TIDAL ECHOES
is an annual showcase of
writers and artists with
one thing in common:
a life surrounded by
the rainforests and
waterways of
Southeast Alaska.

TIDAL ECHOES
A publication of the University of Alaska Southeast and Capital City Weekly

Untitled by David Woodie
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First of all, you may have noticed that this journal was dedicated to pirates everywhere. You may be asking yourself, "What kind of game is this? Who dedicates a university publication to pirates?" Well, sir or madam, rest assured we do not condone piracy unless it is of the rum-swilling, swashbuckling, treasure-burying kind. And sometimes the kind involving downloading music. Legally, of course.

Secondly, we'd like to consider all of you who pillage and plunder the pages of this journal to be honorary pirates. Without you, there'd be no Tidal Echoes. I'd like to give a big "yo-ho-ho!" and a bottle of rum\(^1\) in thanks to everyone who made it into the journal this year and to ALL who submitted! Submit again next year if you have any work to share, and I’m sure Chalise will be more than willing to offer bottles of rum of her own.

And, of course, thank you to our wonderful faculty advisor Emily Wall who, as always, kicked my behind with her peg-leg and kept me focused and on track. And another big thank you to Virginia Berg who, as always, is an exceptionally reliable and knowledgeable woman, and without her help we may as well have been sailing blind in the Caribbean without a compass.

Thank you as well to the editorial board! They took the time to pore over every submission and decide what would go into the journal. Their help was invaluable in the production of this fine volume you now hold in your hands. We are also in John Pugh's debt, as always, as without his funding and willingness to support Tidal Echoes, it would simply not exist as anything more than a pamphlet printed on computer paper, if even that.

There are also two new contributors to the journal this year: first, Capital City Weekly, who designed the layout of this journal (don't you love it?), copyedited, and pretty much proved to be awesome. Thank you so very much! Second, I'd also like to thank Kari Dammerman, our fall intern, for basically doing a lot of the dirty work and making this spring semester merely stressful as opposed to last year's "sleepless."

And, finally, thank you to David Woodie and especially Ernestine Hayes, who put up with my interview shenanigans and took time out of her day to let me probe the mind of one of Southeast Alaska's premier writers.

Aye, thank ye to every landlubber who slaved, contributed, read, picked up, and glanced at this year's edition of Tidal Echoes!

As always,

Josh Carter
Senior Editor & Jim-Lad

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\(^1\) Offer expires April 1, 2009
A Note From Chalise

I would like to first and foremost say thank you to this group of people we commonly refer to as Southeast Alaskans. It’s a culture entirely its own, despite what each individual’s origins may be. You are the people who color the pages of this journal and without your individuality and unique presence this journal would not be so clearly reflective of who we are.

I would also like to thank all of the professors here who continue to encourage, instruct, and lead us on. It is always clear when a teacher is not merely a teacher by choice but more importantly by nature. Your love of what you do is evident in the passion you put forth every day. Without you where would we be?

With that said, I would also like to say a HUGE thank you to Emily Wall. She has been an inspirational teacher, mentor, and nothing short of an anchor for me when I needed it most. I know this has been the case for many other students as well. You are an invaluable asset to this institution and to the students who attend. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this amazing project.

Also, a thank you to Josh Carter for his knowledge and seemingly relaxed demeanor. I’m glad I’ve had the opportunity to work with you on this project and appreciate the humor and glorious sarcasm with which you approach it and the rest of life. And, above all else, a fondest tip of me hat in respect for a fellow pirate…ARRRR!

Thank you to the entire Editorial Board for your time and knowledge. And to Virginia Berg. How would anything get done without you there to walk us through? I’m pretty sure you need your very own cape because you are indeed the superhero of the Humanities Department. Thank you to Chancellor John Pugh for another year of support, without which there would be no journal. We hope you are as proud of this year’s journal as we are.

A deep-felt thank you to Capital City Weekly and specifically Katie Spielberger for partnering with us. Your professional and financial contribution has been a huge support to this journal and we appreciate the knowledge and experience you’ve brought to this venture.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to our featured writer Ernestine Hayes and our featured artist David Woodie. We are lucky to have two such amazingly inspired people as part of the faculty here at UAS and we thank you for investing your time in future creative minds. I would also like to say a special thank you to David Woodie for sitting down with me and letting me pick your brain. As always, it was a pleasure chatting with you.

Chalise Fisk

Junior Editor, a.k.a. Josh’s Lackey and First Mate
Welcome to the 2009 issue of Tidal Echoes! We are so pleased to be able to continue the tradition of showcasing the writing and art of those living in Southeast Alaska. This is the 7th year Tidal Echoes has been published and we are grateful to the many people who made this journal possible.

First, we thank those who submitted! We received more than 260 submissions this year—our highest number yet. This journal would not exist without your willingness to submit your work. We owe much of the thanks for these submissions to UAS student Kari Dammerman who spent her fall semester throwing out the Tidal Echoes net and gathering all your work to us.

Joshua Carter and Chalise Fisk, two UAS students, are this year’s editors. This year’s journal bears the delightful marks of their hard work, sense of humor, and dedication to this project. This journal would not be possible without the many late nights these two put into this project. As a faculty member it makes me proud to work at a university with such dedicated and talented students.

Many thanks go to Virginia Berg, the Queen of Humanities. Her dedication to the work of the department is an inspiration to us all, and without her advice and direction this journal would not be the fine volume you now hold in your hands.

We especially would like to thank UAS Chancellor John Pugh, for his continued support of this journal. Chancellor Pugh has always demonstrated his enthusiasm and support for the work of UAS students and without his special projects grant, this journal would not be possible.

This year we have a new group to thank at Capital City Weekly, in particular Katie Spielberger and Charles Westmoreland, who initiated the idea of a partnership with UAS. Capital City Weekly has donated many thousands of hours and dollars toward making this project a reality and we are grateful for their support.

I’d like to offer a warm thanks to my colleagues in the English and Art departments who volunteered their time and expertise on the editorial board: Professors Kevin Maier, Susan Koester, Flordelino Lagundino, Jeremy Kane, Sara Minton, and Liz Dodd. In the midst of a busy semester they took time to carefully read many hundreds of pages of work and offer their expert opinions to shape the contents of the journal.

And finally, a special thanks to Ernestine Hayes and David Woodie for agreeing to be the featured writer and artist for this year’s publication. We are honored to be part of a project showcasing their beautiful work.

We would like to invite all of you who are living in Southeast Alaska to submit next year. We are grateful for the rich body of work you send us each year and thank you for enriching our lives here in Southeast Alaska.

Emily Wall
Faculty Advisor
Brain Bucket  by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on wood panel, approximately 36” x 50”
Anchors

“Herring,” I shout above the din of screaming seagulls, as I lean over the edge of the skiff to peer at silvery flashes of small fish through the milky white water surrounding the kelp bed.

“Spawning,” he calls back, and cuts the engine.

Hundreds of excited seagulls dive in the kelp; twenty bald eagles reel in the wind, and a dozen sit in nearby hemlocks. The birds are blaringly loud. My husband, Dennis, drops anchor and lets out twenty feet of chain and enough line for the anchor to hold fast to the sea floor through high tide and wind. Waves push milky foam, the milt from the male herring, around us as we row to shore in our inflatable raft. Above us, bald eagles circle, then dive down to the water’s surface, grab ribbons of kelp, and trail them in their talons, like streamers, to the trees where they pick herring roe off the brown ribbons. The ground is littered with discarded bits of kelp. Seagulls sit on floating kelp to eat roe, but make way when an eagle flies close. As we step on shore in front of our cabin, I am a stranger in familiar woods, eyes opened to startling activity in the kelp bed.

It is early May. Last week the water was clear; a month ago there wasn’t any kelp - we could see the rocky sea bottom as we anchored our skiff. As the kelp grew and took hold, so did the marine life around it. In the three years we have come to the cabin, we never saw herring before, rarely do we spot seagulls, and although there is always an eagle, there is never a crowd. For three days, the noise of reeling eagles and seagulls is constant, 24 hours a day. Sleep comes hard because of the din. Every kelp bed for miles around hosts a similar scene for a brief period. I’ve read that demand for herring roe on kelp has created a lucrative commercial fishery just a few hours by boat from here, across Chatham Straight in Hoonah Sound and Tenakee Inlet. There, commercial fishermen use huge rectangular pens, lined with nets, with kelp suspended inside them. Herring are allowed into the nets and kept there for several days while they spawn, and then allowed to escape. Herring roe on kelp, komochi kombu, is a delicacy for sushi lovers, especially in Japan.

Mid-summer, during an outgoing minus four-foot tide, gentle breezes lift salty air while the sea peels back to expose a huge expanse of the seabed. From a boulder high above, I stand like a farmer in the field overseeing the kelp and its entire food chain on the sea floor now visible at my feet. When I first saw our cabin three years ago, the idea of stepping out of city life to enjoy the simple rhythms of nature pulled at me. The secluded site surrounded by spruce and hemlock, and the beautiful view across a five-mile expanse of Lynn Canal towards the mountains near Glacier Bay made me smile, sigh deeply and want to stay. Since then, experiences like watching today’s ebbing tide have strengthened my first impression.
Unlike the rest of the house, the shelves are haphazard in both their construction and their contents, with books stacked nearly to the ceiling. Many of the books here in my father-in-law's study have not been opened in years, and are buried deep behind other rows of books and old photographs. On his desk, his computer monitor is perched precariously on a stack of old Time/Life books, the kind with black and white photos of exotic places and bioluminescent deep sea fish. I poured over books like these as a kid, before we could Google bioluminescence instead. The juxtaposition of these, the dated books and the computer tan computer monitor, seem a fitting tribute to my father-in-law, always a man of ideas and words.

There are other things in this tiny room at the top of the house as well: old tape recorders, an outdated globe, a smattering of antiques, the light touch, I'm sure, of my mother-in-law. But the words, both in books and in notes, are what really tell the important stories.

I don't know when my father-in-law began to write the notes that litter his study and much of the house like confetti. The notes were typed and trimmed to tiny, tidy, precise pieces of paper. Some of the later notes would turn up in his own spidery handwriting. They now remain taped all around his computer even though he died in May. “Press this to turn computer on.” “Phone number for the bank.” “Email account: access through Comcast.” “If this does not work, try rebooting.”

In the Flow  by Kelli K. Burkinshaw, Juneau
Photography
It’s a Small World Parade Float

I am the oriental rug of the room that has been stepped on and told I look nice at the same dinner party.

because I am Korean skinned, white educated and flat faced
I have had to renegotiate my life between raising fists and faking it
I have been the angriest craziest laziest brownest palest shyest highest most offensive girl in the room

without talking

so like every good orphan
I’m hoping
that in all this commotion I can be whole for a moment
look with one eye to one mother and the other to the ocean
and maybe this time

this time
I will not be so small that the doctors will wonder whether anyone will buy me

and this time
I’m not gonna cry the entire plane ride across the Pacific

because on my best days
I am the picture, in the envelope, in the best of hopes
I am the dream deferred, exchanged and sold
rags to riches goodbye kisses it’s a small world parade float

after all

and I’m waving
elbow elbow wrist wrist

holding together all of this
pb&j on my chopsticks
jahp chae bi bim bap hot dish
a broken and balanced
work in progress

and if ever a daughter was split
this time
we won’t know it.
If you’re reading this, it probably means that I’m dead. You, and others, I assume, are standing in a room, surrounded by bodies, wondering how this tragedy could have been avoided. I don’t know why I’m writing this. I guess it’s just a hunch I have. I should be doing something to save myself but I haven’t figured out if I’m just crazy, or if the Algebra teacher is really trying to kill me.

I hope I’m just crazy.

Today I’m taking notes as I do every day. I arrived on time. My laptop is poised and my book is ready. I bought an expensive cup of coffee that I cannot afford, specifically to help fight the battle my brain is about to undertake. She walks into the room. She seems harmless enough. She’s smiling.

Then she strikes. “Today we’re going to be working on Section 3.1, histograms, pie charts, and line graphs. An interesting thing to note on this section is that the plural of axis is axes. I think it’s interesting that not a lot of people know that and they use it incorrectly. It won’t be on a test or anything but I’m trying to differentiate between the two since they do sound similar and should be used correctly. So please make a note of it. Here, I’ll write it on the board.”

Boom! Her first blow is a nasty one. I hear pencils dropping. I turn my head and see my classmates with heavy eyelids and nodding heads. I struggle to stay involved with the lecture.

“There are four quadrants in a line graph and they go clockwise. I mean, counter clockwise. Right? Ya, counter clockwise. So the upper left, no wait, the right is quadrant I, then the quadrant to the left is II. The one underneath that is III and then IV is this one right here.”

She points at the quadrant and glances over her shoulder. She’s checking to see what kind of damage she’s done. Not enough. My head starts to drop a little. I fight it. She narrows her eyes. She sees I’m weak and attacks again. She’s a wicked, unmerciful woman.

But she seems so nice.

“Every point has an x coordinate and a y coordinate which would translate to a first coordinate and a second coordinate. That would be that the x coordinate comes first and the y comes second. So if I were to write it out it would look something like this (1,2). If I wanted to plot this on a line chart I would go over one point, count one, and up two points, count one, two.”

I hear heads plopping onto desks around me. One rolls across the floor. She glances at it.

“Does anybody have any questions?” She mocks us and turns back to the chalkboard. I look at the kid next to me. His face is flat on his homework, drool oozing out of his mouth. His vacant eyes are staring blankly into the distance behind me. Too bad. I liked that kid.

“If you look at the line graph in example 2 you’ll see a collection of points. This would be a good time to practice your coordinates. Can anyone tell me which is the y coordinate?”

A low groan comes from the back of the room. It sounds like a zombie being pulled from a crypt.

“That’s right. It’s the vertical.”

She is oblivious to our pain. She’s done this before.

The room is starting to smell like burnt hair. It reminds me of the way my dog smelled.
Even in darkest winter
the fruit from our young Japanese cherry
comes melting onto the limbs
in creamy pink and yellow icing.
You do not question the way trees behave,
bright coconut bonbons appearing
from time to time,
always when you are hungriest
for the daddy magic.

You’re six now, and I wonder how much longer
I can keep this going,
my concealed hand holding the candy box
as you romp toward the tree
to claim your prize.

The way you tilt your head
in the icicle sun when I call
“I see a bonbon on the tree!”
reminds me of the wind-battered raven,
perched and cocked in the alder opposite,
his eye on the garish treat too –
he knows that nothing in this world
appears without purpose,
that sweet things may be strangely placed
and the best question is always the simplest:
“What put them there?”
Borne Alone by Jane Terzis, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on panel

Continuum by Jane Terzis, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on panel

This poem first appeared in Ice-Floe.
Dew infused webs hung tangled among the blue spruce branches; the droplets deciphering the strands like a hidden message written in invisible ink. The lake, a silent witness, cloned tall grasses on its fog muffled surface. The sun, held hostage behind the frosted glass sky, was disguised as the moon. Ravens, spying in pines, conversed in guttural code. And the eagle feather I found on the trail was the most important clue of all.
Jumping Off Rooftops

How the hell do cats get up here? I mean, my cats are all about a foot tall, maybe two feet long if you include the tail. How does something that small end up twenty feet above the ground? It's not like there's anything they can use as a stepping stone. Maybe they just jump. Twenty feet. Straight up. That'd be a sight. I'd love to be a cat. I mean, nobody tells a cat what to do. If you yell at a cat for peeing on the rug made for you by your dead grandmother, he just looks at you. Maybe he licks his crotch. It'd be nice to have that kind of freedom. To be totally relaxed, not worrying about how you're going to buy groceries this week. Or freaking out because you just slept through class again. Or stressing because you can't buy that plane ticket home. Cats don't care about anything. I'd love to be a cat.

Overlapping the cats' paw prints are my own. They vary in size—the oldest ones, faded from years of sun and not so much rain, are probably fives. Today's are tens. They wander all over the place, giving absolutely no thought to where they came from or where they might end up. That's probably why I love my parents' roof so much: I can drift. The whole world is all about forcing you to take a particular direction. Go to school. Graduate. Go to college. Graduate. Go to grad school. Graduate. Work. Work some more. Die. Whatever happened to freedom of choice? If I don't want to go to college, I'm lazy. If I don't want to get a job, I'm a leech. If I don't graduate, I'm a failure. The world should let you wander as you see fit. I don't need direction; I'm perfectly content to float aimlessly around my roof, listening to the shingles crack and splinter beneath my feet.

Those shingles are probably my favorite part of my roof. By all accounts they're of horrible quality. They crack and splinter and slide with almost every step, sending dirt and leaves and cigarettes cascading down to the gutter. I probably owe my life to those shingles; they gave

Boulder Creek by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on cotton and linen mounted on wood panel

ANDREW LOUNSBURY
UAS Student, Douglas

Jumping Off Rooftops

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Staying in the Room with Ernestine Hayes

It’s always nice to interview someone you know, but that still didn’t assuage my nerves when, minutes before the scheduled interview was to take place, I realized I’d purchased the wrong kind of batteries for my tape recorder. I rushed off to the store as fast as I could and was a mere fifteen minutes late; Ernestine Hayes smiled and said, “I’d given up on you!”

Except for some difficulties pressing the “record” button, our interview went smoothly after that, and Ernestine Hayes proved to be the same humble, humorous woman she is when she’s teaching a class at UAS. As an aspiring writer myself, it was enlightening to hear, first-hand, one woman’s journey in getting her first book published, and extremely refreshing to not have the process sugar-coated or toned down for the work-a-phobic. I hope every other aspiring writer will take away as much from this as I did.

How long have you wanted to be a writer?

Well, because I was an only child to a single mother who read all the time—because back in those days, long ago, there was no television in Juneau, no video games or things to do except play cards or read—I read all the time, and that leads to writing. And so, probably, ever since I learned how to read and got started reading books I probably had it in me to want to write them as well.

Did you have a favorite book when you were little?

I worked my way through the library where the city museum is on 4th Street, and then after I got older I worked my way through different genres, different mainstream titles, and before that it was comic books. I was pretty voracious when I was younger, and I just read anything and if it struck me as interesting I pursued it, so my tastes have changed over the years as I think they will, and I had different favorite writers, different favorite topics, and different favorite styles of genre as the years went on.

Did you have a favorite writer, then, or a writer you came back to year after year?

I quit high school in the tenth grade and so I wasn’t exposed to what the system thought would be what I should read, so a lot of things that get read in high school I didn’t read. I would just find a writer who told stories well and would read everything of theirs and go on. I liked Nabokov very early on. That’s probably the only one that I can think of that I liked early on that I still admire, because I’ve followed the path of all different kinds of books and paperbacks, but I think Nabokov is the only one that I’ve retained.

So would you say Nabokov has influenced your writing style, or are there others who’ve influenced it moreso?

Maybe not so much influenced my writing style as he made me realize how much there was to aspire to. You know, he had such a powerful control of language that I realized putting words together can have its own effect, beyond telling a good story.
After Neruda By Way of Bly (Tenure)

They tied me to a long rope outside the barricade
Until one desertion forced me to the stoop
Where I fed on dampened scraps I found at my soiled feet
Then treachery placed me three breaths inside the jealous door
Where I, a woman meant to live from season to season,
Now lived from week to week.

Collecting rubbish and remorse underneath my untrimmed nails
I tended failing gardens beneath the white-washed tower
Building tunnels from the gardens to the graves.

Near the end of my sentence the prisoners in the tower
Weary of my impertinence, called down instructions
That I was not qualified to join in their distinctions
And I would no longer be allowed to tend their garden.
But I had found sorrow and joy and regret
I had found a field of wild flowers. I had found the bloom of delight.
On a promontory in a spray of surf stood a gang of cormorants, broad shouldered as John Wayne. They regarded the west. The winds did not even lift their feathers. They were still as yogis.

The surging tide in North Inian Pass combed kelp and mussels like baleen – that same rushing sound; a million little sound-snaps in a swoosh – recede – sigh – return. Waves wash up on rocky islets in this entrance to the Gulf of Alaska where a colony of sea lions doze in the midday sun; the gargantuan Steller sea lion.

We caught their scent while we were still in Mosquito Pass, heard them belching loudly, breathing all over the ocean. When we neared their neighborhood nobody was swimming, feeding, or fighting.

The dry white rock of their island was warmed by the sun, emitting heat like a warm massage towel to the large bodies sprawled all over. We idled as much as you can in that Pass and admired the biggest lion high above us on his rocky island. He had few battle scars. He was a leviathan. He was the king of this mountain. He regarded us, he of the one-ton moveable mountain of flesh that can dive to a hundred fathoms. A small movement of his black leather flipper, languid like a yawn, was all he deigned to do. He was regal as a sphinx. A phalanx of sea lions sprawled all around. Thirty-six tons of sea lion lay up on those rocks and hardly a hair moved. They dozed and the ocean surged all around.

A separate perch of seagulls squatted in silent dormancy, civilian, gazing south, asleep eyes open. Every sentient being on that island was at rest.

We bobbed around in the billowing bliss, trying to stay upwind of the sea lions’ big dragon breath.

Eventually we had to go home – to the woods on a hill in a hamlet in a wrinkle of an island that begins or ends the Alexander Archipelago, depending on your voyage. It is buzzing all summer with fishermen and floatplanes, boats and travelers. I retreat to my hilltop at the end of a workday to get as much repose as possible, preferably in my all-weather hammock.

I sat out on the porch, reading, absorbing misty sun, regarding the squirrel sleeping on the tree branch with his legs hanging over the sides. He was as flopped out as a beanbag. A hummingbird, the mighty Rufous, appeared at the feeder, sipped, shuffled tail feathers and then perched on top of the feeder to sun its throat like a ping-pong hologram.

That night, perusing Thoreau’s Walden Pond writings, a word leaped out at me: Repose. It was in curious juxtaposition to some other words. So assembled they read, “The wildest animals do not repose.”

Say what? I laughed out loud. Had Thoreau had been working too hard that day, trying to convince himself? I went back to reading Annie Dillard for a while, wanted a bit of “Living Like Weasels,” the “patron saint” story of repose.

Sometimes you need to be quiet to see wild critters and sometimes just being here year-round helps.

One early spring, floating on the Dundas River, Harv and I were talking, loud as happy people in the wilds, laughing, not particularly looking for wild life. Here came two wolves, one black and one gray loping down the bank. Then, noses to the earth, they made their way down
December 1, 1955

I began a breech birth
Left foot dangling outside
To sample a world, not sure
On the day Rosa Parks decided to refuse
To give up her seat to a white man
Down south in a ruptured land

Clenching my toes, tried out a chilled land
Traveling that lonely burrow away toward birth.
The years had made the doctor the right man
A dozen med students from the hall outside
My patient mother didn’t mind, so didn’t refuse
Their arrival to watch this master's sure maneuver. Put her under to be sure
Shoved my boldest limb back up into that warm land
Flipped me head to toe, though memory may refuse
To recollect exactly the evening of my birth
Nice to know that in the wide world outside
The memory twists fresh for one white man

Or maybe for more than one white man
Never seen the likes of that day, to be sure
The dozens or more watching from outside,
Eyes on one, surprisingly strong, newly rooted to the land
Turned upside-down—the wrong to right, this birth
Without a knife—the significance was hard to refuse.

Life makes its own demands that no one can refuse:
Her complete calm startled that man
Both knowing how useless to slow or rush a birth
Whose calling knows nothing so sure
As the right place and moment to land
And take that first breath on the outside:

Rosa exhaled, looking outside
That darkened bus window. She must refuse,
Winter Ferry

A bearded youth with twinkling eyes
strokes the hair of his pregnant love,
stares ahead into the ever changing face
of gray sea hemmed by spruce-dark edges.
On a blanket a teenage girl sleeps,
a swirl of raven-black hair shielding
her eyes from the morning light.
An old woman reads, a child coos,
someone strums a mellow guitar.

We glide north on Chatham Strait,
clouds, fat with December snow, dip
into the sea, merge sky and water,
erase the horizon and blur all edges.
We too become more than a ship of strangers
simply going somewhere else,
now a part of the ship, the cold waters,
the hanging clouds, a harmony of parts.

Coming into Auke Bay by Tom Bornstein, UAS Student, Juneau
Photoshop
The Big Melt

That competitive part of me
that requires I coach basketball
at age 67,
oil my baseball mitt each spring,
follow my teams during good
and bad years,
and mumble ungraciously
when the guy in the next skiff
catches a salmon
and my poles
remain comatose--
also requires that I exhort
the clouds for another layer
of snow.

Now, two inches beyond
the new record,
I am fulfilled.

Yet, 222 inches
having been plowed,
blown,
shoveled,
sanded,
and blasphemed,
it is again
snowing.

What have I done?
Despite Man’s Best Efforts to Ruin It

Excitement filled the air as a crowd that included myself gathered to peer through the darkness over the side at the water below. Illuminated by only the aft lights of the ship, the surface of the salt water exploded as the second large cobia of the evening was being landed, making several fantastic lunges before finally being subdued. Although it would seem that it was the thrill of seeing these large and exotic bullet-shaped fish of the tuna family rip through the water that had brought our group together on the aft deck for the last several evenings, I was finally beginning to realize that this was about much more than just the fishing. Once evening was upon us, no longer visible was the smoke from the oil field fires, the lifeless beaches in the distance, the four wooden-hulled mine sweeping boats tied up alongside, or even the gray paint and missile launchers on deck behind us. With only these amazingly productive waters and a sense of camaraderie filling our consciousness, we had managed, if only for a moment, to escape the reality that we were anchored in a floating mine field in the northern Persian Gulf onboard a nuclear powered cruiser during Desert Storm.

While the natural productivity of marine life in the Persian Gulf waters has been well established, it has received much less press than events which might seem quite contradictory to that fact. As the world’s busiest oil shipping lane, about 17 million barrels of oil travel by tanker daily between Oman and Iran through the Strait of Hormuz (Energy Information Administration). While the normally heavy shipping traffic has been determined to be a source of contamination to these waters, its damage is pale in comparison to the result of at least 108 recorded oil spills in the Persian Gulf with volumes greater than 10,000 gallons (NOAA).

“Between 1978 and 1991, prior to the Persian Gulf War, five major oil spills had occurred in the Gulf, each involving more than a quarter of a million barrels of crude oil and each being larger than the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill” (Baumann). Despite those staggering statistics, the worst was yet to come. “The largest oil spill in history occurred from tankers, a tank field, offshore terminals, and refineries during the 1991 Persian Gulf War; it dwarfed other spills with a release of approximately 520 million gallons of oil” (“Disasters”). By the time final spill estimates were tallied, the result was more than three times the world’s second largest spill and over 45 times more oil spilled than during the Exxon Valdez grounding in Prince William Sound in 1989. The resulting oil slick produced from this massive spill would stretch over 100 miles long and as much as 40 miles wide (Schmitt). While these large individual events have had a significant impact on the environment, it should be noted that the current estimates of industrial spillage and natural seepage of oil into the Persian Gulf range from 250,000 to 3 million barrels of oil per year (Baumann). These two sources alone are capable of providing the equivalent of between 1 and 12 Exxon Valdez oil spills annually. Yet “in spite of the numerous past oil spills, especially during the Iran-Iraq conflict, the natural seeping of oil, and the large number of huge oil tankers, the Gulf has remained an active and unique ecosystem and functions as a significant food source, an important recreation area, a major habitat for endangered species, and a key flyway for migratory birds” (Baumann).

We had steamed from San Diego to the waters off Kuwait as quickly as possible in
Roberts from Flume by Alan Munro, Juneau

Tidal Echoes 2009
India Scarf

He wears a beige scarf imprinted with Hindu characters, all in the darkest of blood red
I am reminded of the dirt and dust.
The heat is something I never forgot
nor the beige-ness
but somehow I misplaced the dry swirls of dust that coated my young skin
  clogged my nose
  choked my throat.

He wears it tightly around his slender neck
my mind drifts to those revered cows that roamed the streets dropping patty feasts for flies.
Huts formed from those same piles, smoothed with opaque river water and mud,
  bits of straw thatching the sides of the dull tan dwellings.
Bare
burnt
sun-brown feet scampering alongside our taxi cabs while I sat inside
wearing just one pair of my many little girl shoes.
My long hair golden, begging to be stroked by the multitude of black-haired beauties.

Mother dressed me in ridiculous dresses,
her little princess,

left me to defend myself on playgrounds amongst my peers.

India
allowed me to wear pants and play clothes, sneakers sometimes. Running around
in the beating hot sun I chased lizards with Ben,
  pulled pomegranates down from leafy green trees,
  kept a vigilant lookout against snakes.
I had one Barbie doll with me; she traveled far beyond where Barbie normally would go.
Into this private place of spirituality
  into His tomb
  up onto Seclusion Hill
Chants penetrated her plastic ears, rhyming songs of praise and devotion
  interrupted her private thoughts of Ken
  and the Dream House.

A turquoise sari for mother, resplendent with golden stitches,
In Memory of Kerry and Paulette Blake
D. October 1, 2008, Anchorage Alaska

A wheel on the top of an empty building
nicked by a falling plane
broken power lines
like ribbon at the end of a race.

A memory of a flight with Uncle Kerry
trading the headset with Jacob,
circling in the desert
then falling softly.

A charred pile of broken metal
fumed on the pavement next to mailboxes
he couldn’t return to the runway
but he avoided the homes.

Pictures with Mom in the airport,
smiles in blue shirts and skies
wave good-bye,
flaying south.

Only a wallet in a pothole
A fishing license, SS Card,
and three hundred dollar bills
crisp at the corners.

Two lives and a legacy
fused in flame
doused by fire engines
still burning on.
Seattle Riff by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on cardboard mounted on panel
I never really thought about what it meant to actually get a tattoo. I just got it. And I was persuaded by my middle aged aunt who has a pair of cherries tattooed on top of one of her breasts. A lot of people are really freaked by the pain and permanence of a tattoo, but I just went in to DUI tattoo, asked the perky blonde Krista to sign me up (because I’m afraid of a man with a needle) and within the next few days I had a sore left shoulder, but a beautiful rainbow dove to show for my minor pain.

It was a hot sticky day in Vancouver Washington, during my first summer as a high school graduate. But I was inside of a cool building with blood red walls and checkerboard floors waiting to get my first tattoo. It was the strangest thing in the world to see the outline of my dove just sitting on my shoulder blade. Krista was able to just rub it on or rub it off, put it anywhere I wanted. But where did I want it? I had just decided this about two days ago and hadn’t really thought about where exactly it should be located. She said we could move it “here” or “there” and I said “sure” to both. We both decided “there” would be best. As I stared at this colorless outline of a dove it never really occurred to me that my shoulder would never look the same again. That it would forever have this shape etched into it and that every time I would move my arm this way or that way, my dove would fly that way or this way. The idea of permanence never scared me, never really crossed my mind either. I just knew that I believed in the many things that the design stood for, so why not?

I guess I have never really sat down and thought about what a dove means to me or what it symbolizes. To be truthful I immediately think of a dove holding an olive branch and then it starts to get religious which I am totally not, so I try to venture into other areas of meaning. I like to think that the dove represents purity, maybe. Which is funny because I don’t really believe in a white wedding dress or having to be pure when you’re married. It’s a different kind of pure. A pure that comes from an untouched pond that is totally still, maybe. Untouched by anger or hate. Untouched by fear or destruction. Pure in such a way that it brings hope, which is exactly what the dove delivered to Noah while tooling around on his ark, so maybe I am being a little religious. I don’t automatically fall back onto the idea of a dove when I think of purity, but I do admire its soft white beauty and its calm cooing.

Once during an interview I was asked, “If you could have any superpower in the world, what would it be?” I immediately answered that I would fly. My interviewer asked, “You mean fly like a superhero or have wings?”

“T would have wings.”

“Good answer.”

To have wings, for me, would be to have complete and total freedom. I dream of just soaring and feeling everything while feeling nothing. I think the nothingness is what intrigues me. The higher you go into the sky the more everything falls away and you are simply up in ever expanding blue with possible clouds. Clouds that I imagine lying on whenever I fly by them on an airplane. I envy birds and their flight because it seems so relaxing, so weightless and effortless. I envy ravens most of all because they have discovered how to have fun with their wings. Diving and swooping...
Oil and Honesty: An Interview with Artist and Professor David Woodie

I began attending the University of Alaska Southeast-Juneau in the fall semester of 2005. At 25 I was classified as a non-traditional student and here I was starting college for the first time. I had recently moved to Juneau, a city I’d never been to before, I was living in a house with someone I hadn’t met until I stepped off the plane, and I was sitting in a classroom after not having been in school for seven years. I began to question my sanity. Then, in walks this self-proclaimed hippie with his long hair pulled back in a braid, sporting an untamed beard, and Carhartt overalls covering a flannel shirt. I looked curiously at him as he walked to the front of the class and realized that this was my Art Appreciation professor. In that moment I relaxed and realized I could survive going to school in this place that offered me professors who were so real. So, when I was told that David Woodie would be our featured artist for Tidal Echoes this year I jumped at the chance to interview him. I have gotten a chance to know this unconventional character while taking some classes with him and I hope by interviewing him I can open a window allowing others to get to know him the way I have.

As an artist in what medium do you prefer to work?

My preferred medium is oil and that’s just about all of the finished work I do. But, I also use drawing and print making and just about any other medium, acrylic or watercolor for second mediums and for developing ideas. I may do drawings after I finish a painting in order to develop the idea further and then possibly develop it even into another painting, but all my finished work is oil so far.

Why did you choose oil?

It’s the most flexible medium for the most part. It allows the broadest possible range of techniques, but it also accepts the kind of technique that I use. I use a variant which is probably closest to Venician technique, which was developed in Venice during the High Renaissance and it’s been developed quite a lot since then. Like I said, it’s a variant on that technique but it owes a little bit to Flemish technique as well. All of those are oil painting techniques. To some extent a very skilled person can mimic them with acrylic, but you’re really fighting the medium when you do that. It really works best with oil. Oil is very translucent and it can be used for glazing. And glazing is a big part of the way I paint. Glazing is the use of extra medium in the paint to make it more translucent so the image has more depth. For example, it works well on skin because skin is translucent, so it reflects that in a painting.

What got you started in art?

I started like most people, drawing when I was really young. Actually, you heard it here first, I’ve never told anybody about this before in my entire life. But there was a kid named Gordy in the first grade who could draw dinosaurs and I absolutely loved it. He could really
First Day of Fall

Overcast, autumnal afternoon. Varied thrush, blending with the last raspberries. Hummingbird feeders hang like colored planets in some science fiction scape, the hummingbirds themselves long gone, no longer orbiting, as the northern earth tilts away from warmth and sunlight into its polar den. Potatoes harvested and cellered, garden turned.

—Juneau, September 22, 2008

Falling in the Garden

is something old men do. My uncle Gus died in his garden. Once again, the turning of potatoes and the liturgical new year for Jews and Orthodox Christians, new life unearthed with every turning fork.

I meditate on burying our dead, the friends we lost this year, the rest of us slowly dying, one way or another. The endless rains have stopped, the sun briefly warms the garden—Sunday afternoon, the Feast of the Birth of the Mother of God, hope at the harvest turning of the year, like turning pages of Isaiah, living out an acceptable year of the Lord.

I use the fork to slowly right myself again, and one by one examine this muscle, bone, and that, inventory all my fallen self, accept that I am old, and take again the turning fork in hand.

—Juneau, Sunday, September 21, 2008
In snow-white radiance the gardens lie,  
With humid breath the rustling breezes blow.

— Let’s speak of deepest matters that we know,  
Of tender things, and things we’re frightened by,  
Let’s speak of that from which we cannot fly:

You’ve lived your life, not noticing or trying,  
In senseless episodes of dreaming, sighing —  
And now, at last, this all is also done…

I listen to him speak without replying,  
But then, he knows that no reply will come.

By Georgii Ivanov. Translated from Russian by Nina Chordas

Стоят сады в сиянъи бело-снежном  
И ветер шелестит дыханъем влажным.

— Поговорим с тобой о самом важном,  
О самом страшном и о самом нежном,  
Поговорим с тобой о неизбежном:

Ты прожил жизнь, ее не замечая,  
Бессмысленно мечтая и скучая —  
Вот, наконец, кончается и это…

Я слушаю его, не отвечая,  
Да он, конечно, и не ждет ответа.

Георгий Иванов
Existential Sestina

If you were a dandelion flower
how would you wilt?
Like all the rest? Fragile
and weak, lost in these words
A confusing prison
mistaken for freedom

Quick sex of spring brings freedom
To these shivering acres of flowers
dribble their seed on concrete prison
floors. Caught in the wind, they’ll wilt
And wallow, with hard worthless words
Stuck in a structure so fragile

What feeds this pitiful fragile
Growth? A sad hope towards freedom
Where no one rules but your words?
Has no one told you? You’re a flower.
Beautiful but brief. You’ll wilt
Like the rest. A cycle, called prison!

We’ll live and die in this prison.
Together, inseparable and fragile
Til the end. Here’s where souls wilt
Into each other. Passing this freedom
Onto the next bright yellow flower
They’ll scoff at the seeds of our words

Begging and searching for the right words,
They’ll whore themselves out for a prison
Wet with dew, sprouting a different flower.
The soil’s all the same. Give into fragile
illusions, a shallow solace - this freedom.
Accept the clouds for what they bring, and wilt.

Weary petals, only last so long until they wilt

Throw your words
like paint to find freedom
from this prison

But remember. You’re fragile
like a flower.
Connecting the Pieces

As I look for something new to wear each day, I see my atikluk (uh-tick-look) hanging from a white, plastic hanger in my closet. When I see it I think of my home up North, I think of my Inupiaq culture. Some days I want to put it on and wear it to work and school because it represents who I am, but I don’t. This unique piece of traditional clothing or “calico parka” is colored a bright light blue and has a white and bluish flower (maybe forget-me-nots?) pattern, making it stand out among the dark and dull wardrobe that I own. Imagine how much it would stand out among a group of students at the university. It’s not just the color or the pattern that makes it stand out; it’s different. It’s different from the “normal” clothing that everyone else wears, different from the normal clothing that I wear. If I wasn’t so afraid or ashamed or embarrassed I’d put on that atikluk without hesitating and wear it more often instead of letting it collect dust in my closet. But I don’t put it on and it sits there.

In a different place, in a different world, in Noatak, Alaska, the place I call home, this vibrant piece of clothing standing out is a good thing. When you’re out in the short, shrubby tundra picking berries or out along a rocky riverbank you want to be able to stand out so that your mom, your sister, your aunt, or your grandma can spot you. You want them to spot you when you’re out wandering by yourself because one of you might run into a giant brown bear or some other dangerous animal. If you’re not looking out for wild animals, you’ll want to be able to keep an eye on the others you’re with so that none of you get lost since this may be easy to do when you’re out in the middle of nowhere. With this in mind, it makes me think that the Natives of my culture purposely created this piece of clothing so that it would be helpful and useful to them in situations like these. If not, maybe they created it because it looks pretty and is “fashionable” among our culture. That’s a question I should ask my grandma; “Why was the atikluk created to be lightweight, brightly colored, and shaped like a dress?” With the harsh way of life they had back in the day before the village was settled and “discovered” by the missionaries, I don’t see why they’d create something without thinking critically about how it would and benefit them. From comparing these two different places - Noatak and Juneau - you’d see how the atikluk standing out would differ. It is a good thing when you’re out in the country in the path of grizzlies, but not necessarily a good thing when you’re in a city trying to fit in with everyone else.

When you look at the atikluk, you’ll see a hood hanging at the top of this bright colored piece of clothing. Some hoods are pointy at the tip and goofy-looking, but the hood on mine is normal and rounded and just big enough to cover my entire head. It’s not really different from any other hood except for the fact that it has a white lace around the edge of the front. If you have the hood on your head, you’d see the lace around the edge of your face. This is just a decorative touch I guess. Sometimes I think of the hood as my shelter, it keeps me protected. I’m able to put it over my head and feel safe. It helps keep the mosquitoes off my neck when I’m picking berries during the summer, it gives me a shade from the sun when I’ve been out all day long, it keeps the dust off of my hair when I’m riding a four-wheeler on the dry dusty gravel roads back at home, and even though it’s not waterproof, it keeps the rain from directly hitting.
The People

A conqueror for the queen;
An explorer landing in the new world.
Imagine a place called the new world!
Sounds like Heaven.
With abalone beads & salmonberry dyes
Carved cedar helmets & paddles
Fur blankets & leather slippers
Drum dancing cosseted by Evergreen Trees in the night
Watched over by a slice of the moon
Tongues clucking Raven speak for storytelling.

Imagine the tribe’s welcome, the voyager’s hesitation,
His fear,
Their embrace –

His awe at the prize before him: “A Neighbor.”

His Distress.

One wonders...
After being accosted by the sea for weeks,
his cheeks affronted by the salt spray,
his ambition hardened,
his route etched,
his fraternity threatening mutiny,
his gut a vat of wine,
One wonders...
If the message couldn’t have been any closer to,
“Someone already lives here?”
Howling Dog

I pulled the old blue VW bus into the parking lot of the Howling Dog Saloon, just north of Fairbanks. It was June 21st, 1992, and we had come to drink beer and watch the Midnight Sun volleyball tournament. I bought two Alaskan Ambers at the bar and followed Dave out onto the patio to watch the players and enjoy the late evening sun.

It was a warm still night, and the sky was bright at 11 p.m. The game was good, but the cold beer was better. I went back in for two more.

I was startled when the loudspeaker crackled on. “Al Blake, please come to the bar.” I didn’t see any movement towards the bar from inside or outside.

“Maybe Al’s not here,” I murmured to Dave as I slid back onto the bench next to him and handed him his bottle. Ten minutes later the voice came over the speaker again. “Al Blake, please come to the bar.” Again, no movement, at least from outside where the volleyball game was going strong.

A few minutes later the loudspeaker crackled to life one last time. “Al Blake, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital called. Your wife is in labor.” A chair toppled over with a crash and loud footsteps could be heard running through the bar, followed by the revving and then peeling out of a motorcycle from the parking lot.

“Must have been Al,” Dave whispered to me.
Winter Cabin Lullaby

Morning murmurs and steamed
Whispers lift us briefly from sleep
Shuffled steps, the scrape and flash
Of a match, the woodstove lit
Are we forever trying to crawl back
Into our dreams? Let’s drift like
Babies in our cozy sleeping bags
Until the floor is warm

Chain Gang by Bonnie Elsensohn, Sitka
Acrylic
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• Nature Writing
• Memoir Writing
• Chapbook/Novella Writing

Many students complete our program by working one-on-one with a faculty advisor to write a short book of poems, novella, or selection of short stories. Students can send this work out to be published or use it as part of their application for M.F.A. programs.

For more information, visit our web page: http://www.uas.alaska.edu/humanities/programs/english/index.html

Or contact Emily Wall at emily.wall@uas.alaska.edu