



Angie Abdou Author

My facebook profile lists my religious affiliation as Bibliotheist. God is in books. Bookstores, libraries, and universities are my temples of worship. Socrates said, “an unexamined life is unworth living.” Literature creates a space in which to examine contemporary life, and in that way it is everything. In a recent interview, local artist Jocelyn Thomas asked me what I would do if I couldn’t be literary. “You mean I can’t read, write, teach, or talk about books?” I was struck dumb.

In other words, I really really love books, and attempting to write them was, therefore, inevitable.

It’s fairly recently, though, that I’ve been able to call myself a writer. I’ve written articles and academic pieces for well over a decade, but I wasn’t—I would’ve said—a real writer. Despite of (or, more likely, because of) my love for fiction, I procrastinated on my attempt to write it. It took a brush with death to startle me out of that sleepy “I’ll try it later” attitude. After a head-on collision in 1999, I realized that

life is tenuous and we can’t afford to endlessly defer our true goals. “Later” is always in the future and the future is uncertain—what’s wrong with now?

I, therefore, encourage people to act (rather than talk) themselves into existence. Don’t say, “I want to be a writer” (heard so often). Instead, try “I am writing.” This statement not only moves writing out of the elusive future and into the present, but also takes the emphasis off some glamorous idea of “The Writer” and puts it instead on the everyday life practice of

writing. No one says, “I want to be a quilter” or “I want to be a gardener.” Why, then, when it comes to writing, do people linger so long in the limbo between desire and action? Perhaps, there’s more interest in an imagined Writer persona than in the oft-tedious act of writing. Writing is not glamorous, and anyone who pursues it in the service of ego will, I think, fail. The work-to-fame ratio in the writing life is about 7 years to 15 minutes.

Once I decided to write fiction, I drew heavily on a well-developed national mentorship program. Canada boasts some of the best writers in the world, and I’ve learned lessons from many of them, including Elisabeth Harvor, Bonnie Burnard, Lynn Coady, Suzette Mayr, David Carpenter, and Joanne Gerber. Can writing be taught? In its essence, probably not—much depends on talent, individual voice, and work



ethic. But there are fundamentals of plot, characterization, setting, narration, and dialogue that a

beginning writer must master, and for this process, workshops and mentorship programs are invaluable. Greater than those lessons, though, is the inspiration such programs gave me, the confidence to believe in myself as someone who writes.

Because mentors have been so crucial to my writing development, I’m delighted to be moving into the role of mentor myself. This summer I’m teaching at two writing workshops—one for teens (Sage Hill Teen Writing Experience in Moose Jaw, July 16-20) and one for adults (the conference here in Fernie, July 23-29). I’m excited to enter this next phase of my writing career and feel lucky that things have gone so smoothly for me since that 1999 decision.

Luck is a word frequently on my lips these days. I’m lucky to live in such a



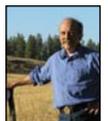
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"Feature Artist" continued

beautiful place. I'm lucky to be part of such a supportive community. I'm lucky to have such a loving family. I could fill books counting my blessings, and 2006-07 has been especially packed with good luck—I published my first book (a short story collection called *Anything Boys Can Do*) in September, gave birth to my first son (Oliver Hawksley Hafke) in December, and will be publishing my first novel (*The Bone Cage*) in July.

But "luck" is a misnomer. "We make our own luck," as the cliché goes, and my decision to surround myself with good people (especially my husband, Marty Hafke) plays a large role in my recent good fortune. In this way, Fernie is the perfect place to be a writer. I cannot imagine a book community more supportive than Laura Nelson, Patty Reedyk, and Patty Ohm at Polar Peek Books & Treasures. That little store in this little town sold over 200 copies of my short story collection and has already ordered 100 copies of my novel. Asked to list popular homes for Canadian writers, one might think of Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, and Montreal. But I guarantee that writers in those cities have never been greeted with the kinds of smiles I get when I walk into Polar Peek. Maybe this is Fernie's best-kept secret – it's a great place to write. If you want to be in the writing scene, move to Toronto. If you want to engage in the work of writing (and to feel wonderfully supported in your occasional 15 minutes of fame), move to Fernie.

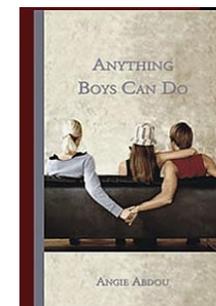
Thank you, Fernie.

For more information on my books and upcoming tour schedule see: www.abdou.ca.

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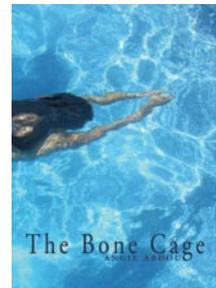
"An extraordinary literary debut"
- *BC BookWorld*

"Hilariously unromantic and refreshingly bitter"
- *Elisabeth Harvor*

"For centuries, terms to describe female sexuality have been along the lines of Slut, Tart and Whore. There are, sadly, no words that describe female desire that are not pejorative, and this lack of available vocabulary is one reason why Angie Abdou's debut short story collection, *Anything Boys Can Do*, is important."
- *Bronwen Welch, Victoria Times Colonist*

"Abdou sometimes creates tension

with undercurrents of death, violence, separation, or loss, but the overall tone of the writing is buoyant and rich with details that lighten the mood."
- *Margaret Tessman, ARTiculate magazine*



PRAISE FOR THE BONE CAGE:

"Abdou captures the heroic quests of these hopeful Olympians in all their gritty pain and glory." "Vivid, intense, and authentic" "Abdou's ear for dialogue is sharp." "The Bone Cage is well paced and readable, memorable for its fresh perspective on the lives of athletes and the obstacles they must overcome."
- *Christine Walde, Quill & Quire*

FEATURE ARTIST