

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 22 Issue 17 2014-04-25

### Meeting the Minds!

Dr. Laurie Milne

### Random Reading

Let a Machine Pick Your Book

### From Where I Sit

What price Freedom?

*Plus:*

*International News Desk*

*Chazz Bravado*

*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

Meeting the Minds: *Dr. Laurie Milne* ..... 9

## Articles

Editorial: *Political Upset* ..... 3

Random Reading ..... 4

## Columns

Primal Numbers: *The Science of Crime* ..... 5

Mindful Bard: *Who Cares?* ..... 7

From Where I Sit: *The True Price of Freedom* ..... 12

Writer's Toolbox: *Tale Told by a Poet* ..... 13

In Conversation: *With Patrick Woodcock, Part II* ..... 15

Dear Barb..... 17

## News and Events

Click of the Wrist ..... 6

International News Desk ..... 14

Did You Know?..... 14

AUSU Update..... 19

## Comics

Chazz Bravado: *Equal Pay*..... 18

***The Voice  
Magazine***

[www.voicemagazine.org](http://www.voicemagazine.org)

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

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email  
[voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto: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](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter.**

## EDITORIAL

Karl Low



## Political Upset

Cards on the table time. I'm a senate supporter. It seems there's not many of those in Canada these days, but I'm one of them. I feel the senate performs a vital function in our House of Commons, and does so specifically because it is an unelected body with lifetime appointments. I feel there are probably tweaks that could be made in the appointment process, and possibly to the rather arbitrary arrangement of seats per province, but aside from that I feel that if we lost the senate, or even significantly changed it, it would significantly harm our Canadian ideals of both "order" and "good governance" that our motto ascribes to us.

So I was quite happy when the Supreme Court shut down Mr. Harper's proposals to be able to unilaterally change the make-up of our senate, or worse, abolish it completely. I'm equally happy that he's claimed there will be no referendum on the issue to continue this debate, although what his word is worth is doubtful. But I'm just angry that so much time and money has been wasted on this garbage over the last eight years while in the mean time really useful and needed information, like a report on the skills gap in Canada, is being shelved due to a lack of funding being available for Statistics Canada (check out the International News Desk for more information on this, if you're interested.)

I'm not a supporter of Mr. Harper's brand of conservatism. Nor have I been ever since his first day in office back in 2006, when he announced that Mr. Michael Fortier, a man who has been soundly rejected each and every time he came up for a public election, would be his first appointment to the Senate, mere weeks after he had stated that he would not appoint anybody unelected as a senator. Being so brazenly cavalier with his word made me instantly dislike the man, and his subsequent actions to subverting our democratic institutions since have not improved that impression one bit. But that said, I will admit that he does get some things right. Most notably this happens when those things have nothing to do with policy within Canada, such as our reaction to the actions in the Ukraine. In this, I agree with Hazel Anaka, who this week has a follow-up article on the issue that is certainly worth a read.

Also worth a read in this issue is Wanda Waterman's "In Conversation". This is part three of her interview with poet Patrick Woodcock, and in it he tells a story about his time in Iraq and some of the dangers there. If you haven't been reading this series already, this is a great installment to start with and gives you some feel as to how extremes can really affect a person and their work.

In our Meeting the Minds article this week, we talk to Dr. Laurie Milne of AU's anthropology department, including her opinions on e-texts, online exams, and Finn the Farting Pug. Although to be honest, we don't talk a lot about Finn. Once you have the name, what else is there that can be said, after all.

Before I let you go, I'd also like to take a moment to point out that we have, at long last, a new AUSU update. I point this out because by now I'm sure most people simply skip it, and there's some good information in the new version they've sent up, so it'd be a loss if you did. That, plus our usual cavalcade of tips, advice, and thought-provoking articles should hopefully keep you busy until next week. Until then!

## Random Reading

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Could you let someone else select the books you read? According to a recent [article](#) in Maclean's magazine, some customers of a Toronto bookstore are doing just that. Last year, the "Monkey's Paw" second-hand bookstore installed a machine that dispenses random books for \$2 each. Clearly intended to move less-worthy stock, customers nevertheless are enjoying some idiosyncratic reading that they might otherwise have overlooked. Dedicated customer Vincent Lui bought a book from the machine each week and wrote about the experience in his *Random Book Machine* [blog](#).

Many readers already allow some external control over their book choices. They listen to friends' recommendations, peruse best-seller lists, or sift through the recent returns cart at the library. Ultimately, though, the reader makes the final decision. Leisure reading is a personal endeavour, after all.

Consider, though, that readers usually select books which appeal to their own interests. By doing so, they are limiting themselves to their current pursuits. How can you broaden your mind without allowing your imagination to travel off the beaten path?

You may find your own interests, well, interesting, but what else is out there that might inspire you? How will you find the spark of something new unless it lands in your lap? In her best-selling book *The Happiness Project*, Gretchen Rubin describes purchasing several random magazines to broaden her mind. Closing her eyes, she blindly pointed to a magazine rack then purchased whichever magazine was at the end of her finger. Then she read the whole magazine, whether it was on horse breeding, paper craft, or religion. Consider that there are thousands of topics of which you know nothing—random reads can work to reduce that number.

Selecting books or magazines at random is good brain exercise. It's not quite as challenging as learning a new language, but reading on a new subject, or in an unfamiliar genre, is certain to make your mind work a bit harder. Any new learning exercises your mind and broadens your horizons. Books on fungi or urban architecture may sound unappealing but could make your next woodland or city walk more stimulating. Exploring new territories can awaken the mind.

Reading at random might make you a more interesting person. Are your co-workers and loved ones yawning when you speak? Maybe they're just a little weary of hearing about your passion for physics, or fishing, or whatever it is that you tend to talk most about. Broadening the scope of books you read will give you more varied topics to expound on. Having more subjects on which you can confidently speak also means you can talk to a wider range of people—you're sure to find some interest in common.

If your local bookstore doesn't have a Biblio-Mat book machine like the one at the Monkey's Paw, there are other ways to randomize your reading. At bookstores, buy whatever the person in front of you in line is buying. Pledge to read whichever book is in the number 11 slot on the best seller list each month. Before entering a library or bookstore, decide in advance to pick the fourth book on the fourth shelf in the fourth row.



Need to be more methodical? Buy a book about books, such as *The Torchlight List* by Jim Flynn, *The Well-Educated Mind* by Susan Wise Bauer, or, if you're ambitious, *1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die* by Peter Boxall, and get busy. Browse online lists posted by readers on [Goodreads](#) or subscribe to an online book club. (I often enjoy the appropriately-named "eccentric pick" from Gretchen Rubin's monthly [book club](#) choices.)

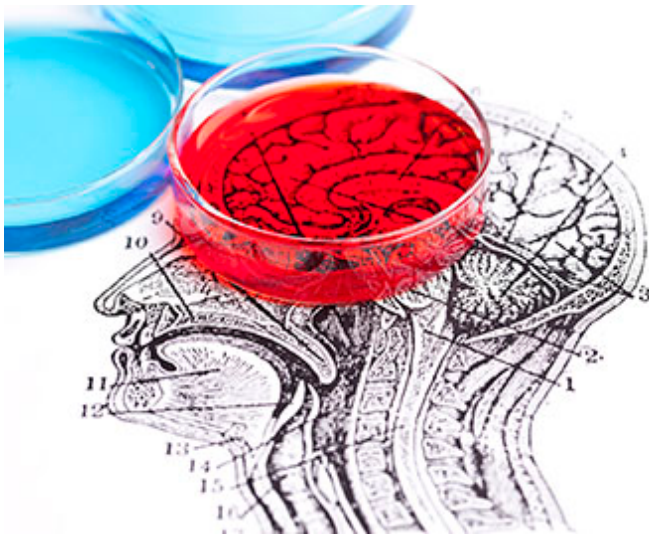
Like making a random turn on a country drive, choosing a random read may lead you to unexpected delights and serendipitous discoveries. Or, who knows? You could become the star player on trivia night.

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



## Primal Numbers The Science of Crime

**S.D. Livingston**



On April 20, Rubin “Hurricane” Carter passed away. His 20 years in prison on a wrongful murder conviction was an egregious miscarriage of justice, and drove him to fight for the rights of other wrongly accused prisoners. These days, it’s tempting to think that science can save us from such mistakes, that DNA and fingerprint evidence is foolproof. It’s time to put those supposed facts on trial.

It’s true, of course, that science has brought us far from the days of Salem witch hunts and Anglo Saxon [ordeals](#)—the days when being forced to grasp a hot steel bar was a reliable test of innocence. And the science behind

DNA, fingerprints, and other detection methods has surely proven the innocence of people who, without that evidence, might well have spent years in prison.

But our reliance on that type of evidence could just as easily put innocent people behind bars. That’s because the majority of people—the type of average, everyday people who sit on juries—don’t realize that the science behind such foolproof evidence isn’t really foolproof at all.

Take fingerprints, for example. Everybody knows they’re unique. No two people have identical ones, and the prints you’re born with are yours for life. Except that’s not true.

As this [Telegraph article](#) explains, “nobody has yet proved that fingerprints are unique, and [it’s also noted that] families can share elements of the same pattern.” In fact, samples of your own fingerprint, taken from the same finger just moments apart, can have substantial differences. In one university study, “two thirds of experts, who were unknowingly given the same sets of prints twice, came to a different conclusion on the second occasion.”

Aging can change your fingerprints as well, as skin becomes thinner and less elastic. The same fingerprint taken in your 20s could look very different from one taken in your 60s.

That's a far cry from the fingerprint evidence we see on popular shows like *CSI*, but what about the science of DNA?

Well, that's a lot more scientifically sound, assuming that human error or deliberate misconduct don't taint the evidence. Yet as the Innocence Project [notes](#), "only 5–10% of all criminal cases involve biological evidence that could be subjected to DNA testing."

Then what types of science do many cases rely on? Things like forensic analysis of hair, fibres, teeth marks, and voiceprints—all methods that, surprisingly, have "little or no scientific validation and with inadequate assessments of their robustness or reliability."

Yet the average person, fed a steady diet of Hollywood crime "science" like *Bones* and *Castle*, has no idea that such scientific evidence in the real world isn't that scientific at all. At least not enough to proclaim a person's guilt or innocence. Even without the influence of such popular movies and TV shows, most people don't have the scientific background to know their forensic fact from fiction.

So next time a high-profile case makes the headlines, it's worth questioning the so-called science behind it. Because sometimes, the real crime is in taking fact for fiction.

*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.*

### Click of the Wrist

This past week we celebrated William Shakespeare's 450th birthday. It's easy to find hundreds of resources geared toward those keen on researching and understanding the influential man's work, but there's also plenty of fun for those who are rusty or reluctant. Click through these links to discover a side of Shakespeare you might not have known:

#### To Tweet or Not to Tweet

If you prefer your reading to be bite-sized—as in 140 characters or less—@IAM\_SHAKESPEARE tweets Shakespeare's plays, a line at a time, every 10 minutes. Started years ago, the project's on its third run-through of the Bard's complete works.

#### The Word

Even if high school English class made you swear off Shakespeare forever, your everyday speech is still influenced by the Bard. Cracked.com's "10 Words You Won't Believe Shakespeare Invented" is true to its name.

#### Cream-Faced Loon

Still not convinced of the merits of Shakespearean study? Just take a look at this infographic of the top Shakespearean insults (and if you're curious, read the full insults—some as long as a whole verse—[here](#)).

### Where There's a Will



## Mindful Bard

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

## Wanda Waterman

Film: Who Cares?

Director: Mara Mourão

Casting Your Bread on the Water and Watching it Return to You a Hundredfold



"We are not guests here. We create our own life. We create our own world. Before we create our world we must imagine what kind of world we want to create and then start doing that."

-Muhammad Yunus, founder of Kiva, a global organization that provides micro-loans to the poor

"I define ideas like a parachute. A parachute is a wonderful achievement only when it is used for what it's meant for. If you wrap a parachute around yourself it becomes a useless object, but if you go to a high altitude and jump you must release your parachute so it comes out open . . . Ideas are things you should be able to throw open."

-Isaac Durojaiye, founder of DMT Mobile Toilets, Nigeria

As a child, Karen Tse had nightmares about people being tortured. She'd wake up relieved to realize it was just a dream, only to become tormented again by the thought that somewhere in the world this dream was a reality.

Karen eventually founded International Bridges to Justice, an organization devoted to ending torture. She's been amazingly successful in advocating on behalf of torture victims and also in compelling some countries to end torture. Despite being surrounded by naysayers, she's convinced that torture, like slavery, is something that can be ended.

She's become a social entrepreneur.

The term "social entrepreneur" was first coined by Bill Drayton, founder of Ashoka, a global organization devoted to seeking out, encouraging, guiding, and supporting those who choose to invest in the best interests of Planet Earth.

But isn't "social investing" an oxymoron? How can working toward a better world be a personal investment? And why would people invest their lives in helping others when they could be doing what people are *supposed* to be doing, i.e. working hard to make enough money to earn their bread and, ideally, building capital?

*Who Cares?* is a beautiful response to all of these questions. It's a roadmap to a better world, a vicarious journey of healing, a reference work for social activists looking for good causes to join, and—believe it or



not—yes, a feel-good flick, especially for those of us who turn on the news only to become smothered by helpless rage and despair.

How can a film about activism make us feel good? By reminding us that there are people out there who don't waste a second on hopelessness, escapism, or whining. These people simply get busy and relentlessly push toward positive change in the world.

At first glance, one would think it's either crazy or masochistic to throw time and money at social and environmental problems. A kind of granola martyr, if you will, but dig a little deeper and you can see where enlightened self-interest is a key incentive. Here are a just a few of the personal advantages of devoting one's life to changing the world for the better:

- Investing in the world makes the world a better place for you personally.
- You develop a milieu of profound, satisfying, and constructive friendships.
- Watching something grow and change for the better is one of the most rewarding experiences imaginable.
- The experience of social entrepreneurship enables us to develop more fully as human beings.
- When you're part of the solution, you're no longer part of the problem, which makes it easier to sleep at night.
- As research has shown, money can make you happy, but only up to a certain point; after basic needs and a little extra for pure enjoyment, money doesn't make us any happier. Financial capital doesn't make us happier. What does make us happier is living in love.

*Who Cares?* takes us around the world to remind us of the problems afflicting humanity and to lift our hearts with evidence that things are changing. There's some wonderfully symbolic animation that pushes this point home. There are also many wise words about how we got here and why working toward change is not a sacrifice but rather a joyful, fulfilling way of life.

*Who Cares?* manifests nine of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing.

- It's authentic, original, and delightful.
- It poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence.
- It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor.
- It's about attainment of the true self.
- It inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation.
- It displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering.
- It gives me tools of kindness, enabling me to respond with compassion and efficacy to the suffering around me.
- It renews my enthusiasm for positive social action.
- 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.*

# MEETING THE MINDS

## A **NEW** VOICE COLUMN



*Dr. Laurie Milne is the current Co-ordinator of Anthropology at AU. She's authored three of AU's Anthropology courses (ANTH 272, ANTH 394, and ANTH 320), and currently is a tutor for six courses while co-ordinating ten courses overall. She is also a subject matter expert in the area for AU, which means she is consulted on courses in development. While Anthropology is not a huge enrolment area at AU, she deals with about 75 AU students in her courses.*

*She kindly agreed to be interviewed by The Voice Magazine and here is the gist of that interview:*

### **How long have you been working with AU?**

I started tutoring for AU in 2000. I taught fulltime at Medicine Hat College from 1971 to 2012 when I took compulsory retirement and am now a part-time instructor there.

### **What brought you to start in your field and tutoring for AU then?**

I entered the new Department of Archaeology at the University of Alberta at Calgary in 1964 to fulfill a childhood dream of becoming an archaeologist and I commenced work with AU because I was interested in distance education and working with students.

### **Do you mean the University of Calgary?**

That's what it became two years later. Before it was made independent as the University of Calgary it was the University of Alberta at Calgary. I achieved my Honours level Bachelor of Arts, and moved on from there to a Masters Degree.

Once I had that, I started working at Medicine Hat College, but at 40 I took a sabbatical and started my doctoral work, eventually getting my Ph.D in Archeology from Simon Fraser University. I served on the Medicine Hat College Board of Governors for two terms, but don't feel I'm a great representative for faculty, as I understand the constraints that the boards are working with too keenly.

I started working as a tutor for AU and since July 01, 2012 have been an Academic Coordinator of Anthropology. I work with Dr. Sheila Greaves at AU.

**It sounds like you're very busy with AU right now, are there any things that stand out in what you're doing?**

We just recently opened a new course, Anthropology 320: Ancient Civilizations, which is somewhat of an expansion on Anth 318: Ancient Civilizations of the Americas. Rather than just looking at the Americas, the new course is looking at ancient civilizations from around the globe.

There's also a major revision of Anthropology 375, the Anthropology of Gender, which I'm overseeing. We're revising it because there have been some major changes in the textbooks.

The anthropology area at AU tries to offer the four-field approach, which trains students in four areas: physical anthropology, social-cultural anthropology, archeology, and linguistic anthropology.

Also, I have had two students that went abroad for archaeological field-schools, one to Italy and one to Ireland. As a tutor, I get testimonies from them on their experiences and hear papers in at conferences about field schools, so if students express an interest, I can send them information or direct them to where there are good opportunities for field-work.

**What are the common pitfalls you see students running into?**

Procrastination is definitely the foremost. Students leave things until late in their contract, and then have to scramble to complete course requirements or take extensions. When they do this, it means they often have to do their work without giving themselves any chance to incorporate tutor feedback.

**What have you been finding interesting to you currently in your field?**

The writing and production of the new course, Anthropology 320: Ancient Civilizations has been most gratifying. In addition, I attended a wonderful conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico in October, 2013. It was called "Paleoamerican Odyssey" and dealt with early settlement of the Americas.

I also write book reviews for the Canadian Journal of Archeology, and Plains Anthropologist. Also, last year I had a paper published in an edited volume dedicated to my first archaeology professor from the University of Calgary, Dr. Richard G. Forbis.

*I think the online texts look beautiful, but students tell me that they are printing it, not reading it online.*

**And outside the field?**

My passions are travel, golf, and gardening. I have grandchildren who live near Edmonton and we have been taking an annual hiking holiday in the Lake O-Hara, Lake Louise, and Bow Falls areas for the past four years. Each year I also attend the Banff Mountain Film Festival and holiday in Santa Fe, the Annapolis Valley, and the Big Island of Hawaii.

While I mostly do flower gardening, I grew up in Olds, Alberta, and the growing season here in Medicine Hat is just amazing by comparison. I had never seen peppers growing or tomatoes ripening on the vine while I was up there.

I also can't forget my dog; he's a pug whom I walk four times per day. "Finn the Farting pug", we call him.

---

**Finn the Farting pug? Do I dare ask where the name came from?**

You can probably guess.

**What is your opinion on AU's move to e-texts so far?**

I've got one course that has moved to e-texts. I've found it a challenge when they put the new text online and have had to learn how to navigate the new systems. I think the online texts look beautiful, but students tell me that they are printing it, not reading it online.

A big initiative related to this though is online exams. I've had three people who have written online exams so far, and my judgement is that they're not writing to the same level of detail they used to with pen and paper. However, I am encouraging students to include more information and have had one student tell me that she really liked several features of online exams, including the word count aspect.

I think there's still some adjustment time required for these. We get the electronic exams, and I still have to read the manual before grading to be sure I'm following the right procedures, and the system still has some glitches. There have been wrong exams sent, and there was one exam where there was an error in the total number of marks assigned to each question. Fortunately, a manual grade is still entered in the system, but tutors and markers have to be careful about these things.

**How about the shift to a call-centre model?**

I don't know enough about it to say much. A few years ago a friend registered in an accounting course that was done through the business school call-centre, and she told me nobody ever returned her phone calls when she called in. Eventually she dropped the course. However, personally, I've no experience with it.

**Do you have an opinion on social media use for education?**

Honestly, I don't know enough about it.

**That's fair. So what do you think AU needs to do to improve itself in future?**

AU has many strengths. One of the ones I see is the service that gets provided through the AU helpdesk, and the staff that are more than willing to aid and help students and staff where they can. Also, the quality of courses that I'm overseeing is first rate, and most of my college students from Medicine Hat would never be able to complete these. In my area, the student who completes an anthropology degree at AU will have far more writing experience and knowledge than they'd ever have received from a regular college. These students are graduating with writing and critical thinking skills that college courses just don't provide.

When I look at the people who work at this institution, the diversity of people, and the wealth of backgrounds and experience, I think that students are quite fortunate to have that. Then there are the professors, and AU staff, and all of these tutors who also have their own wealth of backgrounds, when taken all together it's an extremely diversified set of experiences that are being brought to the table here for AU students, and that's really a positive factor. If there's anything I wish could change, it is that the finances would have allowed AU to continue to hold tutor seminars in Edmonton. That was a great chance to meet people and give faces to those we're communicating with all the time. I miss the workshops and seminars as their content was first rate.



## The True Price of Freedom

Through nothing more than profound good luck I was born into a country at peace. I missed the years of both great wars. I didn't have a husband or child who expressed any interest in voluntarily joining the military and serving in places like Afghanistan. Each Remembrance Day, I can only pray for those who did (or didn't) choose that life.

Because of my own ethnic background and heightened awareness of all things Ukrainian, I have been watching the actions of Russia's Putin with horror and revulsion. Prime Minister Harper's deployment of CF-18s to the area to assist NATO is a sign that we are cautiously starting to put our money where our mouth is.

No one, including me wants a war. In the big picture, there are no winners of one. Yet how on earth do you stop a despot? That answer is being pondered by greater minds than mine, and I hope further armed conflict can be avoided.

So, why do I have war on my mind? Hilary's upcoming trip to Vietnam and Cambodia reminded me of a book that, among hundreds, has waited patiently on my bookshelf to be read. Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* is his fictional account of his stint in the Vietnam War. The book jacket says it "matters not only to the reader interested in Vietnam, but to anyone interested in the craft of writing as well." I bought her a second-hand copy for the flight and at long last began reading my own.

The accolades for this 1990 book are numerous and well earned. I defy anyone to read it and remain unmoved. You will laugh, cry, and be forever changed. O'Brien's sensitive yet brutal telling of the 'real' story is unparalleled. It's one of the best books I've ever read. His skill, insight, and courage are enviable.

This series of connected stories draws us into the humid jungle, into the filth, the dangers, the tricks of the mind. The title story instructs in unforgettable detail. *On the Rainy River* tells how O'Brien spent six days eyeing the Canadian border as he wrestled with the idea of becoming a draft dodger. These are not the life choices a twenty-one year old should have to face. *The Man I Killed* may offer an explanation for PTSD.

There are the contradictions: profound loneliness versus company camaraderie; the desire for self-preservation versus the pain of taking the life of another.

Technology and armaments have changed the face of war since Vietnam or O'Brien's novel. But I doubt that basic human nature has. Isn't it as traumatic to the human soul to take a life in 2014? Isn't it as devastating to families? Or a country's bottom line?

Neither you nor I have anything to say about what happens next in Ukraine. Reading a book like this helps us understand what is truly at stake. It lets us be clear about the true price of freedom, 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

### Tale Told by a Poet

Christina M. Frey



Did you get your poetry on this year?

This past month the writing community celebrated National Poetry Month, with libraries, schools, and literary organizations holding events to promote poetry appreciation.

But, if you missed it, you're not alone. The truth is that for most adults, poetry is something that was left behind in high school. What a loss! Poetry can be a thing of beauty—and it has a practical benefit, too. In fact, reading and writing poetry will help make you a better writer of prose.

#### Be succinct

Whether you're writing a novel or an academic paper, one common pitfall is wordiness. In fiction, this usually takes the form of rambling description, over-telling of details, and explaining, rather than

showing, emotions and feelings. In nonfiction, it often involves jargon and long, awkward constructions and transitions.

No matter the genre or style of writing, word choice matters. But in poetry, particularly poetry that's constrained by form (think haikus) or rhythm, word choice is a matter of life and death. There's simply no room for wordy constructions or unnecessary extras; each word and phrase needs to be carefully chosen to make a statement or convey a mood in as concise a way as possible. Practicing conciseness by reading and writing poetry is a good way to learn the skills needed to defeat wordiness.

#### Use figurative language

Poetry is known for figurative language or language that describes through comparison, whether directly ("My love is like a red, red rose . . .") or indirectly ("Thy eternal summer shall not fade"). Using figurative language creates rich description, paints a vivid picture for the reader, and keeps the writing fresh and interesting. Writers struggling with description in their writing can seek inspiration from the world of poetry and its use of figurative language.

#### Convey emotion

Poetry is the language of the heart, so it's said, and it's true; there is no better medium to express the cornucopia of emotions held by the human heart. You've probably heard that reading poetry helps us develop empathy and understanding for the thoughts and feelings of others—but the benefits go beyond the social realm.

Reading and writing poetry will train writers to access their own emotions and develop empathy for the emotional journeys of the characters they're writing about. This understanding in turn allows writers to break patterns of wooden or one-dimensional characters and instead create more nuanced, human characters that readers can relate to and want to read more about.

## Get started!

Reading and writing poetry is a wonderful experience in its own right, but it will also broaden your writing skills and help you improve conciseness, description, and character development. Don't leave poetry for April alone! Though the month is almost finished, poetry belongs in every writer's toolbox all year round.

*Christina M. Frey is a book editor and a lover of great writing. Chat with her on Twitter about all things literary @turntopage2. Or visit her [website](#)*

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK

### At Home and Abroad



#### At Home: Skills Gap Study Shelved for Lack of Cash

The government of Canada spent 4.6 million on a survey of 25,000 employers to bring some hard numbers to the extent of the skills gap in Canada, but the report has not been able to be made public because of lack of funding. Statistics Canada conducted the survey over the first three months of 2012, but was not given the funding to analyze the results. Over the past two years, the Conservative government has cut funding to Statistics Canada by over 29.3 million dollars, forcing staffing to be cut by almost 20%. Alison Hale, Statistics Canada's director of labour statistics says they are working on the analysis as time allows, but are more than willing to gear up efforts if someone can provide them the funding to do so.

#### Around the Globe: Denmark Seeks More International Students

Reported recently in *The PIE News*, Denmark has put forward an action plan to help recruit non-EU students to their schools and job market. The new polity will target non-European students who are subject to tuition fees (students from the EU are exempted from having to pay tuition already) and who are higher calibre students. With scholarship funding of over 4.5 million dollars US being proposed by the government, and more being sought from businesses and industry that will benefit from having access to these skilled workers. The plan states these changes are necessary because "We are losing thousands of skilled young people who have spent a number of years in Denmark, and who could be contributing to Danish society."

## DID YOU KNOW?



## AUSU Gives away money!

Part of the nine dollars per course that you are charged as an AUSU member goes toward making awards to help those who are either struggling through exceptional circumstances or have themselves proven to be exceptional representatives of our membership.

As an AUSU member, you are allowed and encouraged to apply for these awards, but you had best do so soon, as the awards deadline is on May 1, 2014 for this current round.

For more information on the type of awards and how to apply for them, visit the [AUSU Awards Page](#).

## In Conversation

### With Patrick Woodcock, Part III

Wanda Waterman



*Patrick Woodcock uses poetry to document his adventures and the pain and the joy of people living in war-torn countries—a kind of poetic nonfiction. (See [Voice](#) review of [Echo Gods and Silent Mountains: Poems](#), his book of poems based on his time in Iraqi Kurdistan.) Recently he took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about his formal and informal education and some of the close calls he experienced in Iraq. (Also read the first part of this article [here](#) and the second part [here](#).)*

#### Unwitting Mentors

As with many poets, university wasn't a great fit for Patrick, who openly admits to having despised it. But he later realised that all of his learning, even his formal education, had been a huge boon to him, preparing him for the nomadic life he now follows.

"It was nothing like I expected, and I was too immature and too far-gone in many respects to be there. I'm still amazed I graduated. It wasn't until I moved to Poland that I understood how much university had helped me. And since then I have taken every possible chance to continue studying.

"Over the years I had only one prof who really affected me. My first year of university was at Concordia in Montreal. Being the genius that I am, I arrived late and, when I signed up for my courses, paid little attention to what years they were for. So some of my courses were for second and third year students. I don't remember the name of the prof, but I do remember that for about three weeks I couldn't figure out if he was blind or not; he had this odd way of squinting that both confused and intrigued me.

"The first book we read was Nietzsche's *The Theatre of Tragedy*, which, intellectually, was quite a slap in the face. But I found the prof so interesting that I decided to stay in his class even if I failed. He would go off on tangents about everything from opera to architecture, from wine to different breeds of horses, and he made it all sound so effortless and natural.

"I really wanted to be like him—to be that interesting. It was a full year course with only two exams, each worth 50%. My proudest moment in all my years at university was passing that course – barely passing.

Patrick cites one inciting incident that had a major impact on his development as a writer: "I was walking around Montreal alone one night (1988) and saw a small sign at the entrance to Concordia's main building—that ugly colossus. It was to promote a reading by a Canadian 'avant-garde' poet. It was the first reading I had ever attended. A few hours later I was sitting in a small room with about eight people and Christopher Dewdney.

"He was promoting the *Immaculate Perception* and a chapbook about a man who parachuted into a group of clouds and was stuck in them for hours—I hope I remembered that correctly—the reading was brilliant. It was

absurd, amusing, ambitious without being pretentious, challenging, and by far the most entertaining and inspiring presentation I've ever seen. And to think it was just Dewdney sitting at a table telling us stories, nothing else. I've been addicted to his work ever since and continue to reference the structure of that evening whenever I have to give readings now.

### **Spiritual Explorations and Close Calls**

"After I stopped teaching at the private school I mentioned earlier, I moved to Zakho, Iraq and began to lecture at their university. One of my colleagues—now a close friend—was Yezidi [a largely Kurdish ethno-religious group whose religion is influenced by Sufism and has ties to Zoroastrianism]. I began to study his faith and found it fascinating. Whenever I would return to Duhok I would have lunch at the Dilshad Palace Hotel because it was the only air-conditioned venue I liked in the city.

"After a few weeks I became friends with the *maitre d'* and learned that he was not only Yezidi but also one of their—for lack of a better word—elders. He helped arrange for me to travel to Lalish, which is their spiritual home and also to meet their prince three times. After getting to know and trust each other over a couple of months, he invited me to visit his village and meet his family. He told me what time to be ready at the university and that he would send a cab for me. So, I rose early, got prepared, and set off in the cab.

"But a couple of problems arose almost immediately. The driver spoke no English and I had no idea where the village was. As we were driving I wasn't too happy to realise we were heading towards Mosul. I have to explain that when I was in Iraq, entering Mosul was a death sentence for foreigners, as well as for some locals (a few of my students limped as a result of being randomly shot by a sniper when returning home from visiting family members.)

"The kidnappers in Mosul had given up on the idea of returning the kidnapped victim alive since some governments had attempted to rescue the hostage. So they adopted a policy of killing the kidnapped individual and sending a photo of the dead body to the person's family or government. The ransom asked for was not for the person's safe return but for the corpse so it could be buried at home.

"All of this was going through my head as we approached Mosul. I realised that I had no idea where I was going, did not know the driver, and I also began to wonder if I had entered the wrong cab. I could see that there were only two more exits approaching. If we didn't take one of them, the Mosul checkpoint was next.

"So I closed my eyes and took my camera out of my pocket, gripping it tightly in my right hand. I decided that if the driver passed the second exit I was going to pull the steering wheel into the dirt with my left hand while pummeling him with my right until I felt it was safe for me to either exit the car and run or possibly drag him out and steal the car and drive back to the university's guard house. Thankfully, he turned left at the first exit.

"I told them the story that evening over dinner. They thought it was hilarious and on the way home, the driver—who ended up becoming a close friend as well—made the turn toward Mosul to see if I would panic again. I did."

(Patrick Woodcock's Tumblr page: <http://patrickwoodcock.tumblr.com>. *Echo Gods and Silent Mountains* can also be found here on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Echo-Gods-and-Silent-Mountains/248778701905472>)

(to be continued)



Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

### Dear Barb:

*Following my father's diagnosis of terminal cancer, I decided to attend Athabasca. The flexibility would allow me to help my mom care for my dad. My father survived for one year and it was a difficult year for all of us. It has now been six months since my father passed and I'm worried about my mom, she is acting like a totally different person. She is out partying all the time with some new friends she has met. My parents married at a young age and were married for over 25 years. This behaviour is so out of character for her. I've tried to talk to her and she just gets angry with me. Is this normal behaviour? I'm not sure what to do.*

*Thanks, Kory.*

Hi Kory:

There is no "normal" behaviour for grieving people. Everyone grieves in his or her own way. Since your parents were married young, she may be just picking up where she left off before she got married. This is a completely new life for your mom and she now has to find a new way to live without your father. I really think you need to give her some time to adjust to the world that has been thrust upon her. My advice would just be to try to be available for your mom if she needs help or to talk, which you seem to be doing already. Grief is a complicated emotion, as I'm sure you realize since you have to deal with your own grief as well.

Thanks Kory and check out the letter below.

### Dear Barb:

*My sister lost her husband two years ago and she is still depressed. She has a young daughter and we have to help to take care of her. Julie cries all the time and barely functions. She is only in her thirties and the loss of her husband was a tragedy for everyone. I just don't know what to do to help my sister to move on with her life. Even her young daughter is not providing Julie with the motivation to carry on. Do you have any suggestions on what I can do to help my sister?*

*Thanks, Michelle.*

Hi Michelle:

As I just mentioned to Kory in the above letter, everyone handles grief in their own way. Your sister is not progressing through the process of grief. According to the book *On Death and Dying* by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, there are five stages to grief; denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Individuals may progress quickly or slowly through the stages, and may even get stuck in one of the stages for a prolonged time. Your sister seems to be stuck in a depression and since it's been two years she may very well need a bit of professional help at this point. Perhaps a support group would be helpful, as she will have an opportunity to share her feelings and offer emotional support to others. Your family doctor would be able to direct you to support groups in your area. I hope this helps Michelle.

*Email your questions to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto: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.*



## Comic

Wanda Waterman

**CHAZZ BRAVADO:**  
**EQUAL PAY**

Equal pay for women? I'm against it.  
Women need to be paid more!

Them sweet things need an incentive to waddle out of their gilded cages and enter the workforce! Think about it— if the chicks are always stuck at home, they're just not available!



Except maybe to the meter reader . . .

Now that I think of it maybe equal pay isn't such a good idea.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm long overdue for a career change.



WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN WITH  
INPUT FROM BEN WATERMAN



## AUSU Updates: A new council

On April 1, a new AUSU council took office to represent AU undergrads for the 2014-16 term. The last six weeks have been a busy time, as outgoing councillors prepared the new team to take office and facilitated an executive election.

We're pleased to announce your new student representatives:

**President:** Jason Nixon

**VP External and Student Affairs:** Kim Newsome

**VP Finance and Administration:** Corrina Green

**Councillors:** Bonita Arbeau, Megan Daigneault, Alexander Poulton, Christine Villeneuve, and Shawna Wasylyshyn.

At the changeover meeting on March 31 we said goodbye to members of the outgoing council, some of whom had served for multiple terms. We'd like to take this time to thank Toni Fox (outgoing President; 4 years on council); Bethany Tynes (outgoing VP External; 6 years on council); James Ramsbottom (councillor, 3 years), Ashley Charlton, and Craig French (both served 2 years).

The new team is already hard at work developing a project plan for the coming term year! See [AUSU.org](http://AUSU.org) for more information and the Governance section for bios and pictures of your new team.

## AUSU Awards - May Deadline



AUSU offers a range of awards, bursaries, and scholarships for our members. Some are available year round, but most are given out twice per year at our spring and fall application deadlines. The next deadline is May 1, so there is still time to get your application in.

### Awards available for this deadline include:

- Academic Achievement Scholarships: recognizing excellence (\$1000).
- Overcoming Adversity Bursaries: a \$1000 bursary for students in financial need.
- Student Service Awards: a free course to recognize community involvement.
- Returning Student Awards: a free course for students returning to school.
- Balanced Student Awards: a free course for students balancing commitments.
- Christine Pannekoek Music Award: a free AU course for a student of music.

**Also, these awards are available year round.**

- Computer Bursaries: a free new laptop for students in financial need.
- Travel Bursaries: travel funding for symposiums, practicums, and convocation.
- Emergency Bursary: covers extension and exam fees for students experiencing hardship.

**Tips for a successful application:**

1. Don't wait until the last minute: you may need to obtain some documents that take a few days to arrive.
2. Fill out the form completely and legibly: incomplete forms will not be processed.
3. Read all instructions and submit the completed form to the correct email address ([ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org)).
4. If you have questions, call our office, but do not call AU. They cannot help you with AUSU awards.

All applications and instructions are on [AUSU.org](http://AUSU.org): select SERVICES then [STUDENT AWARDS](#).

## Convocation travel information



AUSU wants to make sure this year's graduating class has a fantastic convocation. To make this happen, we're providing free transportation via bus or limo service to take people from Edmonton to the Athabasca Multiplex each day of convocation 2014. This applies to those graduating from AU undergraduate programs, and their guests (some limits may apply).

We've also arranged hotel discounts in both Edmonton and Athabasca (for Athabasca, you must book early and pay a deposit. Rooms in Edmonton are much easier to book).

Plus, if you stay at the Edmonton hotel where our discounts apply, the bus/car will pick you up right out front, and drop you off at your hotel after the ceremonies.

This service is provided exclusively by AUSU, but grads in some faculties may already be eligible for free transportation. Check your program website or the dean's office to find out.

For more information, contact [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org) as soon as possible. We'll also send you a tip sheet with more information about travelling to Edmonton, getting to and from the airport, etc.

*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](mailto:ausu@ausu.org).*

---

# CLASSIFIEDS

---

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto: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](http://www.voicemagazine.org)

---

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

Contact *The Voice* at [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto: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*