The Promethean, Wonderlings (2010-2011)

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The 2010/2011 Issue

Wonderlings
How to Achieve Greatness

Forget everything you think you know
Block the voices that hold you back
Don’t be afraid to lose control
To let dreams conquer reality

-Casey Kerns
I Hold Life in My Hand

Ciara Laing

I am the fiery purple searing the dusk sky
With a sunflower shape swaying
In a warm, seductive summer breeze

I, the Toccata and Fugue in D minor,
Pounce on your delicate ears
While my Thai noodle taste, splattered
With peanut sauce taunts your mouth

I, the electric violin, seize
The soul behind your eyes;
My sea turtle body invading
Every inch of your ocean mind

I, the cherry blossom, shade
You from Death's gnawing obliteration
While you flee to the white sand beach
In your '65 mustang: bleach pink

I am the third mermaid that plunges
To the bottom of the abandoned lake
Searching for the overstuffed couch
From which you came

Particles

Jeriann Watkins

Floating, flying, dancing through the air as we usually do, we orbit our moon. We shoot out to the limits of gravity's pull and squeal with excitement as we get pulled back into her cool embrace. We do this constantly, always moving. Moving is how we obtain our knowledge. Sounds and actions, thoughts and colors from all over the universe bounce by at lightning speed. If we move quickly, we can see them.

This is how we learned that the humans are coming. Any day now, they will be here. We can see the rocket — large and white — leaving fire in its wake. We hope that none of us are harmed when it arrives. The humans are gigantic, though not as large as the rocket. What will we look like to them?

When the ship arrives, we feel the disturbance in our atmosphere. We are sucked toward the center of our moon, pulled by the powerful vacuum. We feel the heat and hear the humans plan their landing. The spaceship is even more monstrous than we thought. As it lands and powers down, we circle the giant machine. Their technology is wonderful! The exact measurements in both the temperature of the fire and the shape of the vessel show how hard they have worked. Oh what the humans can invent! They are surely one of the more advanced species we've seen in several millennia.

We gather in front of their ship, waiting for them to emerge. We listen to their conversation; they are looking for life forms. They don't want to be harmed while leaving their ship. We hope they know we are friendly.

"There's no sign of life out there. Looks like we're alone."

That's not right. How can the machines not sense us? We will have to tell them that their equipment is flawed. Slowly, the door opens. Out walks a gargantuan human, made even bigger by his astronautical suit. Glancing around, he looks right through us. We are everywhere, yet we do not even register in his vision.
Maybe these humans are not as advanced as we thought.

We try congregating in his line of sight and hovering around their life-sensing machine, but nothing works. We put all of our weight on the buttons of their equipment. They do not detect us.

They stay for several days and we learn wonders about their world, but we cannot share what we know about so many other worlds. We cannot tell them our own story – our moon's history – about which they are so curious but could not even begin to imagine. These humans are a puzzle. Parts of their brains are very developed, as shown by their ability to be here. But vital parts of their minds seem unused, hidden from themselves. They leave without knowing that they have been observed this whole time, disappointed by the lack of life on the beautiful grey organism that they see as a rock.

We wish we could help them, but we have tried everything. So, we continue zipping about our moon, enjoying the lightness that returns with the departure of the vacuum-spaceship. The next visitors will be able to communicate with us. No other species has ever had this problem. We keep track of the humans though, to see if we can determine where their flaw lies. Perhaps someday, we can find a way to overcome it.

In the swamp, I live serenely. My fang-like teeth have speckles of dark mud. The bugs crawl on my stubby toes and my hair flows freely down my back. I press my feet hard against the grass and I charge through the reeds. The air smells like my wet bathing suit when I forget to hang it up to dry. A sweet peace fills my entire body. There is no gap between what I think and feel and where my limbs take me. Everything is aligned.

I hear a sharp whistle.

I know that it is time for dinner. It is my father's signal for me to make my way back. I crawl through the reeds, hop some stones, and quickly make my way onto the porch.

"Swamp-thing!"

That is what my brothers call me. My hair is in my face and there's dirt just about everywhere. My feet thud against the hard wood floor.

I love my brother, Dan. My other siblings tease me and make fun of me, but my brother Dan—he loves me. He's nice to me. He'll let me hang out with his cool high school friends. I get to have special handshakes with each of them. I want to marry his friend Christopher. He is a valid victorian and super nice.

Ah! Now there's one smell I will never mix up. My mom probably didn't feel like cooking tonight, so my dad picked up pizza on his way home from work.

"Now who would like to pray?"

Silence.

"Holly?"

"Thank you Jesus for this food and for this food."

We all grab a piece for our plate. I am very tired from all the work I did out in the swamp. I had to run around and catch all sorts of bugs and then put them in the house I made for them. And I didn't even get a simple "Thanks." My mouth is dry.
"I'm thirsty, but mom, I'm thirsty, but..."

Holly laughs, "Hey, thirsty-butt!"

My eyes swell up into tears. My mother reprimands my sister. Joe is playing with his food, mixing it together and refusing to eat. Our glasses of milk clink against each other. The room is full of laughter, shouting and crying. My parents continue to eat and talk with each other. It's not that they don't care, I know that they love me and my siblings—this is just a time where they let things be. We are the untamable family and it is like this every night. But tonight, there's going to be a storm. Dan grabs a piece of pizza and starts chewing. Dan is usually the nice one.

"Hey Erin, wanna know what you look like?"

He chews his pizza quickly and sticks out his tongue. I am extremely upset, I don't know how else to make him feel bad for doing that.

"Well, you look like THIS!"

I throw the pizza at his face. Dan ducks and the pizza hits the armoire and slides down the glass. There is no way around this, I am in trouble.

However, my dad, knowing the context of my reaction, looks at my brother and sends him straight to his room. I get off clean. It's the kind of miracle I expect kids to learn in Sunday school someday.

Later in the night, a loud boom of thunder shakes our house. I scurry into my parents room and lay in their bed. I love the security and peace I feel under their covers. I think about the pizza I had thrown against the dresser and the way it slid so slowly and how great it is that my brother was grounded.

A Discourse on Folly

Benjamin Fitzgerald

Enter Affectus

Aff. Marry, but I am ruined! How shall it appear to she—she, whom my very being doth but praise—praise? nay, exalt her virtues! She cannot be but the very image of Boticelli's Venus, the perfection of beauty, the pinnacle of becoming, the prime of bloom. But hearken! she is belonging to another man, a true Adonis, for a nobler man 'tis never lived but inside that very bosom. That I could tie his mortal coil into a knot, or better, to hang him with that serpentine thread! A bitterer knave did never live than I, to destroy such truth that virtue should belong to me. But who comes! soft you now, and steel thyself for a leper's discourse.

Enter Ratio

Rat. How now, Affectus? What is the nature, And wherefore the cause, that thou seem'st to me In a fit of agitation to be?

Aff. Fie upon thee, Ratio. Wherefore comest thou before me speaking in iambic tongue? To showcase thy chiseled mind, and to make me sport of thy roguery?

Rat. 'Twere no such thoughts upon my mind, good sir, But that in earnest I beseech of thee The cause by which thy breast beteems to stir— I pray you not bemoan my inquiry.

Aff. Upon my word, an honest knave! Fear thee not but that I shall answer, though I am loathe to do so; yet upon my word I cannot think of reason why I should. Such a tyranny of language, but how my words perambulate and become me not! Therefore sir, and no more digression, but I will avail thy curiosity.

Rat. Worry not sir, but be thou contented, I only want my wisdom augmented.

Aff. Thy wisdom! Fie upon thy wisdom! I have given my word—but wherefore shouldst I keep it? It should not harm
thee should I not; nay, 'twould be my betterment. Unkind
reason, how thou doth evade me! ah, but that I could content
these ramblings! No matter; I am calm.

**Rat.** Art thou sure? for I could but take my leave,
And thy confusion with me to bereave.

**Aff.** Noble squire! Thou art the very voice of reason. Be
appeased; I am resolved. Mark thou ever fair
Sanctimonia? Did
a more lovely creature upon this earth reside? Does not Eve in
all her splendor but pale when compared with one as she? Or
Bathsheba, by whose visage the most righteous heart did melt
— could she hold two pence before our fair lady? Or indeed, fair
Helen, whose face — as Marlowe didst nobly describe — stirred
in motion ten thousand ships to war, she herself would blush
to behold that lovely nymph, and Paris would fain look upon
Helen more. Mark you not her beauty?

**Rat.** No.

**Aff.** No? Then 'tis thy own misery, to never know such
spirits. Attend thine eyes ever upon a sunset? where the clouds
lowly hung in the firmament do alight, and red and gold,
yellow and orange hues, aye, and bronze and copper dazzle
the eyes, stir the bosom, and do homage to the great beauty
Creation?

**Rat.** Thy speech, though prose in form, is worthy craft,
And the allusions Shakespeare could not match.

Of beauty, what can I say? I see it
Though it moves me not, like a dull spirit
Would not move a drunkard to slur his speech,
Nor a slight breeze cause sandstorms on a beach.
For the present sir, speak thy bosom plain
And your struggles then I shall ascertain.

**Aff.** Thou doth rhyme well sir; truly I must tell you, there is
no small stirring of envy on my part, that I may not be granted
such gifts as thou — proof indeed enough of the baseness of
Providence (were such a lie never spake!) that thou shouldst
be granted what I unfairly am denied. But no more of this—I
must have her; though the Euphrates run red with the blood of
Chaldea and Canaan’s streams of honey stop their flow, I shall
have her. Wretched, wretched fate! O, that c’er I was born to
suffer so. I cannot imagine but that the demiurge be our cause;
for certes such beneficence cannot be the spring of such misery
as I have known! O but that I may take up sword, and by work
of havoc cut down that groveling, fawning dog!

**Rat.** Speakest thou of Veritas? So it seems;
Thou shouldst know that I have oft seen the two
Walk together in scenes of gentle bliss,
Whence from the tracks they leave in faded grass
Waters rise, flowers grow, the very air
Of heav’n can be breathed; such a sweet perfume
By angel or man, ne’er smelled fresh as that.
But this is mere talk, pretty poetry
That, though my mind can craft endless volumes,
Yet sing they not to me; my bosom hears
No sound, no art; nay, it beat not at all;
But the hearkening of the deathwatches
In the wall remind me that I still live.
I feel nothing at all; and I’m grateful
That no distraction may befall me thus,
For science is the only art of worth,
And reason the sole source of all merit.
Of thy passions: they are folly, no more.
Sanctimonia, she is fair enough,
But no more than a distraction from vice.
As for Veritas; he shall come to naught,
For without Logos, truth is a blind guide.
And think not, Affectus, that speak I thus
Of the Word which is said to be God’s flesh;
For that is but silly superstition.
Rather, Logos that readies to discern;
Without intellect, nothing is of use.

**Aff.** Thou speakest aright, Ratio, that the scoundrel is Veritas
himself (and a more loathsome creature Satan himself could
not envision), but in speaking so poorly of Sanctimonia, you do
discredit to your sex. I cannot think as you do, but—

**Rat.** Nay, you hath no mind by which to reason!
A simple ass, eating weeds on a knoll
Could not be more dull.

**Aff.** I warrant you are as brazen a knave as ever I didst
behold, and a cuckold too, to be sure; for no other measure
could so disincline you to the luster of Sanctimonia's breasts.

Rat. Behold the man! First he calls me squire,
And speaks to me in matters solemn grave,
Yet when I move my tongue to inquire,
He turns roundabout and doth call me knave!

Aff. A clever fellow, to be sure. Thou art not wanting in brains, good sir, but hath no soul.

Rat. And what is a soul? Something made from God,
Who no more exists than doth a griffon.
So the Scripture reads, man was craft from sod,
And then woman made, smoother than chiffon;
Yet from whence came God? reason cannot say,
Therefore tell me this: wherefore should I pray?
God did not make man, but 'twas the reverse,
Just as I do form simple rhyming verse.

Aff. On this we are agreed, though by cause we differ. For quoth I, "How shalt God be good, if He give not me that which I desire?" Should not He, in His love, bestow upon me all the blessings that I deserve? By my very soul, by the fiber of grains that doth make my parts, I feel that I am more worthy than Veritas. Why should I not taste of her succulent flesh? Why must her linen hair, her silken muff be not mine? So do I know that God is not good, and therefore is not. What thinkst thou sir, that thy countenance do of a sudden change?

Rat. I am Hyperion, thou Hephaestus;
For in all the ways which I am worthy,
You merit not a charitable buss.
So am I convinced, though she move not me,
To woo Sanctimonia out of spite.

Veritas be damned! I'm more man than he.
Thus shall all your days become endless night—
For she must see my greater faculty.
So to prove my point, I shall have her wed,
Though care not I if I don't share her bed.

Aff. Thou abominable dog! I would sooner her blood on my hands, and my soul damned to the infernal fires, than see you possess'd with that which you dare not deserve. O miserable excrement! Pernicious alabaster idol! I am resolved; she shall be dead before another night falls, and all the plans of thy rational mind shall be laid waste from the tempest of my passions.

Enter Veritas and Sanctimonia

Ver. Come, Ratio, Affectus, good gentleman, won't you drink with us? 'Twould give me great pleasure to share with thee my affections.

San. Come, please do! My heart would be warmed with your company.

Rat. Madame, the favor which thou dost bestow
No diamond in the world could bless me so.
For thine heart I would sacrifice my soul;
For thy pleasure, give of thee all my whole.

Ver. Come, thou dissembler, deal not falsely with m'lad.y. I know thy face, I see it in thy eyes; Thy expression betrays thee, thy motives clear as glass. Lady, he wishes to seduce you, to make you his own. And once you are his conquest, to deal with you no more.

San. My love, surely it cannot be. Such a mind as his, such reason—

Ver. Reason, my love, tempered not with humanity, nor with the faith that righteous Moses knew, is no provender.

Rat. Come sir! Call thyself true and pious man,
Who bitter slanders speak'st of me untrue?
Am not I righteous like the house of Dan?
Am I not a Christian and thus a Jew?
Do not I love justice as doth the Lord?
How canst thou call me a false deceiver
When I equip with righteousness the sword?
Thou doth know me not, righteous believer.

Ver. The beauty of your verse hides not the malice of your heart, For artistry that hath no love is worse than poison dart.

San. Away from me, then, Ratio, or pray to God above,
For I cannot live without a heart that knoweth love.

Rat. Somehow I hath lost; I bid thee adieu.
Though I fathom not how I was subdued.

Exit Ratio

Aff. Be not aggrieved, gentle lady, if my poetry seems rough; I am not acquainted with the proper use of tongue. That is to say, when it comes to speaking words,
But on a woman's body it becomes a flock of birds.

San. No more! Be thou away from me this moment! Thinkest thou that passion substitutes a want of wisdom? I could with my chastity not bear to part! Thy presumption becomes thee not; go. Apply to Scripture, that thou mayst become wise.

Aff. I know what the Scriptures read! "Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair." "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet." "Thy breasts—"

Ver. Ah! that is enough; get thee hence at once,
And come thou not again with that foul mouth,
Which hot and cold it spits out all at once
Words too loose to belong to a strumpet
And base blasphemies of the Living Word.

Aff. May maledictions and afflictions, torments, imprecations, tribulations and calamity befall ye! Thou art anathema to me, the both of ye; thy visages are hateful. But as thou didst fail, foul Ratio, so thy life, wanton Sanctimonia, I shall spare.

Exit Affectus.

San. I know not what to think! Such villainy,
Without cause or motive – which was the worse?

Ver. The Lord doth not rank sins by less or more;
All vice is the same. As to knavish ways,
Though in their bosoms each had his own plan,
Yet both of them were equally vile.

San. Come, my love. Let us think of this no more.
My thoughts rest on thee, whom I doth adore.

Ver. My dove, steal away! Let us now be one,
That the Lord may smile, our love sealed and done.

Exit Sanctimonia and Veritas.

My Love is a Shadow

Monica Logan

You grasp me in your hand, and keep me in your pocket
For fear of losing track
Without me, your world would crumble away

I never complain
Nor sigh at your laziness
When you use and abuse me

Even if you do forget my presence
The moment I move
You run to me

The gazes and glares I receive
Only tie you to me
And make you fall

The Helena in a dream
You see me as Demetrius
Your one and only

But, as you truly do not know me
I must remain as close to you as the sun
That lightens the day, but darkens your sight

Do you miss me yet?
Do you miss the moon,
Lighting your path in the dark?

Is it really that hard without me?
Can you see anything outside yourself?
Or do you hear just your hollow, echoed replies?

Oh, I see now, I see who you think I am
Not a lackey or a jockey, just a horse,
Worse than your slave
Which is nothing more than I am
My world depends on you,
My Hermia

How could I have lived this way?
Do you see how much I need you?
Without you, I'm just a piece of plastic without a soul

Like a shadow you can never grasp,
My love will follow you always
Being your beloved and blue cell phone

Parkbench Power Exchange
Jeriann Watkins

The woman on the park bench is exhausted. Her hair is unbrushed and her head hangs, hiding in the hood of the sweatshirt that conceals the rest of her figure. She's been sitting for hours, hardly moving, barely distinguishable from the bench she occupies. Several people walk by and consider sitting down, but move on to other benches. Something about her aura pushes them away. It is obvious that the other half of the bench is being saved for someone. Whether this person is tangible or just the ghost of a memory is unclear.

A man, casually dressed, stands by a nearby tree. He watches the woman for a good ten minutes before approaching. He sits like he belongs there, and suddenly, he does. He is the one she's been waiting for.

"You're early," she says without looking at him.
"You've been here for a while," he counters.

The woman does not reply. She simply sits, expressionless. His presence does not change anything in her demeanor. Indeed, it appears that as far as she is concerned, he has been there the whole time, occupying the other half of the bench. Perhaps his haunting presence in her mind is what preserved his seat all this time.

"Well? How are we going to do this?" The man looks around impatiently, obviously not content to spend all day in the public park.

"Are you still seeing her?"
"Tanya." He sighs, not wanting to put up with her questions.

"No. This is not about me. You had time to talk about me. Now it's about her." She straightens up, demanding a response.

"Yes. We're still together. But you don't know anything about it. You can't understand."

"Well then, there's not much to do. You can get your stuff out of the house or I can give it to Goodwill. You decide."
Let me know when you'll be around. I'll need your keys as well. Please have enough respect not to use them. Just because you can get in, does not mean you belong in my house.”

Tanya stands, resolved, and walks away without looking back. She has not once looked at him, but seems to have his face seared into her mind.

The man remains on the bench, looking confused. He had not expected to lose the upper hand so quickly. As it dawns on him that he had never had it, he starts to slouch into the bench. People walk by, some sitting down on the bench, some standing nearby, no one concerned about the man occupying the seat. It is obvious he is alone, waiting for no one.
Freude Macht Frei

Erika Doremus

Arbeit Macht Frei was brazen in the massive, iron gate that I was about to enter. It is German for work makes you free: just one more thing that the Nazis could do to antagonize the Jews and others deemed subhuman before reaching their imminent fate. Gravel crunched harshly under my feet and I had to think about the 68,000 souls that were held here against their will; 68,000 who were scared and beaten, 68,000 who were victims of their own government. But I was not one of those thousands. I was an American student studying in Germany on an eight week foreign exchange program and that day I was on a field trip with a group of other American high school students. We were visiting Dachau, the first concentration camp built for Hitler’s Reich, located in southern Bavaria.

Dachau was not originally designed for Jewish people. In fact, the Jews were not even the Nazi’s initial enemy. Previously, during the disintegration of the Weimar Republic, the Communists and the National Socialists were engaged in a brutal rivalry. Then, as history would have it, during the elections of July 1932, the Nazi Party effectively took over Parliament forming a fascist regime. Once Hitler had become the Führer he had his party round up every single political enemy in Germany and Dachau is where they went. Communists, homosexuals, Catholic priests, Social Democrats, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the disabled were the first to populate the camp; it was not until after 1938 that Jewish people were actually imprisoned there.

I've got to go in now. The gates open and my group shuffles through. Upon entering, Frau Reichstein, the group leader, announces that we must meet back here by half past two. With an hour and a half to explore on our own I turn to my friend Katie and ask, “Want to go into the museum?”

“Haven't we seen enough museums on this trip? Let's explore the camp,” she answers. She is right; we had visited at least five different museums by our third week. How much more still life history could a person take? So instead of following the rest of our classmates to the flat, beige building we turn south towards the barracks.

The barracks reminded me of long houses, the traditional shelters built by the native Suquamish people back near my home in northwest Washington state. Instead of families though, these buildings housed up to two hundred prisoners. They spanned about three hundred feet, looking hastily thrown together with dull, brown sheets of wood and never any windows. Katie stepped through the barric’s single door first with me following behind. Row after row of bunks, three beds high, lined the walls just as the barracks lined the gates. Everything was meticulously measured with not even a hint of luxury. There were a few other tourists trailing in the far end of the barrack. One woman ran her hand along the plywood of the bottom bunk. Her fingers must have told her how difficult it would be to sleep on such a hard surface, because she pinched her eyebrows down and her mouth tightened as she caught up with her party. That was when I felt a presence. No sudden wind, no fingers tracing my arm; the emotional climate of the room had simply changed. Before the room was stale, just like the wood that made the room itself. In that second though, after the pinch-faced woman left, the air had existence. As if someone had laid their hand on my shoulder to say let me show you this place.

“Do you feel that?” I ask Katie.

“Feel what?” she answers.

“Just something different, almost like we are not alone.”

“I think that this place is just getting to you”

“Yeah, you are probably right,” I lie. I know that someone is here. They might not be with us in an earthly sense, but still I feel it. Feeling queer, I say while heading for the door, “Alright, let's see something else.”

From the barracks we walked along a path that others seemed to be following—more gravel, crunch, crunch, crunch. Everything was still when we paced down the path. I could think deeply, as deep as in yoga mediation. Another fifty or so feet down the path there was a beautiful brick
memorial surrounded by flowers. Levitating among the bricks was a golden Star of David. I paused to appreciate the shrine and realize how warm it was that day. The sun was directly overhead, bearing its worst upon us. Katie started again down the path and I followed a few steps afterward, but not before surveying the feeling of the air to make certain my impalpable companion was still with me.

Showers and ovens are two devices most people in the developed world have in their own homes. They are nothing to be afraid of—that is unless you are in concentration camp. At the end of our route stood the largest building on the compound. It was constructed of cement walls, and two wide double doors outlined in brass stood in the center. It looked industrious with twin smoke stacks attached to the far end. I knew that this was where the mass tragedy took place. I did not want to go. I did not want to voluntarily walk into a place where so many were forced to go. I did not want to feel guilty for being allowed to walk out of a place where so many were denied that option. When I stopped, my presence had stopped with me. It was patient, but urged me forward. You have to go; you have to make it real, it told me. In an internal fight between my gut and my brain I decided that I did not travel 3000 miles just to drink bier and practice my German on the locals, I also had to experience this heinous part of Germany’s past.

The gas chamber itself was cold and cramped, but mostly I noticed everyone else’s silence. A thick door was propped open, allowing visitors into what actually did look like a locker room shower area. Its floors slanted towards a center drain, half a dozen shower heads lined the ceiling, and the walls were tiled in various shades of brown. As I stood there the top of my head brushed against the low ceiling and I fought the urge to run. I knew nothing was going to come out of those shower heads; not water, not Zyklon B, but still my chest felt heavy and goose bumps covered my arms and legs. Fear was not what I felt because I was not spiritually alone. My body just seemed to understand the magnitude of this reality. Today, I am still convinced that in order to learn about the Holocaust one can watch films such as “Schindler’s List” or read memoirs of survivors, but none of those mediums can compare with how I felt walking the same steps that the victims did nearly 70 years ago.

At 2:30, Katie and I met back up with the group near the entrance and we prepared for departure. The staff would not let us leave through the iron gates, because before liberation no prisoner ever got to go back through those doors. As I pushed the revolving door, about twenty feet down from the original entrance, I looked back at those iron gates. In fact, it made us all pause. We are leaving; we are living; we are experiencing freedom when so many, 68,000 to be exact, were denied that right. As soon as I crossed the barbed wire, the air changed again. Its steady stillness was gone and a bustling city, complete with tour bus traffic and travel schedules met me on the other side. My presence had not followed me, but stayed within the walls of the camp. I looked back to whisper aufwiedersehen under my breath.

The train lurched to a stop once we had reached Odeonplatz, the main train depot in Munich’s city center. There had not been much conversation along the ride. Everyone’s face seemed to be wearing a grim expression, so thankfully our teachers were allowing us to relax in the Englischer Garten for the rest of the day. The Englischer Garten is an enormous park in downtown Munich. It is similar to New York City’s Central Park. From the depot we followed our teachers two-by-two, resembling ducklings more than students. Our procession was coming up to a bridge which spanned across the swift, cool Ismar River. Its water looked even more inviting following our afternoon in the 100°F heat. Maybe it was the heat or the fact that we had visited a concentration camp just hours earlier, but an idea occurred to me. I turned to Dennis, one of the German students in the group, to ask how deep the water was. Dennis chuckled and replied, “Deep enough; go swimming.”

That was all the reassurance that I needed. Instantly, I was kicking my sandals off and unbuttoning my jean shorts. “What are you doing?” Katie shrieked. However, Blake, my daredevilish friend had already caught on to my idea and was losing his shirt as well. We both climbed up to stand on the railing. I was down to my pink striped bikini bottoms and tank
The medieval age stone felt warm beneath my feet, but the bridge looked as if it had grown taller in the last thirty seconds. By now, Frau Reichstein had made it back to the crowd that formed around our ankles.

"Are you going to jump, or just stand there?" she chided. Everyone was shocked that she did not try to talk us down. With that I looked at Blake. One, two, three, we swung our arms back and launched into freefall. The pure exhilaration only lasted a few seconds before I pierced the refreshing water below. When I surfaced I looked up at all of the eyes watching me from above. They must have been waiting to see if I survived, because when I smiled they started clapping and yelling. Then it dawned on me—I just stripped down to my underwear in the middle of a major city and jumped off a bridge.

I let myself float with the cordial current for another minute to reflect. I am the greatest skeptic in the world, but I will never deny what I felt at Dachau. I cannot deny that someone, something is still there. I experienced a place whose purpose was to create terror and commit murder. Yet, I did not come away from it depressed and angry like I thought I would. Arbeit Macht Frei: work does not make you free. The German word for joy is freude; joy is what makes you free. Dachau taught me the greatest lesson a seventeen-year-old could learn—live life to the fullest and have an appreciation for your own freedom and ability to choose. I chose to jump off that bridge simply because I could. But I think I also did it for them, the ones that never walked out of Dachau: for Jakob Alber, for Wilhelm Bach, and Eugene Dangel. I jumped for number 131099—Emil Fischer, and for Franz Detmar, who arrived at the camp with just his wedding ring. May I never forget that joy makes you free—freude macht frei.

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Purity

Benjamin Fitzgerald

there is a sort of peace not to be found but in the company of puppies kittens and small children

a gentleness of love a sweetness of sincerity a purity too often lacking in the minds of students scholars and knaves

i am a knave but when i am found in the company of puppies kittens and small children Death doesn’t feel quite so cold (if for but a moment)

and i i remember myself and for a moment am pure once more

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http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol19/iss1/1
Luxury
Chris Marin

be there soon, on the el.
and everybody is
Pottering about beside
DOORS CLOSING,
prattling, or
still RedEyed
& the
Greek goddess of conquest,
aviatic patriotic fanny packs
and Che Guevera
all compete for our attention,
if not our hearts.
but look there!
a Tweety Bird
has alighted on one fleshy & stippled shoulder
everybody's a praxeologist
it's a rotating position
I rub a finger against my eye and
drop Zooey in my lap to speedily impart
yeah i'll stop @ liquor store.
& remove my backpack so one expressionless
child with pale stretch marks on her tummy &
a gold bracelet on her wrist
can sit next to me and
I smile at her.

A Monday in January 2010
Benjamin Fitzgerald

I wake up and look at the clock. 9:29. Crap! I'm going
to be late to Knutsen's class again! I hurriedly toss off my
blankets and rush to get my socks and shoes on. My mouth is
filled with the vulgar taste of food particles starting to decay
between my canines, but I haven't the time to brush. I'm more
concerned with making it to class early enough to at least
answer a few questions of the quiz. Grabbing my keys, phone,
wallet, I stop to turn off the damned alarm before I snatch my
vanilla yogurt from the fridge and rush from the room, racing
myself to L204. All the while I mutter horrible and possibly
untrue things that my therapist says I shouldn't say: "Damn
it Ben! What the hell is wrong with you? Why can't you do
anything right?"

Slinking into class with a prayer that I don't disrupt
my classmates, I take a seat next to the stickbug John
Greenwood. "Hey man, can I get a piece of paper please?"
Checking my pockets, I add, "Do you have a pen I can borrow?"
I'm sure John is not surprised by this, and bless his soul he
gives me one. Knutsen asks us to write the answer to some old
quiz question, don't ask me what, something about some book
I probably didn't finish because I work myself to death twenty­
five hours a week in the cafeteria. Fortunately, when the quiz is
over, she gives us a free-write; I love those things, so my mood
picks up.

Class over, I go to chapel and sit next to Sir Geoff, who
is both regally dignified and an assured nerd, and the bitingly
sarcastic Angry Tim. We talk about my visit with our jovial
Mexican buddy Jeremiah Drelleshak and his internship over at
the ELCA Queen Anne Lutheran up in Seattle.

"What's up with their theology? Are they just lazy or
something?" Tim asks, referring to the Evangelical Lutheran
Church of America. (Tim and Geoff are LCMS – Lutheran
Church, Missouri Synod.)

"I think they're just concerned with looking good,"
Geoff says.

“Well, the people were really nice,” I say.

“Yeah, people are always nice at church,” Tim rebuts.

I disagree. “I’ve been to churches where people don’t even talk to you. They’re no good.”

Next class is Renaissance and Reformation. I sit in the back, next to Edward O’Brien (whose hair mops down upon his face) and behind John. I should probably take notes, but I never do. I learn more just listening; besides, all I need is an hour of study before my midterm to get a good grade. Professor Brandt talks about the line of really bad Renaissance popes, and the furry teddy bear Philip Selway makes his customarily smartass wise-cracks throughout, adding a deliciously hilarious commentary to Brandt’s lecture. O’Brien and I banter back and forth a bit here and there, he’s also quite funny. My humor ain’t always as sharp as I wish.

The cafeteria special is some kind of undelicious-looking stir fry (stupid Mondays), so I go back to my dorm and heat up leftover pepperoni pizza from Friday. I put on some Beatles music and jibber around on Facebook.

“You really ought to be doing homework instead of playing Mobsters 2,” I note to myself, but I never take my own advice.

Bored of doing nothing and uninterested in reading Say it Like Obama and Win for Doc Wright’s speech class, I turn on my Xbox and play some Beatles Rock Band. It’s seriously the best game ever. I can’t help but smile as I play “And Your Bird Can Sing,” “Girl,” “Michelle,” and “Ticket to Ride.” By the time I get to that last song, I’m singing as loud as I can. Music don’t get better than this. I mean it.

I go to Wright’s class, but since it’s speech, I really don’t care about it. After class, I walk down the stairs to Café 1905 and get a large peach yogurt smoothie with whipped cream and no banana. I make small talk with the friendly barista Emily and then debate with myself whether I should do homework or play Xbox. By the time I reach the room, I’ve made up my mind. I diddle on Caroline (my electric guitar, named after the Neil Diamond song) for a while, practice the guitar solo for “She’s a Woman” and screw off some bluesy licks. A little “Come Together” sounds like a good idea, and then my friend Chris from Sacramento invites me to an Xbox live party. Since I can’t talk well while playing Rock Band, I switch over to Uno, and win a game. “YES! An achievement!” I tell Chris I have to go. It’s five o’clock, so I walk over to the cafeteria. My dinner consists of pepperoni and vegetarian pizza. My good friend Jared Barton walks in and I invite him over to my table to eat. He has class at six, so he can’t stay for long, but it’s not a big deal because I’m going to visit him tonight anyway. It’s a nightly ritual.

“See Jared, I’m eating healthy. I have a vegetable pizza.”

“Very good. But what are you drinking? Let me guess...diet coke.” I laugh. “What do you think?” Jared rolls his eyes and slams his hands on the table. “Ben! You’re going to kill yourself!” “If I die at forty, it’s God’s will.” Jared shakes his head. We’ve been through this a million times before. But it’s time for him to go to class, so I go back to my room and goof around on Facebook until I get bored. By six-thirty I’m in the library, reading Shot in the Heart (a cheery, life-embracing work about a family haunted by its demons) for the Knutsen class I was late to that morning.

When seven rolls around, I move over to the Writing Center table at Café 1905, where my coworker Thomas York, famed for his giant afro, is already sitting. Nobody comes by except for some psychology person looking for help with APA citations, the one format most English majors know absolutely nothing about. Tom and I do the best we can.

Around 8:30, Linda Wade walks over to the café, her brown tangles bouncing after her. Dressed in a knee-high black dress and those nylon leg-stocking thing-whatevers that girls always seem to be wearing these days, this girl is seriously adorable. And I am seriously attracted to her.

“Hey Ben!” Her smile is chipper, her voice peppy and alive, brightened by the freckles highlighting her face.

“Hi Linda!”

“How’s your day?”

“It’s good. How are you?”
I'm good. Kind of tired." It's a typical conversation. I smile and turn back around, glancing at her wistfully every once in a while. Gosh she's pretty.

"Bye Ben!"

"Have a good night Linda!" There's a sadness in my smile as I watch her walk away, but I tuck it in. I used to live by my hormones, and I've learned that's foolishness. But now I'm the guy who suppresses his heart whenever it tries to beat. I feel like I'm alone on a boat on a storm-tossed sea, and everywhere I turn are the fins of great whites.

After work, I grab another smoothie and head back to my room. I'm in a Taylor Swift mood, so I play "You Belong with Me," and "White Horse." But the ending of the latter reminds me of Jennifer. Taylor sings, "I'm not your princess, this ain't a fairytale," and now I'm depressed. Jennifer is amazing, and I was crazy about her. But she left Concordia at the end of freshman year and I knew there was no point in telling her how I felt, so I didn't. Instead, I made up fairytales in my head where I, the dashing romantic hero, ran to the airport in a frantic search for her. When I found her, I would kiss her and tell her I loved her, and she would stay in Portland and we'd live happily ever after. But I'm not a dashing hero; I'm a mangy mongrel. I'm not Ross and she ain't Rachel. But I don't really care for being depressed, so I play "You Belong with Me" again, and I get to feeling better, especially because I'm singing along. I like to put myself in Taylor's point of view and pretend the girl I'm in love with is bisexual.

After throwing away too much time doing nothing (once again), I get frustrated with my lack of self-discipline and head over to Jared's room next door, Elizabeth 12, to do my homework there. As usual, he is playing Eve Online. When my brother Sam met Jared, he described him as the archetypal nerd—corduroy pants and a receding hairline. I disagree; Jared isn't any nerdier than I am. I would be just as successful on The Beauty and the Geek as he, thank you very much!

We spend half the time talking, but it's better then jacking off on Facebook. I'm trying to read over a short story from the Writing 352 class, but I keep interrupting my reading to complain to Jared about poor grammar in the story.

"What?" he asks again. "You can't do that! That makes no sense!"

"I know! That's what I'm saying! You need a freaking comma there!"

Somehow, the conversation turns over to Jared's tutoring, which he does on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.

"The teachers are incompetent!" he wails dramatically, wildly flinging his arms about him. All of his movements are exaggerated; it is his most signifying characteristic. "The one teacher who knows how to manage the class gave all her authority over to the teacher who can't manage the class! One of the teachers was yelling at the other teacher the other day, and almost made her cry!"

I laugh. "Wow, that's bad."

"Yes. There are fifty kids in the class, which is waaay too many, and the teachers can't handle it. They're constantly giving the kids rewards of some kind, trying to bribe them into behaving. But it doesn't work anymore! They just ignore it. Now in a Montessori school, this would never happen."

"Here we go again," I laugh. Jared is an avid supporter of the Montessori educational philosophy. Once, I joked that when I go to Concordia for my MAT, the only thing I'll know about education is what I've heard about "some dude called Montessori that my roommate always talked about." Jared had scoffed then and said, "Montessori wasn't a dude. She was a woman!"

"I don't give a damn if she was a woman!"

In the present, I let Jared talk about Montessori. She's really quite interesting, to tell the truth, but I like to jive people, and it's very easy to push Jared's buttons, so of course I make crack comments about Montessorianism that I don't mean. It's all in good fun.

I return to my room around midnight. I should get to bed, I know, but instead I turn on my Xbox. "Just one song," I tell myself. The song I choose is "If I Needed Someone," but as George starts singing, I realize this was a mistake, because the lyrics ("If I needed someone to love, you're the one that I'd be thinking of") remind me of Linda. To return myself to happier thoughts, I dish out another round of "Ticket to Ride" and,
On Losing a Friend

Christopher Marin

What are we?
A pair of pelvises, an electric charge under a blanket;
burned-down candles, sputtering black
a lake Panting like foxes in August.

Do you remember which night we made your bed our home?
And
supply exchanged jawbones for hearts; I took your
foot in my stomach and you my kneecap in your mouth until
we were metamorphosed. And now
your left breast depends from my finger like a kid with a yo-yo,
I hold your spleen in the shallow of my collarbone.

When I was young I found among the thousands
a rare stone, floorboard flat and smooth,
to add to my collection.
It perspired as I fingered it in my pocket
imagining it, long cool, in a purple velvet
box or on the shelf above my bed,
how it would enjoy the light.

& then mossy wavelets were lapping at my feet;
looking, I tucked my toes in the sand and
saw the faraway water; iridescent; a million
pieces of a smashed gold necklace. Chest tight,
shoulders in I peered over the water
and
expertly skipped my stone away.

... plunk plunk
I walked home, my fingers touching lint.

We talked under sodium lights with only
cats to hear us
Now
we breathe each other’s very air,
you dream a world I dream who falls.
"I'm sorry I'm late, class," my professor says, catching his breath. The vigorous computerized clicking draws my attention away from my phone. A PowerPoint flashes onto the screen with the words "The Short Story." "Today, we are going to discuss the short story," he begins, starting down the random and unorganized bunny-trail of knowledge.

As I use all my energy to commence my notes, my notebook's space fills up with planets, moons, and stars. The mechanical pencil shifts through the empty lanes, forming trees and leaves and rivers. The girl who's there, the fairy that lives in this magical place, dances around each stream and rock she has named, joyous to be coming alive. Her sparkling wings have often carried her to this peaceful place from her corner of dark stillness and forgotten thoughts.

She twirls and skips to the tune playing in my head while I am stuck in this lecture. My body feels warm and heavy as my mind struggles to focus. The fairy is now flying through the air, and the world below her sings with absolute ecstasy for life. The soft grass is a pastel green, just like the rest of the earth. Rivers are everywhere, dazzling emerald with lines of deep sapphire. My fairy lands right on the bank of the largest river in all the land. She dips her foot into the icy water, jumping back. With a deep breath, she dives in, making a soft splash.

My pen writes words down. No meaning in them, just letters, one after the other. The extraordinary creature sees these words rush past her. She tries to read them, but can't. They are flying by too fast. My mind must concentrate. My mind must focus. My mind can't focus. It desperately desires to slip away into the place I've created time and time again, the place that's always there in the back of my mind. But I have to listen and pay attention to the presentation.

The fairy is flying through the air again, she wants to travel far and away, but she loves it here too much. The music
of nature is everywhere, in every river, waterfall and rustling of the tall evergreen trees. This place is majestic and beautiful. I’ve given up on staying in reality. My mind flies with the fairy, looking over this lush, green land. The ground is so far away, but I’m not scared. I’m so completely happy. I’m so completely free.

My shoulder shakes as someone tries to wake me from my wonderful dream. “Hey, are you okay?” My eyes had closed during my escape, and the class had ended quietly. I look down at my notebook and smile. So many worlds to create; it’s too bad I can’t live in all of them all the time.

Portland

Christopher Marin

Our love ran like rabbits chewing the night.
Possibilities flew for not being pinned down in words, like butterflies.

Chewing the night, keeping your hurt by me, closer for not being pinned down in words, like butterflies The sky orange, close.

Keeping your hurt, by me, closer.
Possibilities flew.
The sky is orange, close.
Our love ran, like rabbits.
Writing, Rewound

Rebecca Carlson

The editor gives the book to the writer, a crisp stack of white pages held together with a large, black binder clip and years of hard work.

"Great job!" he says.

The writer takes the book and holds it close. She strokes the cover page absently every few minutes on the subway ride home.

When she gets home she puts the book on her desk, admires it for a moment, then pulls off the binder clip and throws it in a drawer. She ruffles the pages until the stack is slipping across her desk. Then, she places the whole rough pile in the printer out-tray.

The writer watches closely as page after page is sucked into the printer and is wiped blank again.

For a while she ignores her desk. Then, one Saturday she takes a letter out of its treasured place in the top drawer, folds it gently, seals it in an envelope addressed to her, and puts it on top of a stack of mail. It sits there for a while, then the whole stack dwindles and disappears.

She makes phone calls, paces in and out of the room. Writes letters more and more cheerfully.

The calendar above her desk changes pictures, but all her days look the same.

The writer is absorbed by her computer, fingers attached to the keys as she scrolls through her entire manuscript, end to beginning. She erases as she reads, watching words vanish beneath her fingers. Sometimes her hands fly across the keyboard and whole sentences, paragraphs even, disappear at once. Other days she has to drag the stubborn words off the page; hours go by as she frowns, pauses, tries to forget what she was trying to say.

One counterclockwise year later, she reaches the beginning. All that is left is the pristine first page. The cursor flashes in the code of unsaid words.

"Here goes nothing," she says, hands hovering just above the keys.

The house is quiet; the first rays of light illuminate the dust motes dancing across the room. The writer closes Document 1, then sits at her bare, grey-filmed desk for a moment, thinking.

For a moment she almost hears her characters, frantically whispering their stories as the writer leaves the room. She slips into bed, stretching out beneath the mounds of blankets. Her eyes close and she begins to dream, one filled with words that fade into images.

The book disappears into her imagination.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Rebecca Carlson graduated from Concordia University in 2010 with a B.A. in English. She is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Library and Information Science at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and plans to be a full time librarian, part time writer. She wrote “Writing, Rewound” as a commentary on the creative process.

Cole Dahle is a sophomore at Concordia University. He is majoring in Business in Sports Management and is on the Soccer and Track and Field Varsity teams at Concordia.

Erika Doremus is a senior here at Concordia University-Portland where she is working towards a Bachelors of Arts in humanities with concentrations in European history and psychology. In addition to her coursework in Portland she had the opportunity to study abroad at the Universität Salzburg. Erika also competes in collegiate volleyball, writes for the Concordia Chronicles and is a part of the Associated Students of Concordia University.

Benjamin Fitzgerald is a failed English major and former student of Concordia University. He hopes to transfer to Portland State for the fall semester, and is currently planning to study Russian. His favorite novel is The Brothers Karamazov. He enjoys George Jones and Waylon Jennings, loves playing Lord of the Rings RISK while drinking Diet Dr. Pepper, and (rightly) believes that La Sirena has the best Mexican food in Portland.

MaLeah Huggins is from Gooding, Idaho. This year MaLeah was the Co-Chair of Elections and served on the Judicial Committee. She volunteers at Legacy Emanuel Hospital. She is majoring in Chemistry and looks forward to taking a year off after graduation.
Matthew Lai, a freshman from Mililani, Hawaii didn’t discover his passion for photography until the age of 15. Since then, Matthew has been exploring new techniques and styles by simply playing with the camera. Along the way he has also developed his own skills and techniques. On April 17, 2008, Matthew and his younger sister, Emily, created Hope Photography. Hope Photography is the signature he and his sister use as a brand of identification. Matthew plans to continue photography in hopes of starting his own private business.

Ciara Laing is currently a sophomore at Concordia University studying English and Psychology. She is very excited as this is the first time her work has been published. She is part of The Promethean staff this year and has enjoyed the experience tremendously. Her goals are to graduate from Concordia and purse a doctoral degree in English with a focus on writing.

Monica Logan is a sophomore this year, majoring in English. She was born in San Jose, CA. Her future plans include going to the Concordia Law School in Boise, ID. While this is the second time Monica’s work has been accepted, she is still honored to be in The Promethean this year.

Christopher Marin is a member of Concordia Portland’s 2011 class and a History major. His poems and essays have appeared in The Chicago Reader, The Skeleton News and Chicago Architect Weekly. He will be going to law school in the fall.

Ben Miller is a Senior in the English Program at Concordia University. He has also minored in musical performance and has plans to tutor language abroad. In his spare time, he loves to follow people and take pictures of them, SO WATCH OUT!

Amanda Elizabeth Overcash is a writer, artist, and photographer. She resides in Portland and is an alum of Concordia.

Megan V. Smith is a Senior at Concordia University majoring in English. She works as a writing center tutor, Public Relations Executive of A.S.C.U, conversation partner, and assistant editor for the school newspaper the Chronicles. In her non-existent free time, she gives art, friends, and video games first priority. She is a believer in the oxford comma, and her love of English and grammar has blossomed immensely during her time at Concordia.

Jeriann Watkins is a Junior English Major who doesn’t know when to stop signing up for stuff. In addition to being the editor of The Promethean, she is very involved as a member of the ASCU Executive Board, a writing center tutor, co-president of the theatre club, and a member of the Concordia Choir. After college, she plans on going into editing, but has a refrigerator box ready as a back-up plan if there are no jobs available.

Vanessa Wendland is a senior English major with minors in history, psychology, and communications. She has spent her time at Concordia as a member of The Promethean staff, a Writing Center tutor, Editor-in-Chief of the Concordia Chronicles, secretary of ASCU, vice president of World Club, and president of Sigma Tau Delta—Concordia’s English Honor Society. After graduation, Vanessa plans to continue her education in literature until students are obligated to call her “Dr. Wendland.”
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Manuscript submissions and correspondence can be sent electronically to promethean@cu-portland.edu or by mail to The Promethean, Department of Humanities, College of Theology, Arts, and Sciences, Concordia University-Portland, 2811 NE Holman Street, Portland, Oregon 97211. Manuscripts sent by post should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Since The Promethean uses a blind review process, contributors’ names should not appear on their manuscripts; instead, they should be included in an accompanying email or cover letter.

The Promethean is printed by Natural Press on recycled paper with soy inks.

This year, The Promethean Staff wanted to encourage a large variety of entries. We wanted to get all sorts of submissions from all sorts of people. We didn’t want to limit anyone. We also could not decide on a theme. So, we, the group of indecisive English majors, did what no literary journal staff has ever done before. That statement may or may not be true, but we did something pretty rare. We chose two themes. We decided we would have a double book, with two covers. One theme would be Wonderlings, the other Forbidden. The book would be able to be read from either direction. Of course it wouldn’t be too hard to do, no problem. Ha.

Despite some of the unforeseen difficulties of doing a “double book,” our original goal was achieved. We received many wonderful pieces from a variety of people. Here, in this collection, are the ones that made the cut. These are the poems that made us laugh, the photos that left us in awe, and the stories that caused us to regain hope in the future of writing.

We spent the year arguing about form, nitpicking comma placement, and hunting down people for copyedits and biographies. But we made it, and we are here, still standing strong, ready to present to you this year’s edition of The Promethean.

This journal is a group effort. This could not have been done without all of our student editors, faculty and staff supporters, and of course, all of our wonderful contributors. Thank you everyone, for helping us make a journal full of exceptional work that we all can enjoy.

-Jeriann Watkins, Managing Editor