

# The Waverley

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Nathan Hensley 2

Literary Halloween Fun 3

Shamanism and Healing 4

What are we Reading? 4

Internship: The Current 5

Per Patterson Reading 6

Poetry Corner 7

November Babes 7

Happenings 8

## Alex Lemon Stops at his Alma Mater

**Marissa Bianco '12**

Alex Lemon, class of 2000, is the author of four acclaimed books: the poetry collections *Mosquito* (Tin House Books 2006), *Hallelujah Blackout* (Milkweed Editions 2008), *Fancy Beasts* (Milkweed



*Editions 2010*) and *Happy: A Memoire* (Scribner 2010).

His bestselling memoir *Happy* recounts some of his time as an undergraduate at Macalester, but his relationship with Mac didn't stop there. After getting an MFA in creative writing at the University of Minnesota he taught at his alma mater from 2004 to 2007.

On the week of October 25th he returned to Mac, participating in a variety of events for the entire college community. During his visit, Lemon read excerpts from all of his works to a full audience



**Students and faculty ask questions about Lemon's craft.**

at the chapel, answered questions in a forum hosted by the English Honors Society and met with students individually to discuss their writing.

## Wilkommen!

### An Inside look at Macalester's production of *Cabaret*

**By Julia Brown '11**

*Cabaret* is a study in levels of representation. As an English and Theatre double-major, that's all I need to know to get excited. The story, originally based on real people's lives in Weimarer Berlin, was first published as *The Berlin Stories* by Englishman Christopher Isherwood. John Van Druten's stage play, *I Am a Camera*, followed this story,



forming the basis for Kander & Ebb's Broadway spectacle, *Cabaret*. Now it's at Mac.

Writing off a play as an empty-minded musical spectacular is an easy and uninformed move. Will there be people coming to see our production simply because they recognize familiar tunes ("Life is a Cabaret, old chum . . ." sound familiar?) or want to see some dancing? Of course. Will those people be shocked and a bit dismayed by the serious discussion of fascism, sexuality,

(cont. on page 3)

## Faculty Profile: Nathan Hensley

*“...going to a small liberal arts school as an undergraduate was vital in opening Hensley up to ‘new angles on the world.’”*

Newly-hired associate English professor Nathan Hensley has always seen books as “mysterious artifacts” containing ideas he desperately wanted access to. Literature developed an enigmatic aura for him despite growing up in Fresno, California, a place he claimed lacked a significant reading culture. His penchant for books wasn’t attributed to his “suburban stucco surroundings” but mainly to his scholarly father. “My dad went to a small liberal arts school near Berkley and majored in English. He kept lots of his books from college on this one imposing shelf. I spent most of my childhood building up the courage to read his destroyed paperbacks,” he revealed.

After graduating from high school, Nathan left California for the East Coast. He pursued a similar collegiate experience as his father at Vassar College. However, he didn’t enter the next phase of his academic career by focusing on literature. “I started out as a philosophy major,” he shared, “But then I realized that literature replayed and reconfigured the same ideas in a more interesting way. Melville could have easily written philosophy. So I switched my plan.” Nathan not only enjoyed analyzing literature but also tried his hand at creative writing himself; “My senior thesis was a series of short

stories. I had this grand scheme to go to grad school, get my PhD, become a professor and then reveal myself as a novelist.”

But, while attending graduate school at Notre Dame University, he found his true calling: literary theory. He realized that “literary criticism combined literature with philosophical ideas” and that now the joke was on him. He had been “overtaken by criticism.” Graduate school also led him to further specialize within his field by focusing on Victorian literature. “I took a class called *Sexuality and Empire*. It discussed how the literature unlocked or restaged ethical dilemmas of the time period. I got interested in it as a political or ethical problem of how the literature influenced the empire and vice versa.”

Despite, formative experiences in larger universities—finishing his PhD at Duke University in 2009—Nathan asserts that going to a small liberal arts school as an undergraduate was vital in opening him up to “new angles on the world.” Because of this he’s thrilled to be installed at an institution like Macalester. Although Nathan is passionate about literary theory, he admits that it often “invites a certain glossy pose,” one



**Nathan Hensley**, the Macalester English Department’s newest faculty member

that he’s never really ascribed to and he’s found neither do students at Macalester. “I remember my first impression of Mac students as being incredibly smart, yet unpretentious. There isn’t a lot of flossing going on; people seem genuinely interested in ideas.”

Nathan’s most rewarding experience as a professor so far hasn’t been in teaching advanced level courses, however, but in instructing a one-hundred-level class. “It’s so exciting to see students read a new text for the first time, or to read something again but in a totally different context. It actually helps me expand my own knowledge of the work.” Nathan doesn’t claim to have literature all figured out. At Macalester, he’s helping students navigate the mysterious artifacts of his childhood, and in doing so continues to unravel their enigma himself.

# Wilkommen!

By Julia Brown '11

(Cont. from page 1)

oppression and society in flux? I certainly hope so.

Kander and Ebb have proven their commitment to using the musical as a site for bringing up tough questions and interrogating accepted histories. Anyone who saw their newest work, *Scottsboro Boys*, at the Guthrie doesn't need to be told this twice. Far from a simple song-and-dance extravaganza, the play itself—and our production—examines what happens when a society accepts without question the option with the shiniest image and the catchiest tunes. Our characters, chorus and principals alike, cling to the smoky, glittery illusion of the cabaret to avoid the real traumas and anxieties of late 1920s Berlin.

Sally Bowles, our entrancing, self-destructive chanteuse, claims that “politics” have got “nothing to do” with the individuals in her club. She lives from drink to hangover, from performance to performance, and she is not the only one. Once the Nazi-appropriated folk song “Tomorrow Belongs to Me” finds its way

into the club, the course is set for the horrifying and heartbreaking final image of Germany under Hitler.

All this being said, there are familiar tunes and some really fabulous dancing. A large percentage of the work of the actors involves navigating the treacherous waters of representation: how do we play 1920s Germany? How do we represent the many cultures and sexualities interacting in the scene of the nightclub? How do we balance entertainment and message? And, to be frank, how do we handle all of these questions, build a set, learn music and lines and blocking for a huge and difficult show in a month and a half? Ah, the theatre.

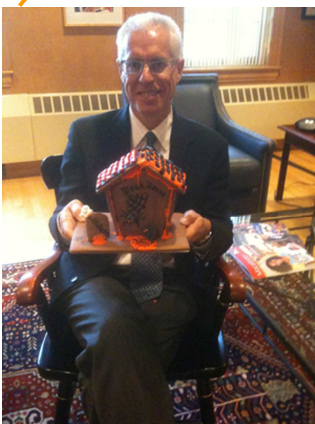
I am a member of the Vocal Ensemble and understudy for Sally Bowles (senior Morgen Chang). This double-duty work is completely new to me, and involves an interesting way of approaching rehearsal. I'm very aware of Morgen's work—how she's moving, how she's relating to the other characters—while focusing on my own invented character. Being an ensemble member means flexing one's creative writing muscles—always a good thing. Each

*“Will those people be shocked and a bit dismayed by the serious discussions of fascism, sexuality, oppression and society in flux? I certainly hope so.”*

of our characters has a name, a history, a goal, and a reason for being in every scene. It's a fascinating practice. We take a very well known work of theatre and create a new world of relationships and influences, necessarily changing the play itself.

From my own perspective, this process has been difficult, tiring, and invigorating. It has made me ask questions that will continue to affect my work in the arts for as long as I live. I expect to be incredibly proud of this production, and I hope that, at the very least, we can spark some conversations around campus. After all, isn't that the point?

**Cabaret opens November 5 and runs two weekends.**



## Frighteningly Literary!

To celebrate Halloween, English majors dressed up as their favorite novels and made scary gingerbread houses. Katie Willingham '11 and Kaija Bergen '11 made a gingerbread “Bleak House” that was featured on the 1600 grand homepage and is now being displayed in President Rosenberg's office!



“... We heal from sources external to ourselves, from having our pain represented and legitimized. Solidarity heals us.”

## Healing

In September, international photographer Vance Gellert lectured on the divergence and reconvergence of traditional and scientific methods of healing in his work. Nola Pastor, a first year in Ping Wang's Intro to Creative Writing class, shares her thoughts on his talk.

**By Nola Pastor '14**

Vance defined healing as a process of naming and stepping into your experience. Finding and killing the snake that bit you, moving the toxicity out of the bloodstream and putting the sweat of a frog right in—all of these require a closeness to what is felt, to that which resides in the unspeakable, the supremely physical, and also in the emotional that we are not given means to articulate. Be

close to what hurts you. Know the venom of your past, taste your own loneliness—sometimes it takes this to heal. In this, healing means that you step into yourself.

But we also heal from sources external to ourselves, from having our pain represented and legitimized by other people. Solidarity heals us, like the process of the grid on the ground, trying communally to find remedies. A guinea pig rubbed across the skin, an egg dropped into water—these represent the power of being heard, of being felt. This is the idea that what we have within us is not unreachable but can be tapped and heard and communicated



Photographer Vance Gellert

to the world at large, the way language and diagnosis can empower. I don't think western medicine is devoid of these aspects, or that shamanism and other traditions are less focused on physiological results or knowledge. But I do think there is something very deep and primal in the way we interpret how we are healed that benefits from the local and the knowable, so that what helps us is something touch-

(Cont. Page 6)

## What are we reading?

### Top 5 Zoë Rodine '13

- *Mrs. Dalloway* (Virginia Woolf)
- *Eva Luna* (Isabel Allende)
- *Unaccustomed Earth* (Jhumpa Lahiri)
- *Herzog* (Saul Bellow)
- *The Elephant Vanishes* (Haruki Murakami)



### What we're reading now... Jonathan Bernstein '11

Ray by Barry Hannah





# Internship Debrief

**By Harley Brown '09**

I've had a lot of internships. I've also had a lot of different ideas for my so-called career path, thanks largely to the feminist movement and a liberal arts education. As a freshman, I entertained the idea of being an ob/gyn, so I devotedly bussed to Uptown Minneapolis and back every week to intern at Planned Parenthood as an assistant event coordinator. I wasn't exactly battling religious protesters outside of the clinic, which is what I had though I'd be doing. By the end of my stint planning conferences I now forget, I was ready to be done. On to the next!

When I switched to an English major my junior year in college, I developed a fervent interest in writing and radio broadcasting. I declared a creative writing emphasis and started working as Rock Director at WMCN 91.7. I also interned for a few months in the promotions department at KOOL 108; but after hearing "Suzy Q" and "Ring of Fire" over and over again at weekly KOOL Karaoke, I wanted to tear my ears off my head. So I lambasted my internship on my blog and was subsequently fired when my supervisor found it online.



*Minneapolis native, Dessa*

Since I had already registered my internship for course credit, my transcript would be branded with a W if I didn't find

a replacement internship. This is how I became web development intern at the Student Placement Center for Saint Paul Public Schools. Though education wasn't my forte, I learned a lot with SPPS. When I coded the HTML for a slide show on their website, they were beside themselves with awe and appreciation. My supervisor, who also went to Macalester, promised me a position there after graduation. I never took her up on the offer.



*Famous folk duo, Tegan and Sara, perform in the current studios*

After graduation, I interned for the Loft Literary Center. It gave me insight into how nonprofit organizations work and made me aware of the Twin Cities writing community outside of the Macalester English Department. I loved working there and applied for a Development Assistant position that opened up toward the end of my internship. Though I was in the top three candidates, another intern got it. We bought each other beers and called it a good game, but I left the Loft shortly thereafter. My internship was almost over anyway.

A year later, I started working as Production Intern for the Local Show on 89.3 The Current. It's been everything I hoped and dreamed for. I'm not kidding. Throughout college, I had always thought it would be awesome to work for Minnesota Public Radio, especially for the Current. I probably

applied there around twelve times without success. But I kept applying and finally, by divine intervention or sheer luck, I got it. Whether I'm writing web features for bands performing in-



*Harley Brown at Rock the Garden, the Current's big summer festival*

studio or ripping music into the database and mastering tracks, I get to listen to music, talk about music, and write about music all day. Sometimes I get public radio testimonials from bands like the National, and sometimes they give me V.I.P. passes to their show and I get to hang out with them afterward. Other opportunities also arise: when I volunteered for MPR at the State Fair, I met a girl who edits a music blog out of Chicago. We exchanged information and now I'm writing music reviews for her. It's fun, and it's a great way to synthesize my interest in writing and in music.

It took me a year and half after I graduated to get my dream internship and figure out what I want to do with my life: be a music director at a triple-A radio station. And write for a music publication, virtual or otherwise. I don't know if jobs will come of interning at the Current or writing for Tandem Magazine, but for the moment it doesn't matter. I enjoy what I'm doing right now, including working at a coffee shop to pay my rent. Maybe I'll attend an MFA program someday, but I don't see the rush. For now, as the Doobie Brothers say, I'll just listen to the mu-



sic.

## Per Petterson at the Guthrie

By Naomi Sussman '12

On Monday, September 20, I attended Per Petterson's reading and interview at the Guthrie Theater. His audience seemed to be predominantly comprised of the literary middle-aged, with a smattering of young adults. Although the Guthrie is a large and formal theatrical venue, an intimate atmosphere permeated the room. Per Petterson promises not to keep secrets from his readers, and that inclusive attitude was present during his interview and reading—despite my seat toward the back, I felt as though he was looking me directly in the eyes.

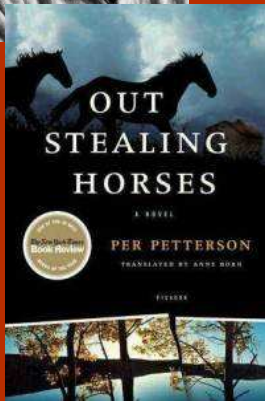
A Guthrie actor opened the session with a reading from *Out Stealing Horses*. Hearing the words spoken deepened my

appreciation for Petterson's style; his sentences, clearly based on the movement and cadence of the spoken word, flowed shimmering like the river in the story. The actor also uncovered bright points of humor in the story, which seemed hidden in between all of the commas on the written page. Read aloud, the story seemed to take on a slightly different shape, and I felt that I understood it better.

Petterson's description of his writing process further elucidated his work for me. *Out Stealing Horses* is marked by an inexorable forward movement. When Petterson spoke, this sense of movement was explained: each next sentence is a discovery drawn from the last. Further, he always reveals secrets to readers as he himself encounters them.

Thus, instead of being dragged toward an eventual goal, the reader is drawn into the very tempo of the character's life. The story is carried by the relieving agony of rupture and release that punctuates the text.

Hearing Per Petterson was a revelation for me as a writer. He described being inspired by a sentence, an image, an atmosphere, the cadence of words—the same things that inspire me. The idea that I could just work with those beautiful fragments, and not plan the themes and the plot, was liberating. I frequently feel trapped by the need to have a direction, an outline. Now, I feel able to let the initial image blossom into the next.



## Healing (Cont.)

(Cont. from page 4)  
-able and seen—a shaman's touch, the surface of a leaf. When medical practice distances itself from these physical, immediate realities, when the practitioner becomes a bearer of information and not an active participant, or when the victim loses their closeness to what is being done in the name of their healing, I think we transition away from healing towards something less holistic.

Healing is painful, visceral and personal, but it is also about the way we communicate our suffering and the ways in which we are heard. This is what writing gives us. This is what we have come here to find.



### Macalester Writing Students in the Community

Students in Professor Wang Ping's creative writing courses, ENGL 150 and 282, have been visiting near-by Ramsey Jr. High regularly throughout the semester to work one-on-one with 8th-graders on their writing. The 8th-graders and the Mac students will have a joint reading of their work on November 22 (see calendar). Renowned Native American poet Allison Hedge Coke will speak with the 8th-grade class on November 19, as part of her extended visit with Professor Ping's courses that same week.

# Poetry Corner

By Drake Myers '14

Singing Song For a Canoe Trip

Trails winding forward and forever,  
rivers flowing,  
trees, cold air, water.

Sand covered feet,  
I'll sit with you on a log,  
I'll sit on a log with you.

An eagle comes out from a broken island,  
a river struggling, in, ropes,  
struggling, chained, a slave,

we are free, in that moment.  
Trees like Mushroom-Clouds and  
Colors like paint spills spell out

unreadable symbols, like when  
we stare at each other and when  
we stand by each other.

Love, please please please.  
I see the forms and the clouds  
and I see the trails right now.



## NOVEMBER BABES

November 1: Stephen Crane (1871-1900)  
*American novelist and poet, author of "The Red Badge of Courage"*

November 5: Art Garfunkel (1941 - )  
*Singer, "Simon & Garfunkel"*

November 7: Albert Camus (1913 - 1960)  
*French author and philosopher, author of "The Stranger" and "The Plague"*

November 8: Kazuo Ishiguro (1954 - )  
*Japanese-English novelist, author of "Never Let Me Go"*

Bram Stoker (1847-1912)  
*Irish novelist, author of "Dracula"*

November 11: Kurt Vonnegut (1922 - 2007)  
*prolific American writer, author of "Slaughterhouse Five", "Cat's Cradle", "Breakfast of Champions"*

November 12: Neil Young (1945 - )  
*singer/songwriter*

November 13: Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)  
*Scottish novelist, author of "Treasure Island" and "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde"*

November 18: Margaret Atwood (1939 - )  
*Canadian poet and novelist, author of "The Handmaid's Tale"*

November 21: Voltaire (1694 - 1778)  
*Philosopher*

November 26: Charles Schulz ( 1922-2000)  
*St. Paul native cartoonist, creator of "Peanuts"*

November 28: William Blake (1757-1827)  
*Romantic poet and artist*

November 29: C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)  
*British science fiction writer, author of "The Chronicles of Narnia"*

November 30: Mark Twain (1835 - 1910)  
*American humorist, author of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"*

Winston Churchill (1874 - 1965)  
*British prime minister, received the Nobel Prize in Literature*



## Happenings

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**Diane Wilson**, author of the memoir *Spirit Car* and many short stories, will visit Jon Lurie's Intro to Creative Writing course in **Olin-Rice 101 on November 3 at 2:20-3:20**. Any student interested is welcome to join Lurie's class on this day. To confirm your attendance or for more information contact [jlurie@macalester.edu](mailto:jlurie@macalester.edu).

Native American poet **Allison Hedge Coke** will give a joint reading with Wang Ping's creative writing students in the Native American section of the **Minneapolis Institute of Arts on Tuesday, November 30 at 2:30-4:30 pm**.

There will be a joint reading with Wang Ping's creative writing classes and students of Ramsey Jr. High on **November 19 at 7:00 pm in the Smail Gallery**. Food will be served, and all are welcome.

The lounge and reading room are always open. Don't forget treat nights on Wednesdays, 5-7!

**We're on Facebook: "like" our page  
by visiting [www.macalester.edu/english](http://www.macalester.edu/english)**

Thanksgiving is coming! Are you thinking of home? And food? We are not, nope not one bit. Just standing by hoping you'll send us an email saying you'd love to write for us. We'd love to have you, specifically, write for the Waverly. You're lovely. We would not love to have food. Nope. Not even a little.

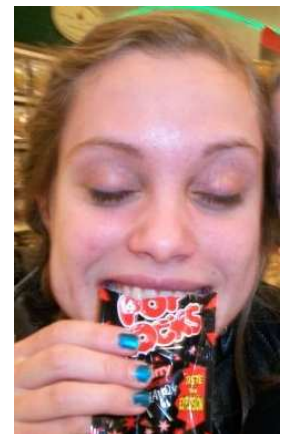
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Marissa Bianco '12



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Jamie Lucarelli '13