's servers.

Sharing such personal metrics might seem like a natural next step in a world where Google already tracks every mouse click we make, and where web browsers show us ads based on sites we visited just moments ago. But it's one thing if corporations know which Pinterest sites we like. It's quite another if colleges and insurance companies get their hands on our health status—and that's a very real possibility.

If anyone's got their pulse on the state of trackers and health data, it's someone like Florian Gschwandtner, the CEO and co-founder of Runtastic. As he notes in this *Huffington Post* interview, "many sleep and nutrition tracking companies are already trying to sell their data to major clinics and labs, while universities and insurance companies are requesting data from app and hardware companies."

For the sake of argument, let's assume that buried somewhere in the fine print of a site or app agreement is a clause that lets them sell your data to a third party. You've agreed to it, but is that really such a good idea?

Think, for a moment, of all the places that could use your health data in ways you might not like. Insurance companies, who could justify raising premiums based on demographics. Even if those reams of app data are anonymized, with no specific user's name attached, what if thousands of people in a particular province or city upload data that shows they have poor sleep patterns and exercise habits? Just as some drivers pay higher premiums based on where they live, companies will no doubt pore over health-tracker data to see which areas carry the highest risk.

The same could happen with university admissions. Will some schools, especially those with sports teams, prefer applicants who come from the areas that report higher levels of fitness and better sleep habits? And what about employers?

S.D. Livingston

A Step Too Far

Not so long ago, there was only one way for the average person to track how far they walked each day. It involved a pedometer, a pencil, and a notebook. Now, there are dozens of personal fitness apps that will record every moment of your fitness efforts, from sleep patterns to urine analysis. But as the latest tech tracks our data, can we really trust the companies who compile it—or have we taken things a step too far?

Wearable fitness trackers are all the rage, with no fewer than 26 gadgets rated on this recent *Time* review list. And it's no surprise these handy little

Obviously, demographic data is nothing new. Governments and corporations have been analyzing population trends for decades. What is new, though, is the highly detailed—and highly personal—nature of the information that fitness trackers allow us to feed them.

You could, of course, use a fitness tracker to get immediate feedback but choose not to sync or compile your data. But that takes away a lot of the incentive for using them in the first place: the social networking and support of sharing data with other users, and the ability to track your progress over time.

Still, I'm not sure I'm ready to share the details of my sleep, heart rate, and meal choices with a fitness tracker—especially when I don't know where that data might end up. For now, I think I'll clip on my old-fashioned pedometer and take a long walk to think about it.

S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.

NEWS DESK



At Home: The Hell is Wrong With You Guys?

Among various venues, the CBC is reporting on a recent story where the president of the University of Ottawa's student federation was threatened with a law-suit when she found out, and was going to reveal, comments made by other student leaders at the university of Ottawa suggesting that she should be sexually assaulted, orally and anally, and likely had STDs.

She decried this as evidence of a "rape culture" present on the U of Ottawa grounds, a comment that seemed to gain extra weight when it came out a few days later that members of the university Hockey Team may well have raped a woman back at the beginning of February, although the senior management didn't hear the news until February 24th. When it did hear about it, the university bravely decided to suspend their participation for the remainder of this season, causing the team to miss all

of zero games, having been already knocked out of the playoffs before the allegations ever reached the senior management.

The five individuals who made the comments subsequently defended their statements as being a joke, and no harm was ever intended. Fortunately for them, the University of Ottawa has chosen to address this issue not by handing out charges of non-academic misconduct, but rather to create a task force to look into what the response of the university should be. The results of the task force should be completed in the fall, well after this current year has completed, and the students involved finished the various courses that they are currently in.

One of the things it is not expected the task force will do is take up the question of who is more spineless; the men who made these "jokes", threatened a law-suit about it when they were going to be outed, and then backed down completely when the student federation president didn't cave to their craven attempt at silencing her, or the University of Ottawa that is desperately trying to sweep this under the rug while handing out absolutely no punishment or penalty for this behavior at all.

Desk Essentials

Working in Cramped Quarters

Barbara Lehtiniemi



What does the ideal home office look like? I imagine a single-purpose room, bathed in natural light and set up with ample, efficient desk space. Just the right amount of shelving and a place for everything. Can you hear the angels singing?

The reality, for me and many other students, is a cramped desk area that shares space with other household functions. A corner of the kitchen, the far end of the dining room table, or, as in my case, a narrow strip squeezed against the wall of a spare bedroom. Using a dual-purpose area for school work means not having much elbow room and needing to re-locate when company comes.

The internet is awash with ideas for creating a small office space. The photos look appealing but bear little resemblance to reality. For example, these dream spaces never seem to have a wastebasket let alone a paper shredder. The desktops generally carry only three items: a tablet computer, a framed photo, and a vase of flowers. In real life, there would be a nest of scribbled notes, a tangle of pens, and several

half-full water bottles. There would also be a printer (along with a collection of new and used ink cartridges,) several pads of post-it notes, a stack of books, and, buried underneath, an unpaid bill. Or two.

A confined office space can feel like a curse, but I also view it as a challenge. Periodically, I sit back and take a critical look at my space, exercise my creative right-brain, and find solutions. One early goal was to extend the working surface of my desk. I'm not at all handy with woodworking tools, so this required more creative-thinking than manual-doing. My solution involved a stool, a towel, and a table leaf.

First, the stool: books I am using now sit on a folding stool next to my chair. This gives them priority and keeps them within reach. When my office needs to convert back to a bedroom, the stool is folded away next to my desk. I use a stool meant for sitting on, but a camp stool or foot stool would work as well.

Second, the towel: the flat top of my printer makes a handy assembly point for research articles, papers to be filed, and, often, my ipod. Since I need to lift the printer's lid on occasion to scan or copy, I use a kitchen towel on top of the printer to create an extra surface. When I need to use the scanner, I lift the towel, carefully cradling the items on top. I replace the whole kit afterwards, and the printer resumes its second function as extra desk space. The towel also keeps dust off the printer, but a piece of stiff cardboard would work here too.

Finally, the leaf: I use a leaf from my dining room table as an extra desk surface. When I'm working on multiple courses or projects this gives me an expanded working area on which to keep books and documents organized and easily accessible. I put the table leaf—any sturdy, smooth board would work—on the bed, but it could sit on top of any stable surface, even the floor or straddling two chairs. When my books need to be tidied away, I lift the whole leaf, books and all, and slide it under the bed.

My desk area is still evolving. It's easy to get complacent but I try to remind myself to re-examine how I use the space. Right now I'm contemplating those little organizing baskets sold in office supply and dollar stores. My goal is to keep all those desk doodads organized and portable without adding clutter. Next, I'll ponder wall space. A white board or even a chalkboard is a great tool for capturing creative ideas. And a strip of cork board below the window frame would give me enough space to tack up a few important notes.

For me, it's important to assess my workspace periodically. After all, I spend a great deal of time at my desk. A few carefully considered creative changes can work to keep school work and other projects flowing smoothly.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario.

Click of the Wrist

Viral Headlines

Happy National Grammar Day! Think grammatical fanaticism is only for stuffy editors and professors? Before you answer, be sure to check out this sampling of grammar-related humor. From noirish mystery to crazy comedy, these links show that grammatical humor is fun for everyone.

Grammarnoir

For the past few years, *Baltimore Sun* columnist John McIntyre has celebrated National Grammar Day by publishing a new edition of his serial Grammarnoir—humor, mystery, and suspense with a grammatical twist. With grammatical jokes and lines like “He crept in, giving off the smell of trouble like the syntax of a freshman essay,” it’s sure to amuse editors, readers, and English students alike.

Comic Relief

For off-the-wall comedy, it’s hard to beat the Oatmeal’s creator, Matthew Inman. Fortunately, in addition to being a great comedian and graphic artist, Inman’s also keen on good grammar, syntax, and usage. His grammar-themed comics will amuse, offend, and—hopefully—educate.

Online Gaffes

If you enjoy—or love to hate—watching grammatical trainwrecks unfold on popular media sites, be sure to check out the Terribly Write blog, which posts clips of inconsistent punctuation, usage errors, grammatical no-nos, and other cringe-worthy linguistic abuses.

Meme Me

If social media-style memes are your thing, BuzzFeed’s grammar nerd-friendly jokes will give you a laugh. Just don’t make punctuation errors when you share them!



In Conversation With Jacob Scheier, Part I

Wanda Waterman



"Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
And shares the nature of infinity."
- William Wordsworth

Jacob Scheier writes essays, poetry, and journalism. His book *More to Keep Us Warm* won the 2008 Governor General's Award for poetry. He was born in Toronto because his parents, on returning from an activist mission in Palestine, were not allowed to re-enter the United States. His poetic landscape is made up of memories of New York, Judaism, his family's radical communism, and the tragedy of his mother's early death. His most recent book of poems, *Letter From Brooklyn*, was just recommended [here](#) in "The Mindful Bard".

Recently Jacob took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about his early leanings toward poetry and his most edifying learning experiences.

Writing as Real Work

"Since my mother was a published author herself (poetry, fiction and essays; she died in 2000), I was exposed early to literature," says Jacob. "That is, I was exposed to the idea that it's perfectly natural to be an artist."

"Strangely, I didn't like reading until I was a teenager. Despite being raised in a literary environment, I preferred cartoons and sitcoms. My mother (who raised me by herself) didn't push her interest in art on me. I came to it on my own, and yet I think I took in the artistic life through a kind of osmosis.

"When I started writing, I didn't have the sense that I was being frivolous with my time. For better and worse, I always thought of writing as real work, however fun it sometimes is. So I feel fortunate that I didn't have to go through the feelings of shame and secrecy that some artists have who grow up in what you might call more traditional families."

Why Isn't Everyone an Artist?

"I think of myself more as a writer who, among other things, writes poems. My mother being a published poet made it permissible to write and publish poems myself, though that doesn't explain why I turned to poetry. It certainly wasn't for approval, since she was against the idea of me doing it, at least as a 'profession.'

"I think writing and especially poetry began as a way to process experience. It amazes me that everyone isn't an artist, at least as a hobby. I don't know how you can go through life without recording it in some way and remain (moderately) sane. I think for me—and I am thinking now of how Auden said 'every good poem is very nearly a utopia' or something similar to that—poetry was a way to get things right, to say them and see them as I wanted things to be, as I more accurately felt they should be even though I knew they never would quite be that way."

Books as Maps of What Matters

"I had an absolutely brilliant, inspiring English professor when I was a journalism student at Ryerson. I bailed on the program after my first year, realizing I was more interested in poetry and fiction than reporting (which is all you do in first year).

The prof, John Cook, taught a 20th century literature course. He really believed and could articulate how books are maps of what really matters in life. He helped me to appreciate Virginia Woolf and for that I will always be grateful to him.

More recently I took a poetry workshop at the Sage Hill Writing Experience in Saskatchewan with Ken Babstock in 2011, which made me a better writer of poetry in a number of ways.

Last summer I was fortunate enough to participate in the literary journalism program at Banff, chaired by Ian Brown. My editor there was Charlotte Gill. Both Brown and Gill, and the other significantly-more-experienced-than-myself-journalists in the program—there is really no better way to say this—kicked my ass, making the story I was working somewhere between ten and 100 times better than when I got there. It was really steep learning curve, but amazingly valuable."

(Scheier once taught a course called Writing Creatively About Grief through Ryerson University's Continuing Education and trained to become a volunteer peer facilitator of support groups for bereaved young adults. To learn more about Jacob Scheier's workshops on writing creatively about grief, visit jacobscheier.org.)

(To be continued)

DID YOU KNOW?



Still waiting for Uberistic? Uberistic, a new web-based career and networking service, "combines the business networking tools of sites such as LinkedIn with all the features of an online employment centre." Job-hunters can promote themselves with a 60-second video, search job postings, and get real-time updates on postings and employers

Uberistic's launch, planned for January 15, 2014, has been delayed. According to CEO Jacquie Verenka, Uberistic experienced some issues while attempting to move from a development to a production environment.

Athabasca University announced a partnership with Uberistic two months ago. AU students and alumni can take advantage of a free one-year membership with Uberistic by contacting aualumni@athabascau.ca. You can still get in on this offer if you act quickly.

While you're waiting for launch day, you can check out Uberistic's [website](#) or view their introductory Youtube [video](#). You can also read this TechNet [blog](#) which declared Uberistic BizSpark's "StartUp of the Day."



Unplug

In the coming days we all face a crucial decision: how to celebrate March 7th this year? A quick Google search gives us a few solid options. Carnivores may choose to celebrate National Crown Roast of Pork Day (yes, really) with homage to the other white meat.

Corporate types may look for special events to mark either Employee Appreciation Day or Salesperson Day. Celebrations will be held Friday. Or ignored altogether.

In case none of these ideas grab you or apply to you there is one more option. It's way harder to do than pop a piece of meat in the oven. But the payoff should be infinitely more satisfying than even the tastiest protein to a hungry man.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to take the Unplug Pledge to become part of the National Day of Unplugging project. Beginning at sundown on March 7th and ending at sundown March 8th it is a twenty-four hour technology fast.

A quick look at the website <http://nationaldayofunplugging.com> shows what countless have chosen to do when they forsake the seductive but crippling hold of technology on our lives. There are the expected R words: renew, reflect, reconnect, read, and relax. Still others want to explore NYC, knit, cook, sing, sleep, hike, or bike. The genius of this idea is that we can each fill out our own ending: I unplug to _____.

Who among us hasn't fallen into the trap of checking and sending emails, surfing the net, texting or playing games on our phones at all times of the day and night every single day of the week? How much of our new vocabulary centres on words that either didn't previously exist or meant something totally different? *Tweet*, *post*, *blog*, *hashtag*, *friend*, *like*, *instagram*, and *follow* are just some. Today the blue light of our devices is a factor in the growing insomnia epidemic.

This initiative is tied to the Sabbath Manifesto, which harkens back to the "olden days" when our parents and grandparents kept the Sabbath holy by refraining from work. It was a day for worship, family, and friends—a day of rest.

The blurring of work and play is creating no shortage of problems. Not least among them is the false sense of connection we labour under. Many people cannot hold up their end of a face-to-face conversation if you paid them. The numbers of inarticulate people, who can't explain a concept, defend an idea or tell a simple story is scary. Or the idea that we've got friends we could actually call on when more than a "Like" is needed. Hah.

So the gauntlet has been dropped. Are you and I willing and able to unplug for twenty-four hours? To power off our phones, iPads, laptops, and iPods and look up to see the world of possibilities out there? I'm going to try. Because pork never was my favourite meat, from where I sit.

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

Writer's Toolbox

Christina M. Frey



Getting Possessive, Part I

Yours. Mine. Ours. Whether you're negotiating with a toddler in the kitchen or engaging in literary criticism at the coffee shop, chances are you use possessive nouns every day without giving them a second thought. Writing them down, though, can be a little more complicated. Over the next few installments of the Writer's Toolbox we'll look at possessive nouns and pin down just where to put that tricky little apostrophe. This week we'll focus on the basics: how to form the possessive for most singular common nouns, including those ending in *s*.

A Refresher

First, a few quick definitions. A noun is a person, place, thing, or concept; it does not need to be tangible. A proper noun is a noun that names a specific person, place, business, book, etc. Nouns that are not specific names (proper nouns) are common nouns. For example, *Alberta*, *Burger King*, and *Alanis Morissette* are all proper nouns; *book*, *article*, and *course* are common nouns.

A singular noun refers to one; a plural noun, more than one. *Book* and *article* are singular, while *women*, *bosses*, and *stars* are all plural. In this week's installment, we'll focus on forming the possessive with singular common nouns. Plural nouns and proper nouns will appear in future columns.

General rule for singular common nouns

For most singular nouns—like *book*, *article*, and *course*—the **general rule is to form the possessive by adding an apostrophe + *s***.

Example A: *The student's research turned up interesting data.*

A caution: a noun with an apostrophe + *s* is always, always either a possessive singular noun or a contraction (usually standing in for the noun + *is*). Never use the apostrophe + *s* to form the plural.

Example B (incorrect): *Our customer's are always right.* This is incorrect because the possessive form of the noun has no place in this sentence.

Example C (correct): *Our customers are always right.* This is the proper plural form.

Example D (correct): *Our customers' complaints are responded to personally.* This is proper plural possessive form, which will be addressed in a future issue.

Example E (correct): *We had only one customer today, and that customer's attitude was very unpleasant.* This is singular possessive form and is correct because it is referring to the attitude of one single customer.

Singular nouns ending in -s

But what about singular common nouns that already end in -s, like *boss*, *grass*, and *illness*? Most of the time, these follow the general rule, **forming the possessive by adding an apostrophe + s**.

Example F: My boss's attitude is lowering my self-esteem.

Example G: I found the grass's texture rather prickly.

Note that I said “most of the time.” There is a **major exception that comes into play for singular nouns that end in -s AND that are followed by a word beginning with a s, sh, or similar sound**.

And here is where things get even trickier; whether that exception even applies depends on what style guide you're following.

If you're following *Chicago* style, which is used in fiction and some academic fields, you **follow the general rule and add apostrophe + s, even when a word ending in -s is followed by a word beginning with an s or sh sound**.

Example H (correct, Chicago style): My boss's statement was hurtful.

However, if you're following AP style, which is used in publications, and you have a word ending in -s that's followed by a word beginning with an s or sh sound, you **form the possessive by adding an apostrophe only**.

Example I (correct, AP style): My boss' statement was hurtful.

What about Canadian style? While Canadian style guides don't make a formal statement other than advising users to use only the apostrophe if it would sound “difficult” or “awkward” when pronounced aloud <http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tcdnstyl-chap?lang=eng&lettr=indx16&info0=7.56>, in practice Canadian style aligns itself with the AP style exception.

Confused? Don't be; just remember that this style-related exception only comes into play when a singular common noun ending in -s is followed by a word beginning with an s sound—and even then, it only applies if you're using AP or Canadian style. Otherwise, add the apostrophe + s regardless of what style guide you're using.

The world of possessives can seem confusing, but breaking it down into smaller parts makes it more manageable. A recap of this week: if you have a singular common noun that does not end in -s, you form the possessive by adding an apostrophe + s. If you have a singular common that does end in -s, you still follow the general rule and add the apostrophe + s, unless the word that follows it starts with an s or sh sound AND you're following AP or Canadian style. Memorize it, put it on a cheat sheet, or both.

Next week we'll move on to plural nouns and examine how to form plural possessives, where to put the apostrophe, and how to keep from getting plural and singular possessive mixed up. Save room on your cheat sheet for these rules and for future installments on proper nouns and exceptions to the rules.

Christina M. Frey is a book editor and a lover of great writing. Chat with her on Twitter about all things literary @turntopage2.

Mindful Bard

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

Wanda Waterman



Book: *Echo Gods and Silent Mountains*

Author: Patrick Woodcock

Publisher: ECW Press

Poetic Nonfiction in Iraqi Kurdistan

"From being mere labels for material objects, words gradually turn into magical charms. Out of a catalogue of material facts is developed--thanks to the efforts of forgotten primitive geniuses--all that we know today as 'poetry'."

- Owen Barfield

A guide leads the poet to a small rectangular hole. They climb down to see where the Kurds hid, four families to a cave, when Saddam Hussein was bombing them. It smells terrible, it's dark and dank and teeming with bugs. Although the bombing has stopped and Saddam is gone, old men still go down there to recite poems to each other.

Since Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* there's been much said about creative nonfiction, sometimes called literary journalism. But is there such a thing as poetic nonfiction? If so, it's a singular achievement: the marriage of two very different modes of language—the primitive metaphorical and the modern descriptive.

The primitive metaphorical mode of language has its origins in the ancient world, especially in magical incantations intended to invoke, if not spirits and miraculous events, at least states of altered awareness. In this mode, symbolism, imagery, and rhythm are a means of conveying not literal truths but, rather, more profound and enduring truths that form a canopy over other forms of truth.

As for the descriptive mode of language, the dominant mode in the world in which we now find ourselves, today's reader requires that what she reads be true and accurate (one doesn't know whether to laugh or cry when comparing this expectation to the lies that now flood the media), and so poetry has been, in a sense, driven underground.

Nonetheless, there remains, as Northrop Frye pointed out, a need for the ancient, magical ways of thinking which must somehow be kept alive in the collective consciousness. This is why we still need poets.

But for the poet-journalist—a role that, in spite of being almost unheard of today, actually has a long and noble history (ancient Greece actually had poet-sports-journalists)—the rules aren't picked up in any university journalism program. And by the time the poet arrives on the scene it's to witness the aftermath of the conflagration and to hear the story from the traumatized survivors.

In this tome we're lead to expect that Woodcock has accurately recorded the details of recent Kurdish history, notably the genocide undertaken against them by Saddam Hussein in the eighties. There's no reason to think

he's fibbing, but we must remember that what the poet records may not be exactly what you would have seen had you been there. The point is that the poem delivers what matters.

Patrick Woodcock once edited the *Literary Review of Canada* but has since become a literary nomad—exploring the planet and opening himself to inspiration and opportunities for reflection and human understanding.

Vicariously reliving Woodcock's journey through northern Iraq by means of his poetry renders it all astonishingly vivid. It's like watching an exceptionally good documentary, but the experience is much more meditative and introspective.

He gives voice to a young woman named Mariama, the victim of corruption, bereavement, and rape. He shows how the war and the current conditions are based on a web of lies as tight as concrete. It's a foundation that can support a diabolical structure of any size, at least for a while.

He touches on the growing problem of mental illness among Kurds, a condition created by torture and imprisonment under Saddam's rule, a reality I wrote about in 2012 in my series of interviews with a Syrian Kurd. He writes about a former teacher who now can barely speak.

At first, you think the whole book is going to be about a people blinded by tradition and crushed by oppression. But then we read about a man who owns a teashop that's actually a kind of mission to the mentally ill clients who've become like children to him, and you begin to think that maybe after all humanity is not entirely doomed.

Woodcock guides the reader into a sacred space. He's mindfully engaged with others, with the environment, and with himself, and his verse manifests an intense refinement of expression, meter, image, line length, and rhythm, all subjected to the exigencies of the poetic idea.

In one poem he's visiting a dwarf community. You feel a pang when the dwarves recount the same dilemma experienced by dwarves and others with physical challenges here in the West, i.e. the daily humiliation of living in a world not built with their needs in mind. He records the rather mundane hopes and dreams of its members. One would like a custom built car. Let's hope she gets it one day.

Echo Gods and silent Mountains manifests six of the Mindful Bard's criteria for books well worth reading.

It's authentic, original, and delightful.

It poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence.

It harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda.

It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering.

It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, 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.



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Dear Barb:

Dear Barb:

I lost my job recently, so decided I'd go back to school. I picked AU because I didn't have to wait until September to begin my semester. Since I started, my sex life with my wife has dropped to like once every couple months or so. You'd think that with me being home more it would be the opposite. I get that there's more stress now because of the money situation, but I figured I would be more helpful to my wife by sharing the chores with her (when I'm not studying or job hunting). If anything, though, I seem to annoy her. You're a woman, any ideas?

Anonymous

Hi there:

My first response would be stress, but you already mentioned that. Have you and your wife discussed your feelings with each other? Perhaps there is something else bothering her, or maybe she simply needs reassurance from you that everything will work out. It's hard for a woman to think about intimacy when she is worried about her livelihood. You don't mention whether you have children, if you do I'm sure that would be a concern to you both. When you try to help with the chores, your wife may feel annoyed because she has her routine and her own way of doing things. Take the time to reassure your wife and be patient. Eventually everything will work out and she will be more receptive to you. Thanks

for your question, hope this helps.

Dear Barb:

I'm in my first year of university and living in residence. I have two roommates, who are also first year students. We are all having difficulty adjusting to life away from home. Do you have any suggestions that would help us to feel more comfortable and more a part of campus life. Thanks, Nicole.

Hi Nicole:

First year university can be a big adjustment, as for many students it is their first attempt at living on their own. There are various things you can do to make this an enjoyable and rewarding experience. It is important that you and your roommates respect each other's time and space as far as studying, personal time, and individual space. For you to fully integrate into campus life you need to join clubs and organizations that interest you. Most campuses have quite an assortment of activities including sports and musical groups, just to name a few. Another way to meet people and help others is to do some volunteer work. If possible focus on the area of your future career path. Most importantly, you need to take care of yourself by choosing healthy food, and getting enough sleep and physical activity. Don't try to do everything, though, you need down time as well. Remember no one will be regulating your activities; you are your own master now. Enjoy the first step on your life's journey!

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

Weird Canada

Weird Canadian Delicacies

YOU NEVER HEAR A FOODIE SAY, "I'M SO INTO CANADIAN FOOD!" HERE'S WHY.

HEY, WHERE'S THE BOS'N? I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE YESTERDAY.

WHEN HE FOUND OUT WE WERE RUNNING OUT OF FOOD AND THE NEXT STOP WAS CANADA, HE JUMPED SHIP.



SEAL FLIPPER PIE— EXACTLY WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

FIGGY DUFF— A PUDDING MADE FROM FLOUR AND RAISINS, STUFFED INTO A PUDDING BAG, AND BOILED WITH THE SUPPER'S ROOT VEGETABLES

RAPPY PIE (RÂPURE)— THIS IS AN ACADIAN BAKED DISH MADE OF POTATOES, STOCK, AND MEAT OR SEAFOOD. TRADITIONALLY THE GRATED POTATOES ARE PUT IN A SOCK TO SQUEEZE OUT THE WATER.

PULSE— A DRIED SEAWEED FOUND IN THE MARITIME PROVINCES AND CONSUMED BY THE BUSHEL WHILE WATCHING HOCKEY ON TV

DONAIRS— INVENTED IN A MIDDLE EASTERN RESTAURANT IN HALIFAX, A PIECE OF FLATBREAD STUFFED WITH A SPICY MEATLOAF, CUCUMBERS, TOMATOES, ONIONS AND A SAUCE MADE OF CONDENSED MILK, VINEGAR, AND SUGAR

MAKTAAQ— FROZEN WHALE SKIN AND BLUBBER, EATEN RAW

PRAIRIE OYSTERS— BULL TESTICLES

BLOOD SAUSAGE— NEED WE SAY MORE?

FISH AND BREWIS— A DISH MADE WITH SALT COD AND HARDTACK, BOILED, BROKEN UP, AND MIXED TOGETHER

BLUEBERRY GRUNT— BLUEBERRY SAUCE TOPPED WITH THICK CRUST AND BAKED

WANDA WATERMAN

AUSU UPDATE



Dear Members,

You may have recently seen information on the internet speculating about the future of Athabasca University. These reports suggest that the Alberta government may broker a merger between AU and University of Alberta, and that this may result in drastic changes to the services and programs offered to students AU students.

We want you to know that AUSU is aware of these rumours and is actively investigating the source – we will keep you informed as we know more.

We can tell you that AU is governed via a bicameral structure with two main governing bodies: the General Faculties Council (formerly Academic Council) and the Board of Governors (formerly Governing Council). AUSU has representatives on both of these governing bodies and we can confirm that there has been no formal discussion of a university merger among these groups. The AU president, Frits Pannekoek, has also assured the press that there is no truth to the rumour. On behalf of our members, we are seeking more information from the Board of Governors, the minister, and AU executives.

At this time we simply have no evidence that a merger is being seriously considered by AU, the U of A, or the Alberta government, and we note that among the many committees and working groups of AU, planning and development for the future continues as usual.

We know that our members are worried and want more information. We will update you as soon as we know more. At this time we do not feel there is any reason for students to worry or make changes to their study plans.

Do not hesitate to contact our office if you wish to talk about this or any other issue affecting AU students.

AUSU.

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.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

500 Energy Square - 10109 - 106 St NW - Edmonton AB - T5J 3L7
Ph: 855.497.7003 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

Publisher Athabasca University Students' Union
Editor-In-Chief Tamra Ross
Managing Editor Karl Low

Regular Columnists Hazel Anaka, Barbara Lehtiniemi, S.D. Livingston, Wanda Waterman

www.voicemagazine.org

The Voice is published every Friday in HTML and PDF format.

Contact *The Voice* at voice@voicemagazine.org.

To receive a weekly email announcing each issue, subscribe [here](#). *The Voice* does not share its subscriber list.

© 2014 by *The Voice Magazine*