FROM THE PROMETHEAN

Lynnell Edwards - Faculty Advisor

How do we decide what kind of material to print in the Promethean? It seems like that ought to be a simple question to answer, even one with an obvious answer: the best writing from the students, staff, and faculty of Concordia University. But, in fact, it's a question and a conflict that while it has frustrated some students and Promethean staffers, has ultimately vitalized our sense of purpose and energized the conversation about the role and shape of the literary arts at a Christian university. And so, since last spring, we have been wrestling with questions of what kind of art not only best represents the Christian ethos of our community, but also challenges and even complicates our understanding of the human experience, in all its dimensions.

To that end, we have proposed a vision statement that attempts to speak to potential writers and readers about what they can expect to find within these pages:

The Promethean is the journal of literary arts of Concordia University. We welcome contributions of poetry, short fiction, essays, and black and white art of the highest quality that affirm the diversity of our community, embrace our spiritual legacies, and challenge the creative spirits of our readers.

Does this mean we intend to print only writing that somehow speaks directly, in a specifically affirming way, to and about the Christian experience? No. A literary magazine is neither a daily devotional nor a forum exclusively for witness and proselytizing. We imagine that some of the writing within will speak from writers’ faith walks and some of it will not. Does it mean that we will print writing that, in its language, subject matter, or detail, will sometimes challenge readers? Yes. Affirming the human experience, in all its diverse forms, and acknowledging the struggle and conflict individuals face in their lives requires truthfulness and courage in its representation—and sometimes that truthfulness manifests itself in a bluntness of language and grittiness of detail that will challenge some readers.

Does it mean there is some writing, though of a certain quality, that will not find a home in the Promethean? Probably so. Crass nihilism, sensationalized sexuality, or writing that is antithetical to the affirmation of faith, is by definition, often flawed literarily, and so, though perhaps appealing to some, ultimately does not merit inclusion.

Those of us who have been involved in this conversation hold the literary tradition in the highest esteem and to the highest standard. Like Prometheus, we too want to bring light and truth to our community. There is no greater gift to that cause than your participation, as readers and writers.
BROWN SKIN BEAUTIFUL

Theresa Todd

The old soul dwells in this old heart of mine
I am too colored for those who don’t know.
This old Negro rhythm dances from depths unheard.
I am just too different, unfamiliar and unknown.

I am too colored for those who don’t know
The brown skin beautiful that is me.
I am just too different, unfamiliar and unknown.
Not the fair skin beautiful you yearn to see.

The brown skin beautiful that is me
Unrecognized by you, and I remain unseen.
Not the fair skin beautiful you yearn to see.
Your reality undesirable to you, not me.

Unrecognized by you and I remain unseen.
My brown skin beauty is your mystery.
Your reality undesirable to you, not me.
It’s your brown skin beauty you hide from me.

My brown skin beauty is your mystery.
You struggle with the rhythms dancing in your soul
It’s your brown skin beauty you hide from. Me,
I am brown skin beautiful, seen or unseen.

ME, THE OCEAN

Lacey Fowler

Moved by the ocean,
My soul’s waves crashing into the
Mass of rock that is the shore.
Moving, changing, deep and shallow.
Monstrous swallows of anger suppressed with
Minute expressions of contentment.
Mountains and volcanoes ready to explode;
Masked under the splendor of the sea.
Moved by the ocean,

Me.
REST

Angela N. Rasmussen

Darkness is all around me, it whispers my name
I am drawn by what it says
Promises of satisfaction and power
As I draw nearer, I let myself get taken
Suddenly great talons sink into my flesh,
Pain surges through my entire being
I am overcome by the realization of the false hopes and empty promises
I try to run away, but the talons are too deep
Every attempt of escape sinks them in deeper, and I cry out in pain;
Wishing that someone could hear me
Suddenly I'm surrounded by light,
The talons leave my body as the darkness flees
I fall limp to the ground
Exhausted, I just lay there,
Wondering if this is a dream
I am picked up and cradled like a child in two great arms
My wounds are healed by the simple touch of His hand,
My fears are calmed by His gentle smile
Finally I am at rest, finally I am at peace
Finally I am asleep in my Father's arms

ONE WISH

John Carpenter

If by happenstance I was granted
One wish to be fulfilled
I would like you to know
It is yours

Some favor gold and emerald crowns
Others feast on savory smiles
Or for death to come galloping with razor fangs
Yes, I remember such frivolous things

The lust of a thousand demons
The hunger of a thousand swords
The tears of a thousand princes
The pain of a thousand words

But now my wish
As I would state it to the Djinn
Would be to give you wings to fly
Where an angel deserves to be
Lucius Annaeus Seneca was born in Spain in the year 4 B.C.E. At this time, Spain was a province of the Roman Empire. This fact coupled with his father’s wealth and reputation as a powerful rhetorician, provided Seneca the necessary educational training which permitted him to excel in philosophy, rhetoric, and politics. Due to his own skill and reputation, Seneca was selected to be the private tutor and confidant of the young Nero, who would later become the infamous emperor of the Roman Empire. Seneca, in part because of his intimate involvement in the royal court, became a noted politician and rose to prominence as one of the greatest writers of the 1st century. Upon retiring from public office in 62 C.E., Seneca devoted himself wholly to his writings. During this time, he produced his Epistulae Morales (Moral Letters) from which the following two texts is extracted and translated. Although being a highly regarded and powerful figure, Seneca was accused of conspiring to overthrow the Emperor. In 65 C.E. Seneca was asked to commit suicide, the proper death for a Roman gentleman.

Seneca was known first and foremost as the greatest proponent of Stoicism during his day. Stoic philosophy posited that one supreme and all-encompassing God resided in the entire cosmos and in each individual soul. Stoicism further taught that this God who existed everywhere was known by differing names such as Virtue, Nature, Fate, Reason, and Word (Logos). In this way, Stoicism was more similar to the modern understanding of religion than philosophy. Seneca believed that the Stoic God created and resided within his soul and that by cultivating the proper way of life and death—following virtues, avoiding sin, treating others well, living each day as if it were one’s last—he would live—and curiously die—the authentic human life. The similarities manifested by Stoicism vis-à-vis Christianity were not lost on ancient writers, pagans and Christians alike. In fact, due to the similarities of Stoic teachings with Christian doctrine, a story began to circulate that Seneca had met Paul the Apostle. The 4th-century text entitled Correspondence between Seneca and Paul preserves a tradition that Seneca met Paul of Tarsus when Paul was under house arrest in Rome. Although apocryphal, these stories grew out of the philosophical and religion similarities between the ideas present by Seneca and those of Paul. The early Christian Church found much worth within the Moral Letters of Seneca. Thus, it is in this spirit that the following translations of Letter 41 and 61 are offered.

Letter 41: God within You

Lucius Annaeus Seneca; trans. Ben Nickodemus

You do the best and most beneficial thing for yourself if, when you write, you persevere with effort to a good understanding, which is foolish to desire when you are able to obtain it from yourself. We do not need to lift our hands to the heavens nor to beg the keeper of the temple so he will let us in to the ear of the statue as if we are able to be heard more plainly there: god is near to you, he is with you, he is within you. If I may put it this way, Lucilius: the holy spirit resides within us, he is the watcher of our bad and good things and our guardian; just as he (holy spirit) has been treated by us, so we are treated by him. Truly no man is good without god: For, is anyone able to rise up above luck except by his help? It gives noble and upright counsel. “God dwells in each good man (which god is uncertain)”.

When you come upon a grove full of old trees which are beyond the usual height, and shut out the view of the sky by their dense branches, then the height of the forest, the solitude of the spot, and the admiration of the shade in the middle of the open spaces will prove to you the continuing presence of the deity. If a deep cave that is eaten out (eroded) of its rocks supports a mountain, not by the hand of man, but hollowed out in such roominess by natural causes in such spaciousness, it strikes your soul with a certain conception of religion. We revere the head of the great river; we have altars where a huge river suddenly breaks out of hiding [from the ground]. We worship fountains of hot water, and we consecrate a certain pool because of its darkness or immense depth. If you would have seen a man not terrified of danger, untouched with desires, happy within hostility, calm in the middle of the tempest, who looks down on men from a superior place, who looks at god from an equal place, do you not venerate him? Will you not say, “This one is too great and too high to be believed like to that of a tiny body in which it resides?” The divine strength comes down upon that man; the soul rises above other souls when it is controlled, when it passes through all things as if they are small things, when it laughs at whatever we fear and pray, this is led by heavenly power. A thing that is so great is not able to stand without the support of the divine will. Therefore, the greater part of it is from that place where it came down. Just as rays of the sun touch the earth still they abide there from where they were sent. So also a great and sacred soul is sent in order that we may know certain divine things more closely; indeed they live with us but cling to their original source; to there they hang, to there they hope and strive, as they are concerned with us, but they are better than us.

1 Aeneid 8:352
Therefore, what is this spirit? It is the one who shines by no good [outside of himself] but only by the good of himself. Who truly is so foolish to praise in man a thing other than what is in him? What is more insane are those who marvel at things that are able to be transferred to another at any given moment. They do not make a horse better by means of a golden bridle. A lion with a gilded mane, is forced to wear and to endure the decoration while he is trained, is sent out [into the arena] differently than the otherwise wild lion. The spirit of the latter is whole; the latter is impressive indeed with a violent impulse, as his nature wishes. The impressive rough nature of him is his glory, to be seen not without fear. This is preferred to that weak and gilded one.

No one ought to glory except with what is his own. We praise a vine if shoots of fruit load it, if the supports of the vine themselves hang down by the weight of those things which it has born; now would anyone prefer to that vine from which a golden cluster of grapes and a golden leaf hang on? In a vine, special virtue is the fruitfulness of itself. In man also we ought to praise that which is his own. If he has a beautiful family and a beautiful house, he sows much, he lends much money on interest; nothing is in the man himself but these things are around him. Praise the thing in him which is not able to be neither snatched away nor stolen. This is the special virtue of man. Do you seek what this would be? It is the soul, and reason perfected in the soul. For man is a rational animal; thus a good thing of him is completed, if he fills that role for which he was born. Moreover, what is the thing which reason demands from him? It is the easiest thing: to live following his own nature. But this is made difficult by the general insanity of men: we push one another into vice. In what way therefore is man able to be restored to health (both spiritual and physical) when no one restrains him and when the people propel him into vice?

I give many thanks to Prof. Michael Thomas for his guidance throughout this project and to Dr. Richard M. Gummere whose translation I viewed as a valued reference.

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LETTER 61: LIVE EACH DAY AS YOUR LAST

Lucius Annaeus Seneca; trans. Michael Thomas

Let us stop wanting that which we have always wanted. Certainly, I am doing this now. As an old man I do not desire the same things that I wanted as a child. Both days and nights pass for a single purpose—this is my task and I think constantly of this—to impose an end upon my old life. I do this so that every day may be to me like an entire life. I do not grasp each day as if it is the end, but I look at it as if it possibly could be the last day of my life. It is in this spirit that I write this letter to you, as if just now while writing, death were about to call for me. I am prepared to exit this life; therefore, I will enjoy life because I am not overly anxious to know how long this life will last. Before I reached old age, I paid attention to living well. In old age, however, I shall pay attention to dying well. To die well means to die willingly. See to it that you never do anything unwillingly. Whatever you oppose will become for you a necessity, but if you desire something, it will not be a necessity. By this saying, I mean, that he who receives orders willingly, escapes the harshest part of slavery: to do what he does not wish to do. It is not someone who does something that has been commanded who is miserable, but the one who does it against his will. Therefore, let us arrange our inward spirits so that we might desire anything that is demanded of us. Above all, let us contemplate our end without sorrow. We must prepare ourselves for death before we prepare ourselves for life. Life is sufficiently supplied; however, we are too greedy in regard to its provisions. It seems to us that something is lacking, and undoubtedly it will always seem this way. To believe that we have lived long enough depends neither on the number of years nor on the number of days, but upon our mindset. I have lived, my dear friend Lucilius, long enough. In light of the fullness of life, I look forward to death. Farewell.
HURT

Simisola Komolafe

tears cried
dried in her eyes

believing the lies
empty and dry.

where was the hope
amidst the stain;

in his tears
more lies remained;

residing pain
she was to claim:

rejected and still persisting.
LONGING

Chelsea Drucker

The minutes are peeled away,
Like the slow, determined husk of an orange.

How I long to caress your skin,
Stroking you,
Sensually,
Tumbling into the depths of you,
As our moans deafen our will,
Our bodies conforming to
one another in their pleasure.

Reality strikes me
I deny my tears
As my body chills at the suggestion of our separation,
The constant reminder of the roads that rip apart our bodies,
Designed as one.

My blood finally warms at the terse memories of
Your voice,
Locked,
Buried,
In the Hallowed catacombs of my mind.

REBELLION

Holly Goodrich

I stage my insurgency and wage my war;
I put up my barbed wire and raise my walls;
I draw my line; put up my defenses and defiantly yell
"Come no closer; do not cross my line."
Yet You invade, advance, and break
through my defenses. In reckless retreat I fly,
I stumble in the battle, curl up into a ball, and scream
"Come no closer I am unclean,
I'm filthy; I'm dirty, don't touch me.
It isn't right.
I'm not worth the battle You've fought for me;
Not worth the price of Your victory."
A conscientious rebel am I
Making war against a love I do not deserve.
And yet this question haunts me,
Am I fighting for Your dignity or mine?
THE BUS STOP

Ryan Sharp

The cold shaves closely against my cheek and digs deep into my exposed skin as if it is desperately trying to find cover from the wind as a gust pulls its wagon full of dead leaves and litter past the bus stop. I step out into the middle of the street and peer through the top of my lenses longingly toward Dekum. I stare as if it makes a difference. As if, by some sheer will of my own, some sort of telepathy or ESP or Super-Human ability, I alone could summon the #9 if I could just focus hard enough. I squint my eyes, clinch my fist and I try to center my chi or gather my mana and what not. White knuckles blaze from my jacket sleeves and a vein pops out on my forehead, but I start to get a headache and there is still no sign of the bus.

Maybe the mutagen doesn’t work in the cold?

I start to make my way back to the bus stop and out of the corner of my eye I notice the wino by the bus sign mumbling gibberish to his partner next to him that he himself only can see. His skin is leather and his shoes are worn bare so that his toes touch the ground. He pushes his life in a stolen Safeway shopping cart. From ten yards away I can tell he smells like dirty, stale alcohol and ammonia. He catches me sneaking a peek at him so he covers his mouth with his gloved hand so that I cannot decipher what he is rambling to his imaginary friend. He giggles and rolls his eyes as if there is something that I don’t know, then turns to continue his top-secret conversation.

Maybe there is some hidden button or switch that I could press back in the bus stop shelter that would alert the bus, like the Bat Signal?

I feel around for any mysteriousness in the cove, for any crazy insignias or symbols, or protruding things that could be pushed in but I am quickly chased out of the inlet by a chain-smoking monster that inhabits the bench. Under her plaid flannel shirt and blue-green sweat pants resides a dirty chimney with no chimney sweep, no Mr. Dawes. She is the Anti-Mary Poppins with no umbrella or spoons full of sugar, just five packs of Pall Malls and wrinkles that lie about her age.

What if I was Michael Knight and I needed it the most the bus would come screeching around the corner, like Knight Rider, to save me? I would slide across the hood and dive into the driver’s seat in one smooth motion, and we would go screaming off. Later I would go on to star in a half-hour Victoria’s Secret commercial disguised as a show about life guards.

I fumble around in my backpack for my Corticosteroid Inhaler to recover from the brief exposure to the Bench Beast’s nicotine cloud, and the wino’s conversation suddenly begins to escalate and he starts to shout obscenities at his invisible friend now turned foe. I decide to give up on the #9 and figure that the #10 should be coming soon and it’s only up Ainsworth a little. I finally unsheathe my inhaler from my back pack and wield it around like a sword and, by the Powers of Grey Skull, I try to transform the VW Bug that’s parked down the street into my faithful Tri-Met, like He-Man did Cringer. But it’s all in vain. It is all in vain. I saunter across 27th and make my way down Ainsworth toward the #10 and take a hit from the inhaler and let it rest in my mouth like the cigarette in the Bench Beast’s mouth. I make it about two blocks when I hear the screech of brakes behind me. I whip around. The #9! I break into a dead sprint, my left arm pumping as hard as it can while the other arm tries to hail the bus while my lips desperately try to grip my inhaler while still managing the gusts of oxygen I try to suck down as I instantaneously begin to hyperventilate.

I wish I was The Flash.

As I round the corner up 27th my right shoe flies off. The wino looks up from his self-imposed headlock to snicker at me, and I realize...there is really no way to look cool while running after the bus.
**SCION WOOD**

*Thomas Arnold*

Driving nails into
Dogwood trees in spring
Brings blood.
Inept tools, inept hands.

Watching me mangle another
Piece of wood,
My son smiling,
Looks up at me and
Asks why I make funny faces
And words he cannot understand.
I am not a carpenter.

Another misshapen piece
Of wood
For the pile of
Miscut, misfit pieces.
We are poor carpenters in this world.

And watch as Blood flows
Upon the Banks of the River.
How much more, O Lord,
Until it is the depths of horses’ bridles?

**ROOTS OR FREEDOM**

*Heidi Sauerwein*

He could not see the future
He wanted not the past
The bonds that hold him to the earth
Eternally will last

The roots of life run deep
Sustaining what he knows
Supporting him in times of need
And watching as he grows

He cannot live without them
And with them he will die
They hold him firmly to the earth
When he was born to fly

The one advantage given
Was broken at his birth
The wings that should be flying
Can have no earthly worth

Wind calls his heart to soar
To climb above the clouds
Roots and earth bind him to the ground
Alone among the crowds

Ever slowly healing wings
Grow stronger every day
His struggle taking shape within
It will not go away

Envy glows upon his face—
And daily it has grown—
Of steam that rises freely up
The sky its only home

A day will come when fighting,
Internal, raw, and sore,
Will no longer wage within him
He will be no more
He could not see the future
He wanted not the past
The bonds that held him to the earth
Have claimed his life at last.

Reborn again from ashes
Everything brand new
But battle scars remaining
He feels them through and through

Error, learning, test, and growth
His life will unfold
Till raging flames surround him
To temper him of old

Flames grow ever mightier
Swallowing his pride
His hopes and dreams forever
Are cracked and scarred inside

The fire is slowly dying
And turning into ash
Destroying and renewing
So gently but still rash

Reborn again from ashes
Old and scarred and gray
The fire is rebuilding
To show him endless day

GIVE IT ALL TO ME
Rachel Melzer

Slowly,
Give me your life.
Burn your throat
Rip out your voicebox
Put it in my hand
So that I may never hear
Your harsh, slandering words again.

Your ears,
Give them to me.
So you can’t hear my inevitable mistakes
That seem to bother you so.

Now,
Your eyes.
Gouge them out with your fingernails
So you cannot see the wonders of the world
That you never appreciated to begin with.

Next,
Your fingers.
Cut them off
Put them in jars
So you can never slap me again.

The rest of your hand.
Yes,
That too
So that you can never punch me.

Cut off your feet
So that you can never kick me.

Your brain
Your heart
Whatever you have left
Your breath
Give it all to me
Your life
So that I may gain back mine.
The Blood of Babylon

Dan Hues

The ground colored red like scarlet,
Babylon’s army commanded by a harlot,
Allies fall beneath her feet,
She drinks their blood and it tastes sweet,
Ashes lay where corpses are strewn,
All of the allies shall perish soon,
All of the wise shall be rendered no more,
For all have tasted the fruit of Babylon’s whore.
I am the last that stands, I have scoured all the lands,
Babylonians die at my hands,
I fight with blood seeping from my glands.
They will send the whore to tempt me,
But lust is an emotion that is empty,
I cannot succumb to my people’s sins,
Lest the Babylonian succubus eventually wins,
I sheathe my sword, pray to my Lord,
My brothers lay dead and gored,
This is a sin that I cannot afford.
I can smell it in the air, blood shall be shed,
I shall not meet the harlot in the sheets of my bed,
I draw my sword and stare into her eyes,
I now see why my brothers met their demise,
Her beauty was unparalleled, she took away my breath,
A moment with her would almost be worth certain death,
But I must not partake in this lust,
Yet my eyes remain stagnate,
Man’s attraction to her is like that of a magnet,
Her splendor consumed my thoughts with her compelling shapes,
Thought like fire is the contemplation that rapes.
I close my eyes yet her beauty lingers,
So I clench my fist and tighten my fingers,
I draw my sword and run her through,
The Word of the Lord sheltered me from you,
Desire awakened when I saw her enchanting form,
With grace I resisted, spilled her blood and it felt warm,
I fall to my knees, the vipress was sent to hell,
The Lord heard my pleas and mighty Babylon fell.

Popular Decision

Christopher Thomas

It was 3 A.M on a Monday and Jane was not asleep. It’s going to be a very bad day. Jane thought as she stared at her feet. They had grown again; they were always growing; if this kept up soon no one would be able to sell her a pair of shoes with GAP Fashion decals on them. She would have to shop in the women’s section and get big, boring running shoes like her mom always wore. It would be just one more thing to separate her from all of the popular girls at school with little feet.

“I just want to be normal,” she whispered to herself. “I just want to be like everybody else.”

Jane looked at her hands. Normality wasn’t very likely. Where her feet were huge, her hands were tiny. They had almost no palm to them and protruding out from them like sticks on a snowman were five unnaturally long fingers. Her legs were long, gangly things with big knobby knees yet her torso was as short and stubby like a flamingo. She thought she looked like someone walking around on stilts. And if her lower body seemed oddly arranged it was nothing compared to her head. Her nose popped out from her forehead like the beak of a hawk, her mouth came up higher on the left than the right when she smiled, and it sat above a chin that was much too pointy, by even a stork’s standards. Her hair was a like a wild jungle that seemed devoted to giving her that freshly electrocuted look. And her eyes, the horrible thing that people always noticed first... one was green and one was blue. Why couldn’t they just have been one or the other? Jane often thought that she looked like two people who had been crammed into one body.

The worst of it though was her name. How could anyone be normal with a name like Jannabellia Articia Atticia? It had helped when she had moved schools and told everyone to call her Jane, but there was always that awful moment when there was some substitute teacher reading role. “Let’s see if I can get this one right,” they would say with a smirk. “Jannabellia Articia Atticia?” And usually commented with something like “My what a name,” or, “That sure is a mouthful.” Jane always would turn red to the chorus of classmates’ snickers and whispers. “It’s Jane,” she would mumble as she raised her hand. “Just Jane.”

She didn’t know what her mother was thinking when she named her. When she was seven and had come home from a particularly rough harassing by her peers, she had decided it was high time to bring up the subject at dinner. Dinner was the only time Jane ever had to really speak to her mother; for all her mother’s eccentricities, she firmly believed in dinner conversation. But that day had been a particularly annoying one for her mother as well and upon receiving of the question,

“Mom, why did you name me such an awful name? Were you trying to give me a hard life from the start?”
Her mother had rolled her eyes up to look at the ceiling, expanded her arms, and said theatrically, “Jannabellia Articia Attica, what a beautiful name. It makes you sound like a Roman Emperor.”

Jane hadn’t been moved by her mother’s theatrics. Whereas most people would have dropped the subject on such an act, Jane witnessed such melodramatic acting on a near daily basis. This is why she replied, “Mom, I don’t want to be a Roman Emperor. Why... why couldn’t my name have been normal?”

Her mother had recognized the small defeat and so she had deflated and peered at her with a serious sarcastic glare, “More normal? Who wants to be more normal?”

Jane had just looked at her plate. “Oh, come on girl. I could have actually stuck with your good for nothing father, Freddie Kellick and gone with the name he had wanted to give you, Frederica Udaya-Catherine Kellick and then just think what your initials would have been. Now, come on, eat your peas Jannabellia and smile; it could be worse.”

Jane always got quiet when the subject of her father was brought up. She had heard varying stories as to why her mother and he no longer were together but due to their inconsistency Jane had just blamed it on her mother’s crazy tendencies.

Jane’s mother was an eccentric, the kind that most people associated with the word peculiar. She was born into a strict Catholic household, the kind they show in the movies, and was brought up to be a nun. As Jane’s grandmother tells it, typically after a few brandies, Jane’s mom turned thirteen; discovered puberty and built a small settlement there, which eventually thrived into a grand city. Grandma said that one day Jane’s mom went to school in her robes; it was the day of her first mass communion and she was to take the first steps towards her life as a nun. When it was her turn to receive the holy sacraments, however, Jane’s mother de-robed herself and revealed a body covered in painted words reading, “Queen of adolescence!” In the midst of the shock, Jane’s mother grabbed the chalice of Christ and yelled to her peers, “Because,” her mother would always respond, “School lunch is not nutritionally balanced, and you are not a lemming!”

So Jane just stared at her big feet clad in practical boots and saved up her allowance for school lunches, and cool shoes, and friendship bracelets. And hoped that would be enough to make her fit in, because nothing but a miracle could change her name or make her spiky hair lay flat.

Her mother would give her unusual features a once over and then sigh, “My, my, you do have character my darling.” Jane didn’t care about character. She had once seen a big white barnyard goose tagging along with a flock of sleek Canadian Geese. I’m like that, she thought, not an ugly duckling that will turn into a beautiful swan, just a big fat goose that will always stick out.

Jane was still staring at her feet as 4 A.M. rolled down her Sailor Moon clock radio. She was feeling especially sick today after going to a school dance function the previous night and being laughed right out of the dancehall. Jane’s mom didn’t believe in the decency of boys and so Jane was forced to go it alone last night, leaving her vulnerable to popular girl ridicule. Jane hadn’t stepped one foot through the dancehall doors before Krissy Derkins and her band of pre-Avon goddesses were all over her, demanding her immediate removal from the dance so it wouldn’t be ruined by her presence. Jane left in a fury of anger and sadness. She promptly came home, locked herself in her room and stayed up all night crying.

By morning she was sitting in total gloom, and feeling that there was no end to it decided to pray for a resolution to her sorrows.

“Please God,” she prayed, as she looked at the door to her room dreading the start to another day. “Please, I think you made a mistake somewhere... no one can possibly be meant to be as strange as me. Please, fix me.” Jane sighed, and reached for the door knob. There was never an answer. And today was just... “JANE.” A voice boomed in her head.

“Oh, God,” she swore and back peddled in panic, the last thing she needed was voices.

“YES JANE, IT IS GOD. YOU WERE RIGHT. THERE WAS A MISTAKE.”

Jane looked around frantically; she didn’t think she had been abducted by aliens. Her room looked the same, the morning sun still slanting through onto the red carpet. She glanced quickly under her bed, nope; no one with a bull horn was hiding there. Anyways she would swear that the voice echoed only in her head.

“Wha... What do you... Wait a minute, a mistake?” I knew it she thought; I was supposed to be petite and blond like the other girls.

“YES JANE, YOU WERE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE AS YOU ARE. YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE TWINS.”

“I was supposed to be what? Twins? There were supposed to be two of me?”

“YES JANE, TWINS, BUT MY ATTENTION WANDERED FOR A MILLISECOND AND YOU RECEIVED MORE QUIRKS THAN ANYONE PERSON SHOULD HAVE.”

“Don’t I know it,” she complained. “Do you have any idea what it has
been like to live like this? My feet won’t stop growing and my hair is unmanageable!”

There was silence, “God? God, are you there?” Jane paused for a second. Maybe God wasn’t the best person to complain to about unmanageable hair.

“JANE,” the voice felt more distant, like her mother would sound when she had done something particularly childish. “YOU NEED TO MAKE A CHOICE JANE.”


“THE CHOICE OF WHAT TWIN YOU WANT TO BE.”

“How?”

“LOOK AND CHOOSE, JANE.”

In front of the window floating above the carpet two transparent girls appeared. One was tall and athletic playing with a see-through soccer ball; she had green eyes, dark curly hair and a long straight nose.

I like being athletic, thought Jane. I would like to actually be good at sports.

The dark haired girl came more into focus and Jane looked at her face. She’s pretty, Jane thought, but she doesn’t really look like me . . .

Jane glanced over at the other girl. She had blue eyes and golden blond hair, dainty delicate feet clad in pink, and she smiled slightly as she flipped though her dresser, and the rest of it felt like it had been beaten with a hammer from the front of the window floating above the carpet.

I want to be taller than the blond girl but shorter than the other one, and I want small feet, blue eyes and black curly hair.” Jane said.

“THIS ISN’T A REALITY SHOW! YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE JANE, ONE OR THE OTHER.”

“But I want to be good at sports and smart. Can, can I think about it for a while?”

“JANE I DON’T HAVE TIME TO MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND. I NEED YOU TO CHOOSE. NOW!”

The last word came with a low hum, vibrated from one side of her skull to the other.

Choose, choose, choose… Jane looked from one girl to the other.

“Why?” She cried. “Why do I have to choose now?” Asking God why was probably really stupid; he’s never answered anyone before...

“JANE YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE TWINS. YOU DO NOT JUST HAVE TOO MANY QUIRKS; YOU ALSO HAVE TOO MANY SOULS. DO YOU THINK MY SUPPLY IS LIMITLESS? I NEED ONE BACK.”

“You want my soul?” Jane asked.

“YES, ONE OF THEM.”

Jane looked from one version of herself to the other.

“CHOOSE JANE. TALL, DARK AND ATHLETIC OR SHORT SMART AND BLOND. CHOOSE.”

Jane could feel her heart beating, thump, thump, thump. But I am smart... she thought, and I am not that bad at sports either—true she did have one green eye and one blue but...

“No!” Jane said, “I won’t choose.”

“JANE.” The voice felt impatient, like a foot tapping inside of her skull.

“No, I won’t choose,” she yelled. “I won’t!” I’m like I’m meant to be, she thought, I’m better than either of these girls! I won’t choose I won’t! You can’t have one of my souls! You can’t! She cried inside her head.

JANE…” Jane, Jane… Jannabellia Articia Articia! Wake up this instant!”

Something grabbed her shoulders.

“No!” She yelled. “You can’t have one!” She pushed violently back and SMACK...she fell and hit her head on the dresser. Jane could feel her heart beating, thump , thump , thump. But I am smart...

...she fell and hit her head on the dresser.

“Jane what has gotten into you? You’re late! Hurry up; you probably don’t have time for breakfast. You’re going to miss your bus!”

Jane looked around the room. Her head throbbed where she had hit it on the dresser, and the rest of it felt like it had been beaten with a hammer from the inside. The girl apparitions were gone from the square of dusty red carpet. Jane realized she must have dozed off. One look from her clock told her she had less than ten minutes to get to the bus stop. Oh God, she thought. He took one of them! Jane jumped up and ran to her mirror.

“Jane you don’t have time to primp! You’re late for your bus!” Her mother scolded her.

Jane was checking her face; the hawk nose was still there, and there was one green eye and one blue. Her profile looked the same. She glanced down, yep; she still had huge feet and small hands.

“That’s me,” she said, “He didn’t take one.”

“Jane what are you going on about?”

“God,” said Jane. “He said I was supposed to be twins, he wanted to take one of my souls... but he didn’t... I’m still me.”

Her mother’s face blanked. “Jane, are you feeling perfectly alright? Here, let me check your eyes. You didn’t hit your head too hard when you fell did you?”

Her mother began towards her and then stopped and squinted at her. “If you’re feeding me this God story to get out of school it’s not going to work.”

“No Mom. I just had a talk with God. We reached an understanding, I think. Where’s my book bag? I’ve got to run to catch the bus.”

“But Jane!” Her mother yelled as she bolted for the stairs. “Jane, you haven’t had breakfast!”

“Mom, call me Jannabelle! Jane’s just too plain a name for a person who’s got two souls!”

“Jane, wait!” Her mother’s voice followed her out the front door.

Great, Jane thought. She’ll probably call the school and have the shrink work. “Great, Jane thought. She’ll probably call the school and have the shrink wait for me when I get there. She imagined the looks all of her classmates would wear as she was drug off in a straight jacket. It would be... classic.

She grinned at the thought and felt an answering whisper of humor grin within her head and then vanish. It was going to be a very good day.
MT. ST. HELENS HAiku CONTEST: JUDGE’S COMMENTS

Orlie Trier

I appreciated the opportunity to read these and attempt to pick one out as a winner. I read them for their creativity and for the images that they presented. And for me the winning entry gave an image, and since I like deserts, that won out. But all need to be congratulated for their creativity and use of words. I am always impressed when somebody can do writing like this. They all brought a smile to my lips and a bit of joy to my heart. Reading this kind of creativity can only make life a bit more enjoyable.

Blessings to all.

Pastor Orlie

First Place
Ann Widmer

Snow falls on mountain
lava, baked and barren cracked.
Frost the fallen cake.

Second place
Simisola Komolafe

Black! Red! Brown! Yellow!
Dynamite explosion?
Actually: smoke

Staff note: We received over 30 haiku in this year’s contest from students, staff and faculty! From those, the Promethean staff selected the top ten they believed the strongest, and then forwarded those to Pastor Orlie who read them anonymously and picked a first and second place. On the following pages, we re-print those top entries (in no specific order). Thanks to all who entered!
HONORABLE MENTION

Been quiet too long
Mount Saint Helens is stirring
Now go kick some ash

Emily Wilbur

She breathes ash downwind
Trembling, she howls in old tongues
Breathes new lava fire

Alissa Harris

The mountain rumbles
Impatient though the watcher
The earth’s clock is slow

Diana Mitchell

The cratered mountain
Disaster for us it seems
Geologist’s dream

Jennifer Stanford

Rain death on Iraq
But not, dear mountain, on us...
They’re just heathen, right?

Dan Wright

Rip Rupture Rumble
Blithe Brash Bombastic Billow
Sing, Shamed Saint, Sing

Greg Close

water rock ash wind
Harry Truman lives again
virgin sacrifice

Steven Frasier

News: move, danger spot
Mt Volcano that was not
Hot? not even close.

Simisola Komolafe
ONE DAY IN OCTOBER

Paul Rondema

The platform on which they ride is made of wood. Bales of hay form four rows on which countless seats had been taken. Through puddles and mud, the ruts they follow take them slowly back to their waiting car. It is October and it is cold, yet they are aware only subconsciously of the briskness in the air, of the chill that fills their lungs. Their visit has not resulted in a pumpkin but that was never their intention. They came with nothing, and with nothing in their hands they have planned to return.

The drive to Sauvie's Island had been pleasant. St. John's bridge is always a beautiful sight, and the myriad colors clinging as long as possible to almost bare branches lent color to a gray-filled sky. Calm were the clouds though a steady wind blew their way. They parked, got out and wandered their way through cars and puddles and gates. And around children, enthusiastically leading parents, reminiscent of their own youth.

Climbing aboard the trailer and taking their seats, they noticed families on this clear late October day. Two boys leaned precariously close to the back of the trailer, daring each other with their eyes. In their minds, a mother and father still clung to their young daughters as the platform swayed back and forth. And they rode, content to let the path lead them where it will.

With others so close at hand, conversation had been brief. At the far field they moved beyond the crowd and found a place of quiet. They searched for pumpkins that reminded them of professors they once had and friends that they had known. Amid all that was misshapen, they were calm. Within the cold, the mud and the crowd, they let fall their boundaries. And in their quietness, in that not quite perfect field, they found their peace.

And then they returned. While others climbed aboard and sat on bales of hay, they waited. They waited, and then they took their seats. They faced each other on this uncertain path.

And now, as the words and laughter of others fill their ears they allow their silent content to draw them close. The tractor dips within a rut and the trailer loosens their balance. He touches her knee. She holds his hand. They ride in silence as, once again, fate has changed their plans.

THE NAME OF A BIRD

Oliver McCurnin

You were there in the flora,
White-haired and loosening flesh,
Beside Kulike Road
On the other side
Of the barbed-wire fence
Planting heliconias in the remaining clay
Of the remaining day.

I was on Kulike's ruts of packed-gravel
With an infant daughter in a sling,
Having reproduced before I could produce;
Trying hard to become a man
Or at least take it like one.

We both are assuming
There is still a chance –
That it can't continue this way
Or be over this soon –
We're fighting hard.

We were talking.
Then something came out wrong
About the fecundity of guavas
Because I could not recall
The name of a bird,

Wanting only to ask
If we all just went away,
Disappeared,
Would it be only they,
The guavas,
That would reclaim the road.
DEMOCRACY, ETC.

Oliver McCurnin

You will hear it said
That someone lied
Broke forward time
That someone died

You will wonder
At the waste of time
Of countless quarks
And paper trails

Come midnight or so
You will attempt sleep
Thrash without intent
To wake back

In another time
Whose ways
We all
Now ridicule

PIRACY

Anne Woodward

Last night someone pulled the bedcovers up over my head
And sewed them to the mattress.

Meanwhile, I stood watch high in the crow’s nest of my ship,
Machete in mouth,
That in a pinch I could
Sink my knife into the sail
And plunge deckward to join the fight.

I had woven the sail, like the bedcovers,
Out of sun-stained olive-colored cotton curtains
Once hanging in an art classroom on the fifth story of a German high school.
I could hear the traffic ripping through
The fresh spring childhood hours below,
The juice of the hours trailing out of the corners of my mouth, rejoining
at the chin.

As a young pirate I was scolded for holding my machete incorrectly:
Blade dangling through the hole made with my thumb and index finger,
Walking slowly through the classroom.
I can still hear the teacher telling me,
A respectable pirate clenches his knife and his teeth
A respectable pirate always carries his machete with him, even to bed.
LITERARY AND ARTS EVENTS AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

John Van Deusen

January 15th @ 9:30pm
Guitarist and Pianist John Van Deusen will perform original works during a relaxing evening in Concordia's Dining Hall (Hagen Campus Center, NE 27th and Holman). Admission is free.

Sarah Dougher: The Odyssey

January 27th @ 7pm
Sarah Dougher will be presenting "Interpretations of the Odyssey: O Homer, Where Art Thou?" The mythological and literary themes of Homer's Odyssey continue to resonate for modern audiences through profoundly different modern interpretations like the Coen brothers' recent film, O Brother, Where Art Thou? and James Joyce's novel, Ulysses. How can the Odyssey still be important? How does it change through reinterpretation? Admission is free.

Lenten Concert/Service

Sunday, March 13th @ 3:30pm
The Concordia University Choir will perform Mozart's Requiem, accompanied by orchestra. The Concordia University Handbell Ensembles will also perform selected pieces to bring us into the Holy Week. Short meditations and scripture readings are included in this service along with appropriate hymns of the season that are sung by all in attendance. The service will be held at St. Michael's Lutheran Church (NE 29th and Dekum). Admission is free. An offering will be accepted.

Greg Fowler:

March 17th @ 7pm
Greg Fowler will be leading a discussion on "Your Genes/Your Choices: Thinking Ethically in the Age of Biotechnology." With technological advances today, genetic science is able to "map an organism's entire complement of genes, bringing about radical changes in medicine, agriculture, and the study of our evolutionary heritage." Questions will be asked, "Should we fear an understanding of our DNA?" and "Do the benefits of genetic science outweigh the potential for misuse?" Come and join the discussion on March 17 in Luther Hall Room 121 (2811 NE Holman St). Admission is free.

Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference

April 7-10
The Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference is the academic home of annual assemblies that brings together professors, teachers, students, playwrights, actors, directors and lovers of Shakespeare from all over the world to share research about and insights into the Elizabethan world's most acclaimed poet-playwright with the primary goals of establishing who the writer the world knows as Shakespeare was and exploring why he wrote anonymously and probably pseudonymously.

We invite all to attend who are interested in exploring the circumstances that led to the creation and publication of the Shakespeare canon. Registrations can be submitted at any time, but registration for each conference is limited to 200 persons, so register soon for assured seating. Students, staff and faculty at Concordia University may register free of charge by contacting Dr. Wright.

All others, please visit the website: http://www.authorshipstudies.org.

The exclusive right to reproduce the Hilliard portrait of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, is extended to the Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference by the kind permission of His Grace, the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, KT, VRD

Spring Theatrical Production

April 8-10
The Spring Play will be presented April 8 - 10 with performances on Friday and Saturday at 7:30pm and Sunday at 2:00pm. Admission is $7.00 for adults and $5.00 for students/seniors. Call 503-280-8614 for reservations and information.

Spring Concert

April 17 @ 3:30 pm
The Concordia University Choirs and Handbells Ensembles will present music in a variety of styles and from varied time eras at St. Michael's Lutheran Church (NE 29th and Dekum). Admission is free. An offering will be accepted.

All events are subject to change.
Call 503-280-8614 for tickets and information.
CONTRIBUTORS

Thomas Arnold is a junior at Concordia returning to school after a 20-year hiatus (Military service, work, family, life, etc.) in order to enter the Pastoral Studies Program. He is married and has one child. The two hamsters from last year no longer inhabit this earth. They ate each other.

John Carpenter is freshman currently deciding between an English or Psychology major.

Chelsey Drucker is a sophomore studying Theological Studies and History. She wrote “Longing” on the plane ride home to visit her long-distance boyfriend, Nick. The poem was inspired, oddly enough, by watching the mintues tick away on her watch. This is Chelsea’s first time being published, and she looks forward to more opportunities like this in the future.

Jared Durham is a History major at Concordia University.

Lacey Fowler is a sophomore at Concordia majoring in English and Education, with hopes of becoming an English teacher. She also plays basketball for the Concordia Women’s team. She writes, “I wrote this poem while in Oceanside, California. This was actually my first poem written that I actually took seriously. I have never been much of a poet, but seeing the ocean that blue in California really inspired me.”

Holly Goodrich is a sophomore majoring in English. Her poem “Rebellion” is inspired by her battle against God and His love. She writes, “It is a war I always start and He always wins.”

Dan Hues is a junior at Concordia and is majoring in Pastoral Studies. He writes, “I hope you enjoy this poem...it deals with man’s struggle with lust and the difficulty in defeating this ‘empty emotion’. This poem was inspired by Prof. Thomas’ Old Testament class and was actually written during one of the class sessions.”

Simisola Komolafe is a senior at Concordia University majoring in English. She writes, “Writing for me is an outlet, a way to capture the world of emotions that swim inside my head.” Simi also enjoys journaling and listening to worship music.

Oliver McCurnin is an MAT student in Language Arts and Math writes that he “has difficulty deciphering the difference between surfing, poetry, and conversations with his family. Someday he might really write.”

Rachel Melzer is a writer living in Portland, Oregon and is currently exploring all areas of writing. She enjoys writing poetry where inspiration dwells. Lately, she has also delved into short fiction. She is currently a junior at Concordia University majoring in Business Administration and minoring in English. In 2000, one of her poems was published in The Fires of Sunset: The International Library of Poetry.

Julie Nguyen is Biology major at Concordia University.

Benjamin J. Nickodemus is a senior in the Pastoral Studies department with a personal emphasis in Biblical Languages. His accolades include: being the senior theology and language tutor, teaching an independent introductory Hebrew course, and author of the library student handbook. Through a study of Latin under Prof. Michael Thomas, Ben has been introduced to some of the works in Roman Antiquity including the Moral Epistles of Seneca. His personal inspiration has come from the wise instruction from Prof. Hans Spalteholz and Prof. Michael Thomas.

Angela Rasmussen, a sophomore Business major, writes, “When I wrote this, I was coming out of a dark and lonely time in my life. This time found its end when I let myself fall in love with God. He continually fills all the vacancies of my heart.”

Paul Rondema completed his undergraduate degree in 1999 and is currently working on his Masters in Education at Concordia. He teaches at Reynolds Middle School in addition to writing stories, articles and music.

Heidi Sauerwein is a freshman Biology/pre-med major who spent most of her childhood in Oregon. She writes, “While traveling to various parts of the country over the past five years I have seen a lot of different cultures. With influences from many diverse origins, I sought a middle ground. What I discovered was the world of poetry and prose. ‘Roots or Freedom’ is one of the many works I have created, and is probably the most relevant.”

Ryan Sharp is a senior Secondary Education major at Concordia who is looking to teach high school Language Arts. ‘The Bus Stop’ is a flash fiction which was inspired by hundreds of early days and late nights spent waiting for the bus, and his childhood as a comic book geek and pop-culture junkie.

Christopher Thomas was born in Portland and raised in Alaska. He graduated from Juneau Douglas High School in 2000 and holds an Associate of Arts degree from the University of Alaska. He’s currently a senior in the English program at Concordia and plans to pursue a career in journalism after he graduates. This short story is one in a series of stories that are based around conversations with other people. He writes, “Sometimes I meet people who have some of the most amazing points of view or outlooks on the world... ‘Popular Decision’ was based on a conversation I had with a woman who possessed a neurotic fear that her body would become deformed in some way.”
MICHAEL THOMAS is an Assistant Professor in the Humanities Department. He teaches courses on early Christianity for his own pleasure and classical languages to the delight of his students. His motto: Nil sine magno vita labore debit mortalibus! (Translated: Life has given nothing great to mortals without labor!)

THERESA TODD, a senior at Concordia, is a poet and creative writer currently living in Portland, Oregon. She had work published in the Spring/Summer 2003 issue of The Promethean and is working on a senior thesis that will be a collection of poems.

PASTOR ORLIE TIER has served as campus pastor at Concordia and at St. Michael’s for the past seven years. Orlie has written a variety of devotions and articles, serves as a guest instructor, and enjoys being a part of the campus culture.

BRIAN VISSE is an Education major at Concordia University.

ANNE WIDMER is the Dean of the School of Management where she continually calls upon her liberal arts core courses as a resource for her work. She reads and writes poetry in an attempt to guard against becoming one of P.B. Shelley’s “promoters of utility.”

ANNE WOODWARD will have earned her degree to teach elementary school by April, at which time her changing understanding of one’s own youth may be even more prominent a topic in inner dialogue. Nevertheless Anne encourages others to face the future with a sharp object.

http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol13/iss1/1