

HAUTE DISH

The Arts & Literature Magazine of Metropolitan State University

Fall 2007

Poetry. Fiction. Art. Graphic Story. Personal Essay.



Inside Out by Photographer Noel Opti

Haute Dish is Metropolitan State University's entirely student-run online Arts & Literary magazine.

Our mission is to be the Midwest's best online literary journal at both the collegiate and professional levels.

In achieving this mission, we will do the following:

- ◇ Encourage Metropolitan State University's student body, staff, and faculty to create and submit prose, poetry, essays, and visual art that reach the highest levels of excellence.
- ◇ Provide the highest-quality and most innovative online publishing facilities, with outstanding aesthetic appeal, usability, and technical excellence.
- ◇ Consistently maintain a highly-competitive editorial policy, never settling for less than the very best that Metro State students, staff, and faculty have to offer.
- ◇ Commit to accessibility of past publications, never allowing the ephemeral nature of online publication to overtake the artistic value of the publication and the hard work that went into creating each entry.

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Submit to Haute Dish

Please send your submissions in electronic form to submit.hautedish@gmail.com. Include a cover letter in the email that states your Metropolitan State University status, your name as you would like it to be listed, a 75-word bio written in third person, the genre of your piece(s) (prose, poetry, art, graphic story), and a title for each piece.

All artwork should be in .jpg format and be at least 600x800 pixels. Written word should be sent in a Microsoft Word .rtf file (to preserve formatting).

Poorly copyedited writing, no matter how brilliant or creative, often gets rejected. Please be sure your writing is thoroughly copyedited before you submit it.

Want feedback for your writing before you submit it? The Writing Center loves reading your creative work. Email centerfolk@metrostate.edu to schedule an appointment.

Poetry: Max 40 lines

Prose Poetry: Max 750 words

Prose: Max 1,500 words

Graphic stories: Scanned, 1 page max

Comics: Scanned, 3 panels max

Photograph your **drawings, paintings, sculptures and sketches** to submit them

EDITOR LETTER

A few weeks ago, I visited the Picasso and American Art exhibit at the Walker Art Institute. I am not a fan of modern art, but the question of how Picasso influenced American artists such as Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, and Louise Bourgeois piqued my creative curiosity. The juxtaposition of Warhol with American artists gives viewers an intimate perspective of artists finding their unique voice and vision by copying those they admired.

Emulating your favorite artists, however, can be fraught with danger. Speaking of her own experience of a Picasso exhibition in 1939, Bourgeois said "It was so beautiful, and it revealed such genius and such a collection of treasures that I did not pick up a paintbrush for a month."

Indeed. I know when I've finished reading a well-written novel, I wonder whether I'll ever be able to write even one sentence as beautiful. (Most recently, that novel was *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold). So I know what kind of courage it takes to pick up a pen, paintbrush or Pentax and give form to your creative voice. But we do it because we can't not be creative.

So take a peek inside to see the twelve artists in the Fall 2007 issue of Haute Dish. See their courage. Let their creative voices speak to you.

This is my final issue as Managing Editor. It's been more fun than you can know. Thank you all for your support of Haute Dish as readers, artists and enthusiasts. I am grateful to be handing the reins over to the talented and thoughtful Rebecca Haven, who has been on staff since May 2006. Please welcome Rebecca as the new Managing Editor.

N. Jeanne Burns, Managing Editor

Visual Arts

	page
Bukowsky by Krissy Domm	4
Fight to the Top by Thomas Adams	10
Sepia Door by Emberly Herman	13
Inside Out by Noel Opoti	17
Alien Barn by Emberly Herman	21

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Poetry

	page
Aspirations by louis murphy	5
Bottles in the Surf by louis murphy	5
Rosetta by louis murphy	5
Ancients by Susan Solomon	10
Wandering in Circles by louis murphy	13
A Thin Veil by louis murphy	17

Prose

	page
The Cost of Living by Emily Urness	2
The Ass in Assume by Joshua Fischer	6
Last Round by Kristin Bleninger-Sundar	11
The Formerly Ugly Duckling by Christine Liebeg	14
Chennai, From Touchdown to Sundown by Kristin Bleninger-Sundar	16
Second Shift by N. Jeanne Burns	18
Last Kiss by Theresa Starkes	19
Artsy Stuff	page
Paddle & Pen: Profile of Bob Babin by Kathy McEathron	22
Riding Out the Storm by R.J. Babin	23
Need Inspiration?: Upcoming Exhibits	24

The Cost of Living

by Emily Urness

Herman took up washing the floors after he'd run out of money to fix the car. The car that, at least these days, is permanently parked in its place, grass

growing dead underneath it. Irene took up dusting and is developing a slight sneeze and cough combination. The mornings are the worst, after the kids go off to school. She and Herman stand on the front porch, his arm around her waist. After little Nanette and Rita's pigtails bob onto the bus, his arm drops and it begins.

They re-enter the house, Herman always in front of Irene. They make their instant coffee, each watching the other so as to catch someone stirring in more granules than allotted. Their coffee is never as strong as they like it. It used to be that they'd have their coffee together and share the funnies. The paper stopped coming a few weeks ago. In its place came a letter saying they owe \$39.95 on their subscription.

Some days, she will sit and think about how they used to act, back when they had the innocence to imagine how both of them becoming unemployed in the same week would be an opportunity to spend time together and start new lives.

It's better that the paper doesn't come anymore. They'd exhausted the new opportunities within a week; a better life couldn't be found between its pages.

Every so often Herman will call Larry up at Eagan Construction and ask if any of his crew has quit. These phone calls have grown shorter in duration and frequency as the days pass. If he doesn't call Larry, Irene will get out the local phone book of the surrounding small towns. She'll turn to the Yellow Pages, every time choosing a different section and to call to see if anyone has any positions open. She's called everyone from Appliance Shops to Restaurants, but as the pages dwindle so does her eagerness to call.



Irene puts two mugs of coffee-water into the microwave, making sure to choose the clear mugs, not the ones with fading, uplifting messages on their sides. She listens to Herman fill the mop bucket for the first time today.

Herman ambles back into the kitchen, his shoulders askew with the weight of the bucket. He sets the bucket gently onto the linoleum and reaches up to the microwave as it dings. He sets the mugs on the table and reaches for the jar of instant. She watches him take a small amount, and stir the granules into what substitutes coffee. He clicks the spoon three times on the cup's rim. She'd never noticed this sound until sixty-eight days ago.

He shuffles his beat-up slippers over to the toaster to make his daily two pieces. She spoons in her coffee and stirs, making sure to not clink the spoon in the same rhythm he did.

"We got any bread in the freezer?" he asks, holding up the two butts of the loaf.

"No," she says. He sighs so hard his shoulders sink.

"Honey," he says, not turning to her, "we need to get some groceries."

"I know," she says.

“We gotta eat,” he says, slamming the butts into the toaster. “Goddamnit, we still gotta eat.” He puts his palms on the counter, resting himself, supporting himself, calming himself. Irene stares at the neatly stacked mail on the table. It contains bills and charities asking for money. She knows there’s at least one credit card application in the stack. Herman shuffles his slippers to retrieve a plate and knife, arriving back at the toaster seconds before it pops. She hears him scrape the bottom of the butter dish and let out a smaller sigh. She feels him look at her, for recognition of this malady.

“I know,” she says. He clunks the knife on top of the butter dish and reaches over and flips on the radio. The volume has been set on the same little notch all of the years the radio’s been on the kitchen counter. It sounds much louder these days. Herman listens to the radio announcer call out livestock prices. He’s never been a farmer. Irene looks over Nanette’s multiplication tables and sips her coffee. She hears Herman swallow his coffee in gulps and wonders how many cups he’ll go through today.

The livestock program and the local news come to an end. They both rise at the same time and perform their ballet of non-touching. He refills his mug with water and returns to the microwave. She wets a rag to wash the toast crumbs from his place at the table and by the toaster. She moves the butter dish during a pause in the radio program, knowing it was a mistake of timing. He crosses to her from the microwave.

“You’ll go today?” He ask-says, wrapping an arm around her shoulder. She sighs, taking no comfort from the arm that holds her.

“Honey,” he pulls her close, she inhales his stale coffee breath. “Look at me,” he raises her chin with his thumb.

“Don’t worry about them, we’ll tell them when they get older, they’ll understand,” he says. She shudders. “It’s not gonna be like this forever,” he says. His hand pulls her head to his chest. “We’re gonna get through this,” he says. She looks up to see the stubble of his chin, it’s been a long time since she’s seen his stubble this close.

“I’ll call Larry today and see if he’s got any jobs lined up,” Herman says, pulling apart from her. He walks the three steps to the microwave. “Earl said they put in a bid to restore Old Tinkmeyer’s barn,” he says, to the water in the microwave. Irene starts for the bedroom.

“Irene,” he calls. She stops. “You’ll go then?”

“Yeah,” she says, not turning around.

“Honey, just take twenty-five from each,” he says, “That oughta be enough for groceries, don’t you think?”



Irene sits in her car at the bank parking lot, Nanette and Rita’s bank books sit beside her. Her face shines with tears. She tries to think of what to tell Mrs. Anderson when she hands over the withdrawals. She decides to tell her that the girls want to buy a new bike. This will be the hardest lie she will ever tell.

Irene sobs, trying to avoid catching her own eye in the rearview mirror, trying to not witness the moment. Her hand rests on the door handle. Her mind fights to leave and get it over with. ?

“It’s not gonna be like this forever,” he says. His hand pulls her head to his chest. “We’re gonna get through this,” he says. She looks up to see the stubble of his chin, it’s been a long time since she’s seen his stubble this close.

“Irene,” a gold-ringed knuckle raps on the car window. “Irene, I’m so glad to see you darling, you know I was just about to call you. Say, what happened to your eyes, dear? Are you crying? Is everything all right?” The ringed hand starts to reach for Irene’s shoulder.

“Oh, are they red?” She leans to the rearview, “It must be allergies.”

“You poor thing,” Julia says. “But, I am so glad to see you, like I said, I was going to give you a ring, you know it’s almost cookie season for our little troop. Now, I was wondering, did you want me to go ahead and pre-order for Nanette’s share? You know, it’s just so much easier than delivering later, don’t you think?” Julia’s head and her lipstick-smearing toothy smile bob up and down.

“Well, I won’t keep you,” Julia says, backing away from the car. “You can just let me know at the scout meeting Wednesday. Make sure you come in to chat, hmm?”

“Will do,” Irene lies. Julia’s floral-printed over-stuffed business suit perkily recedes in the sideview mirror.

“Oh, Irene, make sure you get some Benadryl,” Julia says, turning back. “I just can’t bear to see anyone suffer. Bye-bye now, see you Wednesday.”

“Bye,” she mumbles, watching her in the mirror. She wonders how strong Julia’s coffee was this morning. Julia recedes from the side view mirror. Irene grabs the bank books and gets out of the car, saying to herself over and over, “The girls want to buy a new bike Mrs. Anderson, isn’t that wonderful?”



Bukowski by Krissy Domm

Poetry

by louis murphy

Bottles in the Surf

our broken glass edges have been
smoothed now, worn down,
by healing, sharing, giving, taking—

but recently conversations have become
speeches through silk scrim,
seldom more than shadows,

face to face in memory—words only—
showing up as mild detergent glowing
in the shower of a black-light—

absurdity

beached in this state of indifference;
We have become
shuddering sheltered souls.

please stir my world again, like the tide,
the glowing potion still hoping,
and let us return

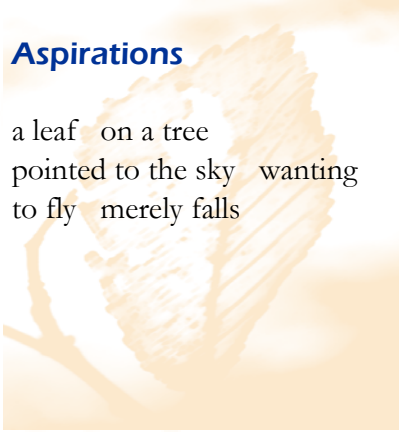
to simplistic and soon settled—
to become pebbled surface and smart
insightful reflections instead of sloth;

be, at times, the heart-raging lover again,

and live with me in sin,
holding together in the darkness—
no longer waiting for tomorrow

Aspirations

a leaf on a tree
pointed to the sky wanting
to fly merely falls



Rosetta

Statement
Pictogram
Locked into stone
Standing for something
Can't tell the answer
To a old puzzle
To a cold pulse

Fragmented
Lesson
Cipher and time
Legend of incest
Stone of the delta
Each word a mirror
Each meaning broken

Pick up the pieces
Line up the reasons
Nothing else given
Take back a lesson

Waking an ancient face
Picture and letter
Opening a tomb
Everything falls into place
Moving together
A trio of feathers
Falling in a vacuum



The Ass in Assume

by Joshua Fischer

Assumptions ran deep and heavy in Dumpsville, like hot syrup over fried squirrel brains, when Dumpsville hosted Georgia's Meeker County Softball Championship game. The locals assumed they were making without a doubt a squirrely assumption, yet they did it anyway. Assuming the situation, even with only two last inning outs and even with the tying runner only 90 feet from home standing on third, Dumpsville locals assumed their hometown team the Dumpsville Dumps would lose to the out-of-town Tip City Chick-Hens. Assuming the assumption with quite certainty, Orville Humperdink, Dumpsville's squirreliest local, was an easy out.

All assumptions assumed: Orville would always strike-out, or pop-out, or ground-out; an out's an out. Dumpsville locals were a bunch of strange cookies this way. "Old Man Roscoe" had a saying they could always count on, "A pile of shit is a pile of shit, no matter how many flowers are piled upon it."

With assuming the assumption that Orville failing was not even an assumption, Dumpsville locals also assumed the name "Tip City" was somehow related to the word "tipsy." They then figured Tip City fans to be alcoholics. Dumpsville locals wanted no part in their drunken moonshine celebrations. On these two assumptions, all Dumpsville locals' behinds began piling out of their bleacher seats. By the time Orville stood at-bat, all that remained spectating were 30 Tip City hootenannies and 200 empty gallon moonshine jugs tossed every-which-way.

As dastardly as it sounds, Lucy Hecklingberg, an MVP catcher for the Chick-Hens was even more dastardly than the Dumpsville locals in their assuming ways. Lucy Hecklingberg was a ringer at heckling and there was no doubt about it. Through her gap tooth she'd spit out a spat of tobacco. Since she was a heckler, she started in on warbling at Orville.

"I reckon, Orville, you are the—"

"Shut up, Lucy."

"I reckon Orville. That's all I was saying."

"Don't you know I'm trying to concentrate?"

"Orville, I reckon that—"

"Well, Lucy. Reckon all you want. So what!"

"I reckon so. That's how I reckon—of course!"

"Strike one!" Umpire Jenkins said.

Orville stepped back outside of the box, which gave time for Umpire Jenkins to warn both Orville and Lucy to quit jibber-jabbering each other to death. Lucy argued first about how it was just jibber-jabbing to jibber-jab. But, Umpire Jenkins warned a darn near forfeit to Lucy and the Chick-Hens if she continued to yak and squabble on.

Orville yukked at Umpire Jenkins who was yakking-and-all to Lucy. Umpire Jenkins didn't take kindly to Orville's yukking by yakking at Orville's yuks.

"Game-called. Both teams lose!" Umpire Jenkins said.

“What in tarnation?” Orville and Lucy said.

“I reckon I said, ‘Game-called!’”

“I know you reckon you said, ‘Game-called,’ sir, but I reckon the rule book reckons there’s no rule reckoning on yukking, squabbling, squawking, and what not” Orville said.

“I, Umpire Jenkins, reckon I don’t care. Ain’t a damn thing to me. Both teams tie on accounts of jibber-jabbering.”

“I reckon the rule book talks a mean talk about called games. Any umpire won’t get their pay for called games. Now I reckon if this here game won’t count, you don’t get your damn pay.” Then to punctuate his statement, Orville tossed his glasses off of his face, which landed square into Lucy’s spitting tobacco spot.

“Yeah, listen to ‘Orville the Popcorn Boy.’ Besides, I ain’t done heard of no tie before. Wouldn’t we all have to wonder back tomorrow, or sometime to finish the game anyway?” Lucy said.

“Darn it. Lucy, don’t call me ‘Orville the Popcorn Boy.’”

“To make all accounts clear, this is how I reckon, ‘If you, Orville, reckon on squawking-and-all in the rule book, then that’s sweeter than a peach. If you, Lucy, account we’d have to play again anyway, then that’s sweeter than peaches and syrup atop squirrel brains. And if I get paid after all of this, then that’s sweeter than squirrel brains covered in sweet sauce’” Umpire Jenkins said.

“Sir, I reckon so” Orville said.

“I reckon so, too” Lucy said; a smirk accentuated her gap tooth.

“Play ball!” Umpire Jenkins said when he fired the ball to the pitcher to say it was so without saying it.

Orville ramshackled around for his glasses. When he returned, there was a long pause, followed by hoots and hollers.

“Orville, I can tell that you can’t see too well” Umpire Jenkins said.

“How so?”

“On account your lens got smeared landing in Lucy’s tobacco spit spot, that’s how so.”

Umpire Jenkins called, “Time!” Then, he scooted Orville around square in the other box to face the pitcher instead of the catcher. Next, he took off Orville’s lens, spit-shinning them clear. “Now, you good to go. Okay, one last time. Play ball.”

The ball was pitched.

Orville squinted his eyes real tight.

“Well, Orville. I done reckon that you ain’t nothing—nobody!”

“So, Lucy,” Orville’s voice raised. “You do nothing but reckon and assume.”

“I reckon so” Lucy’s said.

“I reckon the rule book talks a mean talk about called games. Any umpire won’t get their pay for called games. Now I reckon if this here game won’t count, you don’t get your damn pay.” Then to punctuate his statement, Orville tossed his glasses off of his face, which landed square into Lucy’s spitting tobacco spot.

“Well. You know what people say to those who assume?” Orville gripped his bat tight. “They say you’re an—”

At this point, Orville said right then and there, “Ass!” as loud as he could. He hammered the ball as if he had it in for it. The ball traveled all the way yonder into right field. The fielder pursued the blast, while Orville blasted out of the box, out past first base.

Nobody never done seen Orville in a runner’s stride before. Most people assumed he was slow, because they saw him around town walking slow, hunched over all the time, like a goose. But when it came time to hunker down, Orville was as fast as a mongoose. (And, mongooses were fast.) They booked with the speed like none other. That was what Orville did. He booked like a mongoose around the bases.

Orville zipped past first and zapped to second. The runner on third jogged his way home. This tied the score. But, all eyes were on Orville. At least, all the eyes of those who didn’t reckon to assume Orville was not an easy out and, in the process, left. (As Dumpsville locals did.)

The throw was on line, approaching home plate; Orville had rounded third by this time. Lucy was one who always played the game flashy. To make a statement, she could have gloved the ball, but caught it with her teeth instead.

Orville was caught in a rundown.

Then, to assume that Orville was the one in Dumpsville never to assume, Orville reckoned he was out. His legs appeared to buckle. He darn near tipped over. When Lucy caught the ball near home, she paused. Orville did nothing but stand still.

“Orville, I reckon you’s an out.”

“I reckon so.” Orville said his say. Lucy started trotting over about 60 feet to tag Orville. Still, Orville stood still.

Now, nobody never done seen anybody show up Lucy like this before. If the Dumpsville locals didn’t assume that the at-bat was an easy out and were there to watch the game, they would have assumed a person named; Lucy Hecklingberg would have gotten even.

Lucy stopped.

“I assume you’re trying to make an ass out of me?” Lucy said to Orville square in his eyes.

“Of course!”



“I assume, since you’re standing still, you ain’t gonna move. So, this here is what I’m a gonna do. I’m a gonna walk on over and tag you out.”

“Go on! Tag me out! I’m done tired of speaking to chicken shit bastards, myself.”

She was a person of her word. She added insult to injury. She calculated slowly all the way over to Orville. All the while, still, Orville stood still. At least his legs were still. Orville started quacking and carrying on with arms flapping in the air, like a chicken, egging Lucy on.

“You should get it, Orville.”

“I reckon I’m caught, so go on! That’s right. I ain’t ever gonna move.” Orville said this while raising his hands up in the air like Jesse James surrendering to the law.

Lucy moseyed on down inches from his face, where Orville was. Finally, she put her fist around the ball firmly with gumption. All in one motion she lunged her fist aiming it with the ball at Orville’s chest.

Orville lunged from the lunging fist and dodged on past Lucy.

Before you could say, “I told you so!” Orville’s foot landed safe at home plate. After word got around Dumpsville about how Orville ended the game, he single-handedly put an end to the Dumpsville locals and their assuming ways. It’s safe saying now that the Dumpsville locals assume only an ass assumes. At least they suppose this is so.



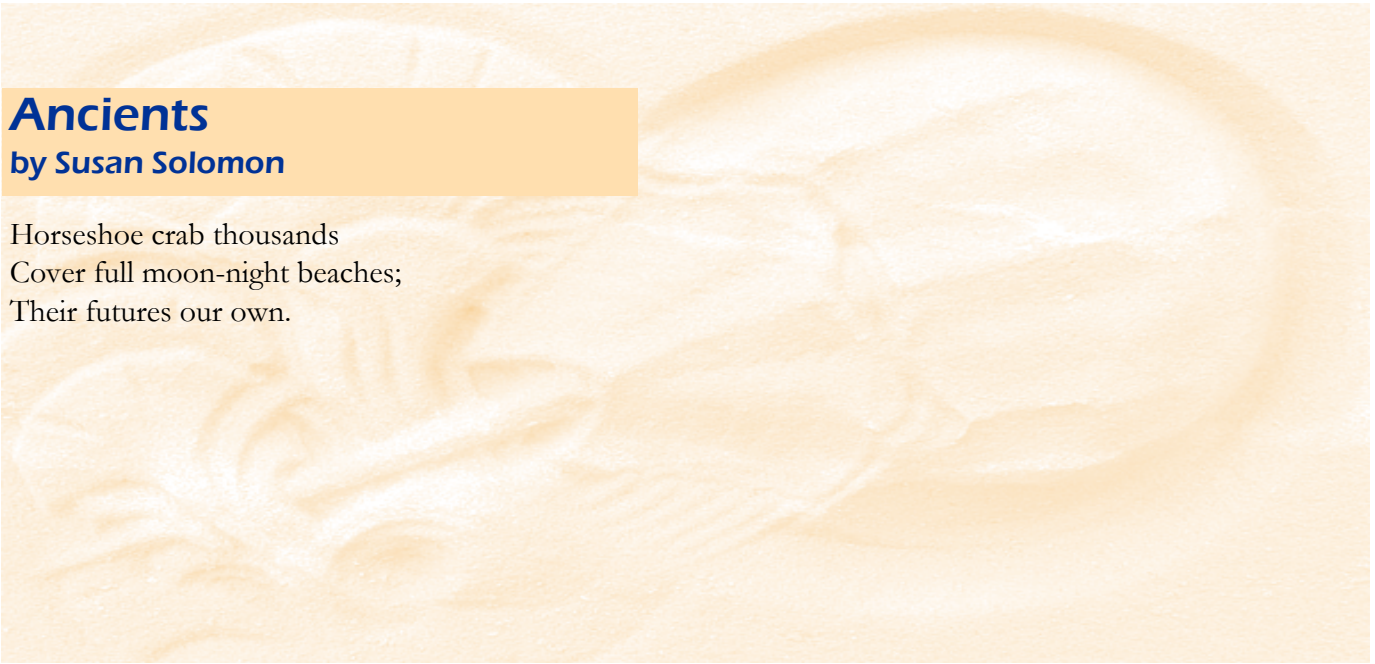
We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth, at least the truth that is given to us to understand. —Pablo Picasso



Ancients

by Susan Solomon

Horseshoe crab thousands
Cover full moon-night beaches;
Their futures our own.



Fight to the Top by Thomas Adams





Last Round

by Kristin Bleninger-Sundar

"Am I alive?" she asks

"Yes," I answer. "Do you know where you are?"

"The hospital?" She looks at me as if through a fog and then gazes around the room, her eyes unfocused until they rest upon her son's school picture taped to the side rail of her bed. Smiling widely, her seven year-old son beams at her in his best red sweater. She ponders the picture for a few moments, and in a decisive but poorly executed flourish of her right arm she rips the

picture from the side rail and shakes it off her hand onto the floor.

I quickly assess her, expecting little change from the day before. Her dandelion-yellow eyes peer out from under a wild head of red-brown, kinky hair. Her abdomen gathers in a mound under the blankets, as if she's pregnant. Her failing liver is not making enough albumin. Albumin--such a tiny little protein. Without it, there is no osmotic pull to hold the fluid in her vessels, and the fluid leaks into her abdominal cavity and legs, now gigantic from the thighs down, the skin taut and shiny, the taper of the ankles gone. I push my finger into the flesh of her right leg and a dimple lingers long after. In spite of being bottom heavy, her long, bony fingers give away how malnourished she is. She hardly eats or pees anymore. She hasn't pooped for days.

As always it is a busy night. She is just one of six to eight patients I will care for during this stretch of twelve-hour overnight shifts. In a flurry of pills and IV medications, assessments and phone calls to doctors, I dart around the unit from room to room. Every time I pass her room, I notice she is always lying with her head turned toward the door, unfocused and yet searching. Perhaps she awaits a family member who never comes. Maybe she waits for the shape of a nurse to walk by.

"Nurse!" she calls out in her gravelly voice. I go in and stand over her bed. It takes her a few moments to gather her thoughts. "Well, how am I going to get from D to E?" She is puzzled by the words that are coming out of her own mouth, and I give her some time to clear her mind. The build up of ammonia in her blood causes disorientation and confusion that is common in liver disease. "Oh... wait... I'm a little confused.

"That's okay. Now try to tell me again what it is you want."

Pain medication. I go to get it. I check her central line to make sure it is not bleeding at the insertion site. Her sluggish liver, in addition to not making albumin, also is no longer making adequate amounts of clotting factors. She's had bleeding from her central line a number of times in the two months she's been here. I see that the central line has no signs of bleeding or redness and in my mind give a small prayer of thanks before hooking up her TPN and lipids, her only real source of nutrition. The night blurs into a series of medications and personal care. I hang her pain medication every four hours and manage to squeeze her albumin and diuretic infusions between pain medications. She tells me her bottom hurts, a common complaint from patients who spend too much time in bed. Every time I go into her room I try to get her

to move around a bit, whether it's sitting up in a chair for a while or just rolling onto her side. I am forever adjusting and propping pillows behind her back and between her legs.

"Where's my picture of my son?" she asks.

"I taped it to the side rail of your bed so that you can look at it any time," I answer. "Where is your son?"

"With my fiancé," she says, in the present moment just long enough to answer before fading into a blank stare. I've never seen her fiancé, her son, or any other family members visit. Her mother calls in the middle of my night shifts, her questions dragging slowly over the telephone line. "Did she get a blood transfusion today? Is she eating? Is she getting any better? Tell her I love her."

I feel a pang of loneliness every time I enter her room. A television hovers in the upper right corner of the room, as constant as the moon, incessantly shedding its light and talk. An audience of medical equipment—the venerable IV pole standing guard, the clicking and humming IV pumps—is the constant witness to the inevitable shutting down of organs. Shadows stash themselves in every corner. The chairs meant for visitors have been shoved sideways against the wall by the door.

She is twenty-five years old.

I think about the patient, and eventually, the person. What happened to her? I heard she started drinking young, after her father died. What a small piece of a big story, but I try to imagine it. Age fourteen pops into my mind. I picture her with that same wild hair tipping back a bottle, maybe in somebody's basement at a party. Maybe she had an older boyfriend or friends who got her drunk at first. I picture her angry, hurting, damaged, trying to cover some kind of internal wreckage while stating out loud, "Shit, I don't care."

On Monday morning, my work stretch is ending. I go into her room one last time and open the blinds. December sprinkles billowy puffs of snow over Chicago Avenue. "It's snowing outside," I say, hoping that even though she will never again feel snow on her cheeks, she will enjoy a memory of snow, or maybe Christmas.



Got something stuck in your creative craw?



Let Haute Dish help you get it out into the world.

At least out to the 1,500 regular Haute Dish readers.

Submit!

We accept poetry, prose, artwork, photography, sculpture, comics and graphic stories.

Guidelines: <http://hautedish.metrostate.edu>

Deadline: Fri., Nov. 16th, Midnight

Email your work to: submit.hautedish@gmail.com



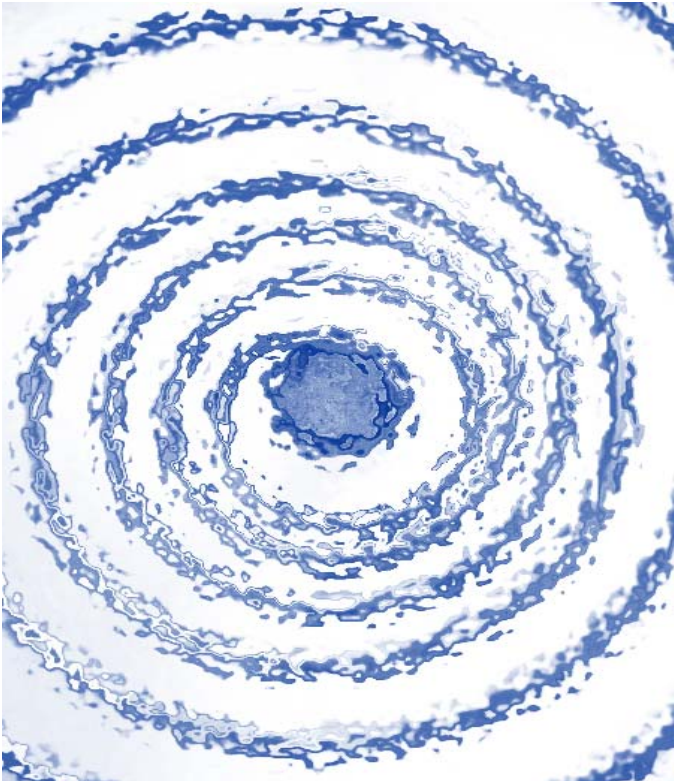
Sepia Door by Emberly Herman

Often while reading a book one feels that the author would have preferred to paint rather than write; one can sense the pleasure he derives from describing a landscape or a person, as if he were painting what he is saying, because deep in his heart he would have preferred to use brushes and colors.

—Pablo Picasso

wandering in circles

by louis murphy



I am lost when I am out on the street—
my feet go wherever they are pointed
and never seem to find a front door ;
there is no hope for me to grasp to—
my feet go wherever they are pointed;
signs shout out names and directions
(there is no hope for me to grasp to
and no medication that I can afford)—
signs shout out names and directions,
“to my doctors building for a prescription
(but there is no medication that I can afford
so I am stuck with voices)”...
to my doctors building for a prescription,
but I am lost when I am on the street—
so I am stuck with voices
and never seem to find the front door.

The Formerly Ugly Duckling

One year after the trials

by Christine Liebeg

of rejection, the formerly ugly duckling, now a beautiful swan, was happy. The sun shined brightly overhead, the moor's water sparkled, and the grass was always green. Every day the swan was grateful for the beauty that surrounded him but sometimes he still had to look in the water to see that he was beautiful too. After a whole year of being called ugly it took some getting used to. He had friends

now, three of them in fact, and there was a pen he liked too. She was the most beautiful bird he had ever seen, and yes, he was pretty now, but he didn't think he had a chance with her yet. He was still learning not to be ugly.

His friends couldn't believe the things he had gone through. "That's terrible!" said one, and the others nodded. "Looks alone do not make the bird," said his other friend, "we were all ugly once." Sometimes his friends would playfully slap a wingtip on his back. "Well, see what all that did for you? You're the prettiest of us all!" The formerly ugly duckling would hide his head under his wing and blush after that. He was not proud about his looks, merely happy.

There was a cob that swam in the moor too. He was a big fellow and loudly proclaimed himself to be the best of the swans. He was not yet married and he could never figure out why. He courted every pen he came across, and one by one they rejected him. "It must be that I'm too good for them!" he said very loudly one day, and set about finding the right pen for him. He tried showing off to the pen the formerly ugly duckling liked, but she only showed him her tail feathers and swam away. He swatted the water with his bill in frustration, then beamed. "She must be playing hard to get," he thought, and swam after her.

He tried showing off to the pen the formerly ugly duckling liked, but she only showed him her tail feathers and swam away. He swatted the water with his bill in frustration, then beamed. "She must be playing hard to get," he thought, and swam after her.

There were ducks in the moor too, and sometimes the formerly ugly duckling would watch a puzzling thing. Some of the other swans treated them badly. He never did, but watching his friends torment the poor ducks was hauntingly familiar. Ducks were one way and swans were another, he was told, and swans are the best. "But why?" he thought, uneasiness growing in his white breast, "what makes them worse? What made me worse a year ago?" He asked one of his friends. "Don't be silly!" the young friend said, "It's because we're prettier. They are brown and green and ugly. We are white." He didn't ask again, horrified as he was, and luckily he didn't watch the harassment often. It made him sick.

One day formerly ugly duckling was out swimming on the far side of the moor, trying his best to understand the ways of the world. It hurt his mind after awhile so he decided to eat some watercress. When he bobbed up to the surface he heard a fierce squabble. Swimming around a bend in the shore he came to a stand of reeds. There was the pen he liked, but she didn't have his attention. The proud loud cob was arguing with an

old mother duck. “Go AWAY!” she snapped at him, flapping her wings in his face, “Leave me and my children in peace, you great lout! We did nothing to you!” The proud cob laughed in her face and flattened her with one of his great white wings. “You are ugly, and that’s plenty! Leave these reeds mother duck, because they’re mine!” Well, that old mother duck was tenacious and she got back up to yell at him some more. “You don’t have the privilege to own everything just because you’re beautiful! Go away!”

Now, the formerly ugly duckling was mortified by this entire scene, but something tugged at his memory. When the old mother duck sat still long enough for him to look at her, he gave a startled honk. “Mother!” he cried, and everybody went quiet. The old mother duck stared at him and the proud cob huffed haughtily. The pretty pen watched. “... Yes, and who are you?” the old mother duck demanded, paddling right up to him, “Someone else to pester me with his good looks? Be gone! Two louts are worse than one!” The proud cob swam up to him too and buffeted him with a wing. “Who do you think you are? These are MY reeds and I want them for my girlfriend!”

The formerly ugly duckling swallowed at that. He looked at the pen, but she said nothing. He looked back at the cob and his mother, so small, and put himself between the two. “This is the mother who raised me,” he said, “and she let everyone treat me badly because I was an ugly duckling. It was wrong, and I’m not going to let you do the same thing to her!”

The proud cob puffed himself up to full height and looked like his feathers would come apart. But the formerly ugly duckling stood his ground and would not give in to the angry look in his eye. Moments passed and the proud cob eventually deflated. “Fine!” he hissed, “I’ll find my own reeds for my girlfriend. Come along, dear.” The pen looked at him, then the formerly ugly duckling, and shook her head. “I’m not your girlfriend. You’re a proud old coot. Beat it.” After some frustrated squawking, he did.

The formerly ugly duckling took a long breath and backed away from his mother. She looked at him, awed, then turned away, very ashamed. “I didn’t need your help,” she grumbled, “even if you were my son. My children couldn’t be as beautiful as you.” The formerly ugly duckling chuckled. “No, remember me, Mama? I was the ugly duckling you had.” She turned back to see him, and he smiled as best a bird with a beak could. Then the reeds rustled and tiny chirps appeared with little fluffy heads. “Mama, mama, is the big scary one gone?” the ducklings asked, then stared at the formerly ugly duckling. “Is he going to eat us?” asked a brave little one. The old mother duck laughed and gathered her children up in a feathery hug. “No. This is your big brother.”

From that day forward the formerly ugly duckling made sure no swan made fun of the ducks ever again, and when he had children of his own he let them play with the ducklings.



Wittle wubber ducky thezz: We sure do hope you like the PDF version of Haute Dish! But don’t forget to check out Haute Dish on the web, in the form Haute Dish is intended to be read. Paddle on over to <http://hautedish.metrostate.edu> and quack at us at hautedish@gmail.com.

Chennai, From Touchdown to Sundown

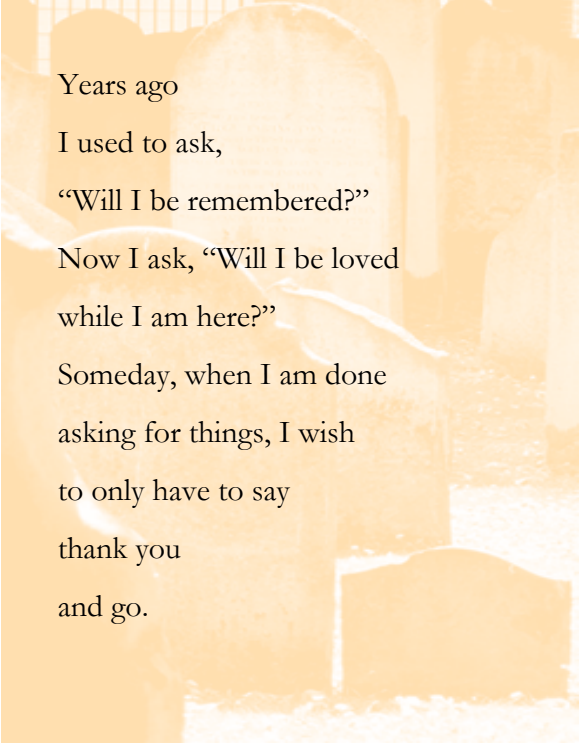
by Kristin Bleninger-Sundar

The streets swirl in a dance of dust and slick exhaust. There is no order—just an ever-churning and thronging mass of motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians, and carts. Drove of souls with different agendas push in all directions, honking and blaring “Get out of my way!” or “Don’t hit me!” Women ride side-saddle on the backs of motorcycles, clutching duffle bags, babies, boxes, their saris flapping and dotting the congested streets with every imaginable color and texture. Cows chomp lazily at little piles of straw placed before them at road-side. Men bathe in buckets on the sidewalks, dipping their clothes and then sloshing their shoulders with cool water. One man simply stands and picks his nose, looking side to side as if to take a break from the struggle of motion and assess what to do next. Another in tattered and stained clothes spots me and approaches with hand outstretched. Some stare unabashedly at me, for I am the only white person in the commotion. While sharing a taxi, a stranger squished into the seat beside me glances sideways at me and giggles every time we hit a bump. I think she’s trying to read my reaction to all the chaos. I just look and listen and smell. Everywhere a racket... conversation... street vendors shoving their wares at me or trying to hand me flyers—they shout at me in Tamil, and I don’t understand. Everywhere the spitting and sputtering of various motors intersperses with music and bells and children’s play. Every street is lined with a mound of wrappers and bottles and paper and old sandals mashed together in a fermenting wall of stench. While walking toward a temple I gaze too long at the street vendors carrying mounds of samosas and fruits and find myself almost stumbling upon a leper with stumps of hands reaching up to me, his face lined with a pleading unlike any I have seen. Amidst the unrelenting whirl, the stores feel a bit slower, their merchants idly chit-chatting while fanning themselves. A hunched woman waddles over to a grocer and begs him for a handful of raw rice, which she immediately shoves into her mouth. There is no “Excuse me,” and men standing on sidewalks do not step aside for old women. To walk is a constant up-and-down, in-and-out... walk around the people, step down off the foot-high curb, walk around the parked car, and now traffic is six inches to my left... back to the sidewalk... The dust pelts my eyes, the throng swirls on, and overhead the coconut trees sway their palms, gently coaxing the clouds along.



A Thin Veil

by louis murphy



Years ago
I used to ask,
“Will I be remembered?”
Now I ask, “Will I be loved
while I am here?”
Someday, when I am done
asking for things, I wish
to only have to say
thank you
and go.



Inside Out by Noel Opti

Second Shift

by N. Jeanne Burns



Assassins never get enough sleep. Belize then Kazakhstan then North Korea, all in three days, and you wouldn't fucking sleep either. Certain jobs are easier than others, like St. Petersburg, which was supposed to take three days, four costumes and five guns, where I popped my target in like ten minutes with just a wrench. Duluth, Minnesota, on the other hand, was supposed to be a cakewalk. Eight full hours of sleep before the drive made me feel like a real human instead of the hit man that I am, or was.

Father so-and-so (I can't tell you his name cause I'd get whacked if you know what I mean.) wanted the Cardinal up there taken out. Greed was the Father's motivation, or

maybe it's not greed, is it avarice or something—what's the word for someone who wants power—I don't know cause I never graduated high school. He knew he was next in line for the Cardinalship or whatever you call it. I checked with my superiors and took Padre's money. Judge me if you want, but I ain't no Catholic anyways despite what the Cosa Nostra would have to say about the fucking Family religion.

Kabul was easier, it turned out, than Duluth—can you imagine? Lake Superior was kicking up a fucking huge storm and, if you don't count my stop at Betty's Pies and Gooseberry Falls—yeah I took a bit of a detour but I love the hike up beyond the falls to the tree line so I can see the lake all churned up like that—it took me three times as long to get there than it usually does because first I blew out a fucking tire then I hit traffic like I've never seen at the Cloquet exit before the fucking check oil light came on.

Meeting the Cardinal took a little cunning and some lies on my part, in a church no less. No one answered the doorbell so I staked out the back door. One cleaning lady, two choir boys and three nuns in their habits went inside so I accosted one of the penguins when she came out for a smoke. Padre, it turned out, was home sick so I asked her where he lived. Queen Avenue, she said, but I had no idea where Queen Avenue was so I asked.

“Right after Penn.”

“So you're telling me he lives in Minneapolis?”

“Tell me who you are, kind sir, and why you're looking for Father?”

“Um, Sister, I can't tell you—”

“Vatican business, I know, I know,” she said with so much hope in her eyes that I couldn't look at her when I nodded.

“Well, then, come on inside the church because he'll be here in a couple of hours.”

X-acto knife in hand, I waited for him to return, nodding off for the better part of two hours. You don't want to fucking know how much blood an X-acto knife makes when you kill someone with it but I'd left my gun at home and an X-acto knife was all I had.

Zeal kept me working until the Duluth job but the Family let me retire and I sleep-in every day before heading over to my second shift job as a Wal-Mart greeter—so welcome to Wal-fucking-Mart.



Last Kiss

by Theresa Starkes

I feel unraveled. Once again I trusted, once again I fell. But my God, it had been over ten years, alone. I grow new skin just long enough for someone to peel it off.

I am frantic, my stomach hurts. I must get out of my apartment with its soothing pastel color scheme and my black cat that slept through the whole incident. I need a

jagged place, feeling this ripped up. The pot-holed pavement of downtown Minneapolis will have to do. I understand being accosted by the harsh weather or a thug on the corner, but not through the phone. I hastily throw on some clothes and tie back my hair. My old pink “Chucks” that are falling apart like I am, my keys ... get out!

I always feel a bit vulnerable walking alone downtown. One time some kids started fighting and knocked me down to the curb. I almost got hit by a bus. As this thought occurs to me an ambulance screams by as if on cue.

The city stinks of urine in the summer. On the weekends the street beggars out-number the shoppers. I cross the street to avoid a particularly bad corner. If someone asks me for money I will implode.

I spot my reflection in Macy’s window. Who is the bitter, angry old woman staring at me? I feel young. I want to feel pretty again; have the pimps on Hennepin Avenue whistle as I walk by even though it frightens me. When did that stop? The men stopped looking when I wasn’t paying attention.

The lump in my throat is choking me. It pulses hot and threatens to pour out my eyes. I will not cry in public. The back of my throat burns. I am close to running. The train calls out from the next corner. I could make it look like an accident... no, stop! “This too shall pass,” crosses my mind like a whisper. Suddenly I panic, I went too far, I got too upset and I have no way out.

I see the train coming. I’m not going to do it, not over a man. I’ve been alone for so long, I can do it again. But maybe last night was the last time I will be touched, the last time I will feel beautiful. This ache is swallowing me whole. Think ... damn it! Target has a bathroom. I won’t make it home to melt down in private.

This body that can still sprint like a teenager through the city streets has betrayed me. When did my breasts start to sag? When did the lines of character on my face become wrinkles? When did I lose my ass?

This morning he said he wants someone closer to his own age. What was I thinking sleeping with a thirty year old? I was thinking I was pretty hot shit, that’s what I was thinking. Like Demi Moore without the face-lift and boob job.



I remember once as a small child I was playing in my Aunt's yard in the country when I happened upon a toad. I was too rough and its guts started oozing out of its left side. I ran for my Aunt so that she could help. She saw it lying at the base of the ancient tree where I found it and promptly smashed its skull with a rock. Then she called "me" a monster and walked back into the house. I am severely wounded. Where is my hero?

I am humiliated. Like the time I went to the 7-11 by my apartment complex in a skirt and thong panties. My skirt blew up and I was exposed and embarrassed. By the time I returned to my apartment someone had left a pair of crusty woman's underwear hanging on my doorknob. It was just cruel.

I can't stitch up the toad or catch my skirt. I can't look twenty-one again no matter how much I feel that way inside. I can't make them turn their heads with my personality. I can't even make it to Target.

The tears are coming. I begin to sob violently. I suffer my way down the Nicollet Mall. I don't care anymore. I lost my dignity when I spread my legs for someone young enough to be my daughter's boyfriend.

I get to my apartment and wipe my face. White heat sweeps through me. I am rage. I am bleeding. I need to disinfect the wound with alcohol.

I head to the liquor store for a bottle of Merlot and a pack of cigarettes. The clerk doesn't ask for my ID ... fucker. When did that start to happen? I could swear that just yesterday I was carded. I notice the stamp on my hand from the night before.

I felt sexy and alive. He couldn't keep his hands off me. He couldn't stop kissing me. I hypnotized him on the dance floor. Waking back to his car he pressed me up against a building. "No," I said. "Not in public, wait until you get me home." He slipped his arm around my waist and led me toward the car.

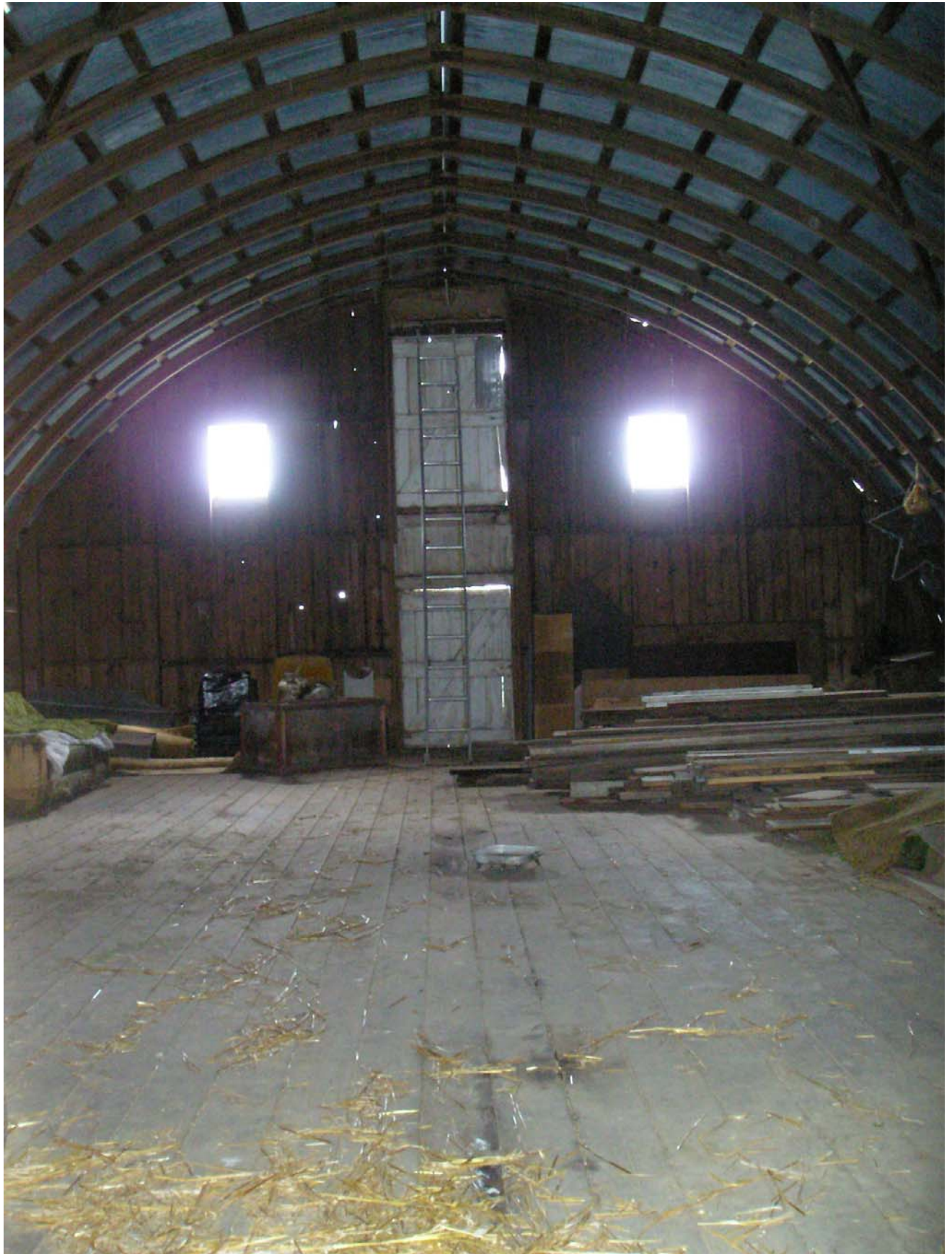
We were young lovers last night. What time exactly did I become too old? It must have happened after he left, because he was still all over me when I walked him to the door of my apartment. He kissed me deeply and left with a playful smile.

I woke up with hickies all over me. I remember thinking, how high school. That I was going to have to have a talk with him about that.

Back in my apartment I can smell his Armani. I see his picture framed on my end table. I quickly rip open the pack of smokes and fumble in my junk drawer for some matches. It's been two years since I've had a cigarette. Slow suicide ... no one will ever suspect. I take a long drag and feel the nicotine rush. Who cares if I taste like cheap wine and smoke? At this moment I would rather die than face my last kiss.



What is a face, really? Its own photo? Its make-up? Or is it a face as painted by such or such painter? That which is in front? Inside? Behind? And the rest? Doesn't everyone look at himself in his own particular way?—Pablo Picasso



Alien Barn by Emberly Herman

Paddle and Pen

Profile of Guest Alumnus Editor Bob Babin

by Kathy McEathron



Kayaking the waters of Lake Superior and writing memoir is a natural combination for Bob Babin. Journaling, whether it's after a day of kayaking or a day at the office, is part of his daily routine. Babin didn't stop writing when he graduated from Metropolitan State University last summer; writing threads its way throughout his life. "Writing has made me a better communicator," he explains, professionally because "confidence comes with good basic writing skills" and personally because of the daily journaling he employs for personal insight and creative expression.

His kayaking trips are also writing adventures because Babin records his reactions and experiences as he travels. And that writing may eventually expand into a memoir or story. He was surprised to find memoir his preferred genre. When he registered for the writing memoir class at MSU he expected to find it his least favorite because he is not interested in writing with "T" as the theme. Instead, he found that "memoir is not about me, but a picture of the things going on around my life." So a kayaking trip may become a memoir or prompt a story for Babin and kayaking in the cold Superior waters as a writer confers to him a deeper awareness of the natural world.

The Creative Writing major at MSU fit Babin's vagabond lifestyle and love of books. He has always appreciated the power of good writing and made use of the library since he was a young child. "I used to view the writers that I admired almost as gods," he says. The writing faculty at MSU was supportive and sparked his desire to write. Two authors who influence his writing today are Alison McGhee, writing professor at MSU and author of Shadow Baby and Falling Boy; and Joe Coomer, author of Beachcombing for a Shipwrecked God. "Both authors create stories that are character driven. Their characters are flawed; they fail and overcome struggles," Babin says. Because of his personal experience he is drawn to stories with themes of redemption and the human condition.

He appreciates McGhee's crisp writing style. "Every word counts in her stories." As Babin develops his own style, he finds he works to achieve that precision and clarity in his writing. "I am learning to get out of my own way when I write," he explains. "I want the story to find its own path instead of channeling it in a preconceived direction." By getting out of the way, his memoir writing becomes a deeper and more complex story with many characters rather than a flat recounting of his experience. "Let the writing do what it does," Babin wisely cautions; perhaps his writing advice also usefully applies to kayaking on Lake Superior.



The wind howls, and the rapid fire pop of rain against my tent sounds a chaotic counter beat. I can't sleep, I'm far too restless, and the words of my book read like a foreign language. It's no use. I have to look. Once more, probably the fiftieth "once more" I unzip the door and take a peak outside. The clouds are boiling, and sheets of rain spill from the shredded sky. Endless progressions of white tipped waves zoom down the length of Rainy Lake. That wet surge, breaking against our island, foams and bubbles like the contents of a giant witch's caldron.

We are trapped in the midst of a wicked storm, far from the security and comforts of home. I should be miserable, I'm not. Instead, I find myself drawn to these primeval forces. All my personal storms are forgotten as I take in the show. I feel like I've been part of this forever, but just a few hours ago...



Riding Out the Storm

by R. J. Babin

❖

We work our way towards Kettle Falls Minnesota. Our six kayaks glide across a mirror smooth surface. Echoing V's of water, traveling outward from the bows of our boats, create the only disturbance. The paddling is effortless. We relax, talk and enjoy the soft lap of water against the rock strewn shores. It's as though the lake, like a snoozing tourist at the beach, is being lulled by the bright sun. But change, the one constant in nature, is on the way.

The clouds and wind begin to swirl and the water begins to bump. Nature's forces are gathering for some vast and lively dance, a dance where more than our toes are in danger. The shelter of Fish Camp Island is just two miles ahead. We dig in and sprint for its refuge.

Twenty-five minutes later our bows crunch against the sandy shore. The leaking black clouds warn that time is short. Under the soft touch of a drizzling rain we assemble tents, stow gear and prepare a hurried meal. Within minutes drizzle makes way for a steady rain, and a tree shaking wind begins to whistle around us. By ones and twos we surrender to the shelter of our individual tents. Finally, the last holdouts, John and I, are forced to capitulate. Under the now bellowing tarp we swallow the last bites of supper, and then splash off to our tents.

❖

Darkness has settled in, forcing me to give up watching the storm. But my thoughts, like the elements outside my shelter, are energized. Watching the crossed poles above me bend and twist with each high speed gust has me thinking a bit about my safety, but mostly my mind is off riding the wind.

I enjoy the air-conditioned steel shell of my car, the strong roof of my house and even a safe ride in a hard hulled motor-boat. But now, as the layers of manmade safety have been peeled back, I find myself connected to something far greater than those manmade creations. My senses are tuned in, and all the outside static of daily life is gone. I'm entirely alive in this moment, and I believe my diminished safety is a fair trade. It's taking me years to move from fear to appreciation of nature's bumpy events, but now I savor them. They replenish me, and help me the ride out all the storms life throws my way.



Need Inspiration?

As Picasso said, artists are receptacles. And every artist needs new fodder from time to time.

What better place to be a receptacle for new fodder than in the Third Floor Art Gallery, at the Saint Paul campus Library and Learning Center. And if you're a starving artist, there's always free food and drink at the opening reception.

Come be inspired by these upcoming exhibits in the Third Floor Gallery:

The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider's web. —Pablo Picasso

Testimony: Visions of Hope and Despair from East Africa

Photographic Documentary by Daniel Cheng Yang

Daniel Cheng Yang has a passion for social justice. Born in 1983 to a multicultural family, his international perspective has taken him to former conflict areas, including Guatemala, El Salvador, Laos, Cambodia, and Chiapas. He traveled solo to East Africa several times between the ages of 15 and 18 to immerse himself in the Sudanese and Somali refugee experience at Kakuma and document it. He also was able to capture a rare glimpse into the indigenous life of the Turkana near the camp.

His work has been displayed at the Louvre in Paris and in New York and Yokohama as part of a United Nations worldwide photographic exhibition.

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 14th, 4-7 pm

Exhibit: September 14-October 5

Picture This: The Art of Children's Books

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 18th, 4-7 pm

Exhibit: October 19-November 9

Focus on Fibers: Selections from the Textile Center

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 29th, 4-7 pm

Exhibit: November 26-December 14

Why not write, draw, scribble or create something here, scan it, and turn it in to Haute Dish at submit.hautedish@gmail.com?

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What are you waiting for?

B-gock, b-gock. Are you a chicken or something? Come on! Do it now! Pleeeeze!

Haute Dish

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Fall 2007

