

**Text 1****Procrastinating Again? How to Kick the Habit** By Trisha Gura

Procrastination is as old as humans are. For people living in agrarian societies, a late-planted crop could mean starvation. Thus our ancestors equated procrastination with sin or sloth. The industrial revolution may have facilitated the practice of putting off important jobs. Technical advance brings some protection from the forces of storms and famine as well as an increase in leisure time, in consumer goods and in the number of possible *choices* of activities. Contemporary society offers a surfeit of distractions, including computer games, television and electronic messaging – not to mention cars and planes to take us to more stuff to see and do – all enticing us to move off task.

Succumbing to such enticements can be costly. Experts estimate that 40 percent of people have experienced a financial loss because of procrastination, in some cases severe. In 2002 Americans overpaid \$473 million in taxes as a result of rushing and consequent errors. And Americans' dearth of retirement savings can be attributed, in part, to people putting off putting away cash.

Procrastination can also endanger health: after screening more than 19,800 people for high cholesterol, epidemiologist Cynthia Morris and her colleagues at the Oregon Health and Science University reported in 1990 that 35 percent of those who learned they had elevated cholesterol put off consulting a physician for at least five months. In 2006 psychologist Fuschia Sirois of the University of Windsor in Ontario reported in a study of 254 adults that procrastinators had higher stress levels and more acute health problems than did individuals who completed jobs in a timely manner. The procrastinators also received less frequent medical and dental checkups and had more household accidents, a result of putting off dull jobs such as changing smoke detector batteries.

Task aversiveness is one of the main external triggers for procrastination. Who puts off doing what she loves? According to an analysis, half of the college students surveyed cited the nature of the task itself as the reason they put it off. Undoubtedly, few leap at the chance to write a dissertation about nematode reproduction or clean out the garage. 'Procrastination is about not having projects in your life that really reflect your goals,' Pychyl says.

The amount of time before a project's due date also influences the tendency to procrastinate. In particular, people are more likely to dawdle when the deadline is far away. The reason for this lies in a phenomenon known as temporal delay, which means the closer a person gets to a reward (or a feeling of accomplishment), the more valuable the reward seems and hence the less likely he is to put off performing the work needed to earn it. In other words, immediate gratification is more motivating than are prizes or accolades to be accrued in the distant future.

Research suggests that 95 percent of procrastinators would like to break the habit but cannot, because it has become automatic and ingrained. 'Habits become non conscious brain processes.' Pychyl says. 'When procrastination becomes chronic, a person is, essentially, running on autopilot.'

Some experts suggest replacing the reflex to postpone with time-stamped prescriptions for action. So rather than setting a vague goal such as 'I will get healthy,' set one with its implementation, including timing, built in – say, 'I will go to the health club at 7:30am. tomorrow.'

Setting such specific prescriptions does appear to inhibit the tendency to procrastinate. Research conducted at Hofstra University demonstrated that procrastinators who formed implementation intentions were nearly eight times as likely to follow through on a commitment than were those who did not create them. You have to make a specific commitment to a time and place at which to act beforehand. That will make you more likely to follow through.

More simply, Pychyl advises procrastinators to 'just get started'. The anticipation of the task often is far worse than the task turns out to be. To demonstrate this fact, his group, in work that appeared in 2000, gave 45 students pagers and checked in with the volunteers 40 times over five days to query them about their moods and how often they were putting off a task that had a deadline. 'We found that when students actually do the task they are avoiding, their perceptions of the task change significantly. Many times, they actually enjoyed it.'

**Text 2**

'Jeanette Winterson's new novel, makes an excellent choice for desert-planet reading – scary, beautiful, witty and wistful by turns, dipping into the known past as it explores potential futures. (...) It is when the characters truly engage with one another, rather than with their own ideas, that Winterson's story transcends the established facts and common fantasies; it becomes art, and thus makes its case most powerfully. This is, I think, her point: we grow more through feeling than through intellect.'

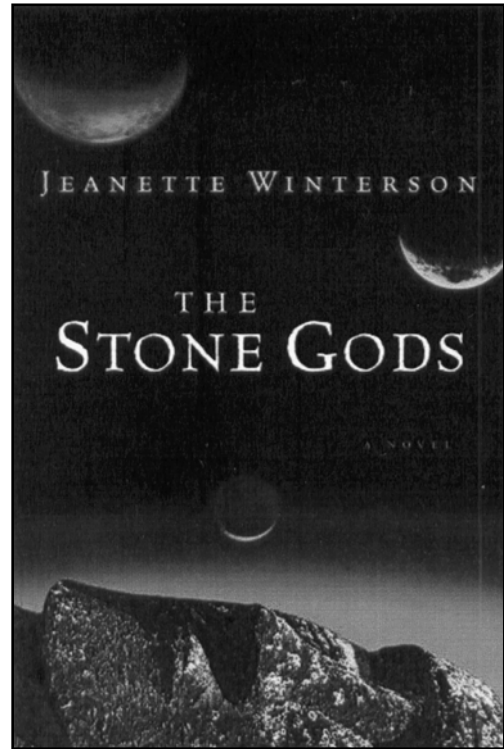
[*The New York Times Book Review*, Susann Cokal]

'Still, when the connection among the three narratives finally dovetails, and what once flickered as an early suspicion blooms to certainty, the sense of closure is both chilling and fulfilling. Some novels are intriguing enough to shorten a plane trip; some even offer a trip into other people's skins and minds. And then there is this kind of book, one that you don't so much read as drink in, refuse to put down, cast inside of like a hunting dog, seeking against all odds the insight that will illuminate everything, a true answer to the fix we're in.'

[*The Los Angeles Times*, Kai Maristed]

*The Stone Gods* is a parable about history and about what we have done and go on doing to ourselves (...). But it is more than this; it is also a parable about love. (...) *The Stone Gods* is a dazzling feat of storytelling that travels from the personal to the political and on towards the infinite.

[*New Statesman*, Stephanie Merritt]



'In the novel's rich dough, the horrors of environmental meltdown are leavened by an interspecies romance in which a robot seduces her handler, and a lament for the beauty of the natural world. Amid the imaginative high-jumps of sci-fi fantasy is a lilting, beautiful, crisply modulated text that will delight Winterson's faithful. (...) *The Stone Gods* is a playful but impassioned novel. Winterson cloaks her disillusionment with a sustained imagination. Her writing is funny and beautiful. It cocoons the novel's dark heart.'

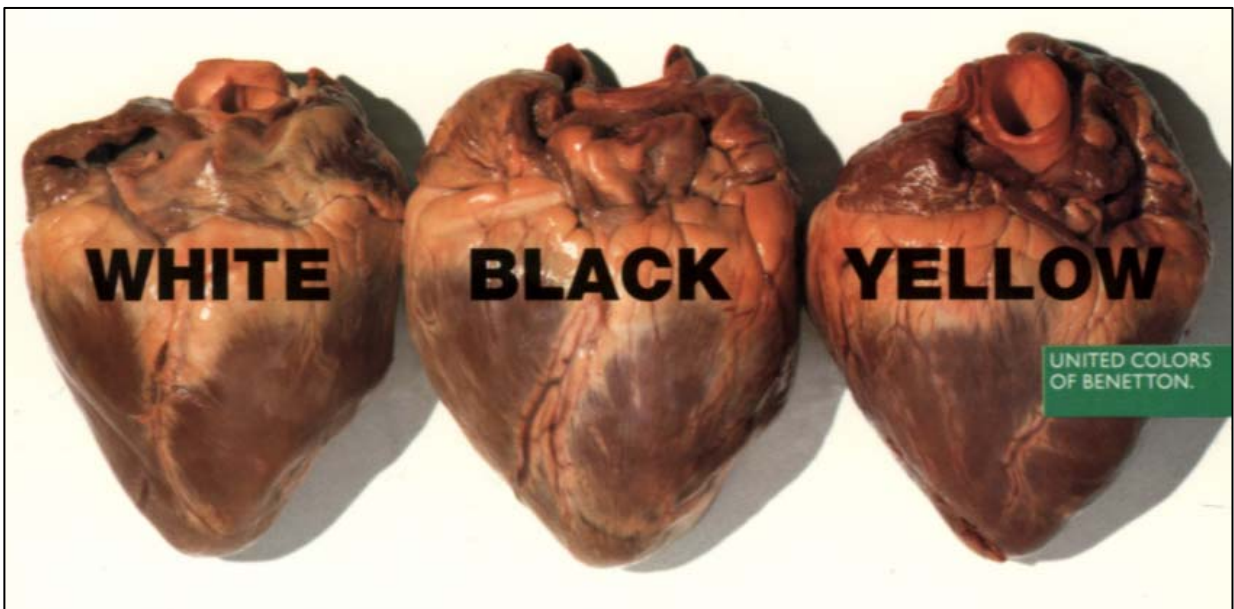
[*The Times*, Matthew Dennison]

*The Stone Gods* is a critique of contemporary ways and man's insistence on control and dominance, on taming worlds and imposing rigid systems. Things go wrong – even the best laid plans of the best scientific minds. The long-term outlook may not be so bright or pleasant, but for now, Winterson acknowledges, these systems work eerily well.

**Text 3**



**Text 4**



Text 5

Given more time, imagine the possibilities.

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Age 2  
Given 9 months to live.

Nkosi captures international media attention.

Age 10

"Do all you can with what you have in the time you have in the place you are."  
NKOSI

Age 8  
Death of mother, Nonthlanthla Daphne Nkosi.

Nkosi's Haven opens its doors

Dies age 12.  
1 June 2001

Nkosi Johnson  
Born HIV positive.  
4 February 1989

Nkosi spearheads school policy

The school reverses its decision.

XIII INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONGRESS

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: NKOSI JOHNSON

Age 8  
School rejects him due to HIV. Causes outrage at highest constitutional level.

Age 11

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## Text 6

## Want to steal in style? Get a gun – and accessorise

Gang of women burglars decked out in designer gear gains easy entry.  
**Victor Khupiso**

A GANG of four women in killer heels and designer clothes are robbing homes at gunpoint.

Police believe the four women, wearing Rolex watches, Guess sunglasses and crocodile-skin shoes have, since January, been responsible for more than a dozen robberies in Johannesburg, Pretoria and the Vaal area.

The group, believed to be in their 30s, arrive at their targeted homes in a 'latest model' silver BMW.

They get inside by pretending to be prospective home buyers or clients of a business run from the premises. Then they drop the classy act and rob the occupants with knives and a 9mm pistol.

In one attack, an elderly domestic worker ushered the women into the house, which was advertised as being for sale. They asked whether the house was worth the price. She said it was a bargain.

'There was nothing that made me suspicious. They wore designer labels and one of them wore Guess sunglasses. They spoke English like white people and used words I could not understand,' she said.

After the 'inspection', the robber in the leather skirt and expensive heels held the domestic worker at gunpoint in the kitchen while her accomplices ransacked the house.

'While they were busy, one of the robbers even told the rest to hurry up because she had to fetch her son from the school.'

A police officer said the women had been difficult to apprehend because they operated across a wide area in Gauteng and didn't arouse suspicion in the suburbs they robbed, as they looked like they belonged there.

But criminal profiler, Dr Irma Labuschagne, said the gang of women should be easier to catch than other robbers who had no fixed addresses, who simply 'disappeared into settlements'.

'It is more interesting to me how the four of them got together ... it amazes me that four middle-class women are all of the same criminal persuasion, proving that birds of a feather do indeed flock together.'

[Adapted from an article published in the *Sunday Times*, November 16, 2008]