"Self Portrait" by Anthony Lathan

Concordia University  Spring 2000  Portland, Oregon

http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol8/iss2/1
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Advisor: Karen L. Morris  Graphic Design: Sean O'Skea

Staff: Jillian Olsen, Michael Schultz, Tim Tanner, Karen Thompson

Cover Photo -- "Self Portrait" by Anthony Lathan

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Boogie Eyes

My mother called me an accident. 
Not even her accident, but apparently 
someone else's.

My sister and I were ten 
and a half months apart in age 
and a million miles in demeanor. 
She loved Barbie and tea parties 
and I loved GI Joe and mud holes. 
She wouldn't dream of joining me, 
but I wanted to be like her, like normal. 
Like tomato soup with saltines, 
like Swanson's T.V. dinners 
like kilt skirts with big pins that 
made momma spend time with you 
and share the secrets of pin curls, 
and braid your hair and touch your heart.

She had her friends—Eloise and Brenda 
and Mother had her sorority. 
I had a reluctant inclusion in a late night game 
of Boogie Eyes at the Baker Street house 
that hot summer night when the light breeze 
you prayed for made the sweat feel like heaven 
and we watched the golden glow on the horizon. 
As the cars made it up the hill, the cowardly would shout, 
"Boogie eyes!" too soon and run to safety 
but I would stand there, in the street, with fame glimmering 
and hope not yet abated, waiting until the split second before 
the headlights appeared, and calmly walk to the curb 
among magic and imaginary cheers of celebration 
for my Boogie Eyes victory 
over the cars and the night, the grief and the sorrow.

--Lindsey Grant
Sanctuary In Time

The cotton-candy breakers of the autumn azure sky held back until the afternoon billows danced in. We hastened a retreat home, the neighborhood sanctuary. There we could be protected from the fall chill, and enter the arena where Roy and Dale, Cisco and Pancho, and Corky and White Shadow would vanquish the villainous rogue in black.

I remember it vividly, but more like a dream. The end of this dream, however, came to mean the end of innocence, the end of peace, the beginning of true sorrow, the confounding of my mind which permeated my soul.

I dreamt that I was young when I dreamt of joy and laughter. I dreamt that I was old, when I felt the wisdom of a sage emerge. When I dreamt of the present, my heart was muddled and grieved. It was vexed beyond reason. The walls of my experience encumber me and I find no peace or haven in the present, so ...

I turn to what I know. I turn to the distant past and its asylum of memory, and I do not forget to wipe my feet and close the door behind myself upon entering in.

Invocation for Direction

What is my goal if not to grow? Can I hold back an acorn from growing into a mighty oak, or muster the coinage to do nothing, to simply experience the moment, content that it is what it is, for its time, and I cannot contain it or weary myself grieving in its passing?

My goal is to grow, in the direction that was and is and will be appointed. Each day learning more of who I have become, yearning for a glimpse at who I will be.

Give me strength, Oh, God, to perceive the world as you have given it to me, and not as my own vanity supposes.

-Freda Mae Knott
Off-peak Tube

The pandering politics
“We need your support”
Soft peddled news
Seattle’s Fat Tuesday
Debris, “order” and cuffs
What a way to begin Lent

The station’s self promotion
RV shows, ITT Tech, Western Business
the temptation of exposé shows

Has-been celebrities tout the goods
Graham Kerr (I thought he was dead)
George Foreman, Carol Burnett and Dr. Ruth

Full Size Fashions and Jennie Craig

Carrors, Bobali, and Butter Topped Bread
Sex and Dentine & Sex with Uncle Ben
Diminished Capacity
and the Vanity of Man

--Lindsey Grant
"Myth." Defined in Webster’s dictionary as "an unproved or false collective belief that is used to justify a social institution." Hmm. Recently, a male friend stated in effect, "I hope God doesn’t make me marry an ugly woman; I want a beautiful wife." Notwithstanding the bad theology such a statement implies, I valued his honesty but puzzled over what he meant—beautiful for whom? And what defines “beautiful?” Cute? Altogether lovely? Drop-dead gorgeous? Does he want someone whom he thinks is beautiful, or someone whom everyone else thinks is beautiful? Either way, God and I rolled our eyes.

Of course, people are attracted in differing ways by endless variations of the human shape: facial features, height, weight, skin-eye-hair color, voice. Whatever our tastes, we’re all wired the same way; we are meant to enjoy one another’s physicality. So he wants a beautiful wife? Perfectly understandable—if he means that he wants to feel physically attracted to her. No one expects to be repulsed by their lover. But why would they be? As if someone would say to their intended spouse, "Wow! You’re everything I’ve ever wanted—intelligent, kind, funny, honest, creative...physically you’re a major disappointment, but that doesn’t matter; I think God wants me to marry you." After doing penance for progressing that far in such a schizophrenic relationship, any smart person would turn around and run.

I hope the point is obvious. Real love grows out of an integrated wholeness, consisting of mutual attraction on countless levels. Enjoyment of physical attractiveness is not divorced from this committed love; it is a necessary ingredient, but never can survive as the foundation or defining criterion. Unless it is all you’re looking for, in which case, one’s “house of love” will require perpetual repair...cosmetic surgery to be exact. Consider a rose severed from a flourishing root system, leaves, branches; it can only please temporarily and then it dies. What about the rosebush’s ability to nourish itself through a harsh winter, or to stretch its roots down deep “into good soil,” or to climb in a marvelous tangle of directions? There is more to the bush than its blooms.

And there is more to you and me than our outward blossom, or perceived lack thereof.

Four years ago, I read a delightful fairytale called Love and Be Wise by Ann Carter, a modern retelling of Perrault’s Riquet of the Quiff. This story defies stereotypical solutions—no frogs transform into handsome princes...no down-trodden scullery maids use magic clothing to dazzle rich men. In fact, a rather hideous-looking prince remains so but wins the heart of an exceptionally beautiful woman. His wisdom woos her, and in the end, his love gives her the power to see him as the most attractive man in the world. Bravo! What an unusual example for women and men! My sincere but culture-stained friend would probably look at me cross-eyed if I suggested he allow a woman’s wisdom to woo him.

You’ve heard of “the beauty myth”? That insidious motivator in men and women to conform to Barbie or Ken proportions, weight and plastic expression? Of course you have. You live in the 21st century. Every TV commercial and glossy magazine ad invades our approval-starved psyches with one hammering message: "IMAGE IS EVERYTHING. IF YOU LOOK RIGHT, YOU’LL BE A SUCCESS." And every day we clamor to curl, diet, pluck, dye and squeeze ourselves into the mold. NEWS FLASH: this ideal is a lie; designed to drain our money and uniqueness. Certain segments of our culture present this image of so-called perfection to make a profit and take advantage of your desire for significance. The lie will probably never go away, but at least we can call a spade a spade.

More often than I care to admit, I abandon what I know to be true and buy into the “beauty” myth. Invariably, it begins with the temptation to compare my body with others’. I have been programmed to think of “attractiveness” on a graded scale, which has become the rubric I use to scrutinize my body in relation to its distance from the ever-illusive ideal. I think, “If I only had a flatter stomach, bigger breasts, smaller pores, straighter teeth, higher cheekbones, and a more fashionable wardrobe, I would be more desirable.” I know I am not alone in this obsessive comparing, but because we are all shaped differently, there are as many “if only” lists as there are individuals.
Now don’t get me wrong; there is an undeniable brightening of one’s self-perception when the pursuit of wellness yields improved looks. Even wearing a complimentary style, color or fragrance can help us feel better about ourselves. Pursuing enhanced appearance is a good thing. But to condemn myself as ugly if I don’t measure up to other people’s “beauty” is to live in a downward spiral of discontent.

In his superb Devil on the Cross, Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong’o offers a painfully intimate glimpse into one character who exists in this web of miserable insecurity:

But she could never appreciate the sheer splendor of her body. She yearned to change herself in covetous pursuit of the beauty of other selves. Often she failed to dress in harmony with her body. She rushed to copy the ways in which other women dressed. Fashion, whether or not it flattered the shade of her skin or the shape of her figure, was what governed her choice of clothes. Sometimes Wariinga distorted the way in which she held herself by trying to imitate another girl’s stride. Insistent self-doubt and crushing self-pity formed the burden that Wariinga was carrying... (11-12 Ngugi).

How this attitude resonates in my spirit! It is as though others’ perceived attractiveness cancels out mine. Makes me into a zero.

And in candid moments I would have to admit that the spirit of Snow White’s evil stepmother possesses me as well: “Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?” My need to feel desired decays into an obsession to be the best. Do I really want others to feel inferior to me? Uh...well I must say with a cringe...Yes! Need I remind you or myself to scour the recesses of memory and find an instance when we consciously congratulated ourselves for looking better than someone else? We felt more powerful, in control, more significant in arousing jealousy. SICK!! Hopefully, this selfish attitude stems from healthier recognition—it is impossible for me to be a cookie-cutter model. A model of what? Why aren’t they called unique masterpieces? It is only possible for me to be the best I can be.
A Dream

I feel like there's something in my throat
That blocks me from speaking my mind
I tread the waters of my subconscious
During my waking hours
And dive deeply during dreams
Swimming through desire
My dreams are talking to me
And I'm trying to learn the language
But every once in a while
I feel like everyone is having the same dream
Running through a field full of flowers
Others are running with me
The sun seems to fill the entire sky
This light also throbs through everything living
The essence of everything mixes together
There is happiness here
Ecstasy almost to the point of pain
We are all going somewhere
There is a destination
When we reach it, there is joy
Palpable, flowing joy
Ultimate communion, peace
Then it fades
And memory fades with it
My body is energized, but my spirit is disappointed
Vague memory becomes oblivion
I want to ask others about it, but then
I feel like there's something in my throat
That blocks me from speaking my mind

-Michael Schultz
Silver Sparkles of Light

I wanted to write
to let soft words flow and dance
onto the whiteness of the page
like a thousand ballerinas
in perfect form.

I wanted to color the world
with all the beauty
of a Kansas sky
where silver sparkles
light up the dark background.

I wanted to create a memory
to touch people
like the cool mist of morning dew.

But my pen stayed black
and the words never came.

--Christy Eller

The Ballroom

from the record player
ripples the Blue Danube Waltz
two shadows of the candlelight
approach one another
one curtsies; the other laughs
they mold into one
one who is
deaf to the static
blind to the light
ignorant of the audience

while I stare in amazement
at my parents
dancing in their empty nest

--Pam Van Den Broek
The Planet Earth Journal
by Karen Thompson

My name is Jennica C. Spraeling. I am 25 years old at this time. I have always written things down, especially things that mean a lot to me. I started this journal at my mother’s insistence, to keep everything in one place. It is about the main thing in my life: the earth.

1. The Waiting Time

Ever since I can remember, I have been waiting. Not just your ordinary kind of waiting, like for a doctor’s appointment or for dinner, but Waiting. I have always felt that something will happen that I need to be prepared for. Maybe not soon, but in my lifetime. My parents have also felt that way, and so has my older brother. Way back when my parents were in high school, everyone was thinking that something would happen. No one knew for sure what, or even when, but everyone knew it was going to be something life-changing. They started Waiting then, but times were different then, and it did not run their lives like it runs mine. I have been preparing for Something to happen all my life.

I was born the year before the Waiting started for my family. Not just the feeling, but the real Waiting. That was back at the turn of the Millennium. Some people started Waiting that year, 1999, but these were the ones who got confused about when the Millennium actually started. The computers were not so technologically advanced as now, and many people thought that the systems would crash when the date changed from ‘99 to ‘00. That did not happen, but people stockpiled food and other necessities in case it did. That is when they started letting the Waiting influence their lives.

In 2000, when my family started Waiting, the governments around the world declared an environmental disaster. My mother says they should have declared one much earlier, but they did not want to admit failure. They had tried for so many years to protect the earth so my generation and the generations after mine would not have to put up with the problems they created. They failed because they were trying to protect what was useful then for the society now. We do not use the same things they used back in the 1970s, so even if they had succeeded in preserving those things they would not be of use to us now. They thought our society was going to be more industrially advanced, rather than technologically advanced. They also thought we would value the same things they valued back then.

Conditions were much worse than they are now. Cars ran on gasoline and diesel, which produced too much pollution to be any good, and they were the main transportation even in most big cities where people could easily walk from place to place instead. Not many people rode buses or light rail systems, because of the inconvenience of the schedules and limited access in some areas. People also did not value the bus and light rail systems enough to keep them running at decent times. Some lines stopped at six o’clock in the evening, which meant that people could not go downtown on the bus for the evenings! Almost all the temperate rainforest was gone, and the tropical rainforest was being depleted at the rate of one football field a minute. Wild animals were being killed because they were thought to be threatening domestic animals, and whole species were becoming extinct at a higher rate than ever before or since, except for the dinosaurs. Pollution in all its forms was destroying needed land and causing severe health problems, even in parts of the world far distant from the original problem.

Because of all this, laws were passed in most countries that mandated that people had to move to be in self-sufficient communities and make many lifestyle changes. Everyone was afraid that something drastic would happen to the world soon, and they were doing everything possible to avoid it. This was part of the Waiting, and it is still a major part now. Electric cars were mandated, because they were already on the market. New structures had to be made from sustainable products, recycled materials, or what my generation calls “20th century junk”: plastic pop bottles, tires, aluminum cans, and all the rest of the things people used to throw away.

People also had to change what they threw away. Back then, recycling was a total disaster. Glass had to be sorted by color because people wanted pretty recycled bottles instead of the nondescript ones we have now, and recyclable materials were oftentimes thrown away because they could not be recycled in that particular area. Now, every community recycles over three-quarters of our materials. One thing that made a big difference in this and other areas was the implementation of the no-waste laws. These laws were adopted by the communities of the United States, Britain, and Germany in late 2001, and the rest of the world followed soon after. There is no enforcement of the laws, but there are fines for high materials consumption rates. The laws are as follows:

1. Turn off any electric light you do not absolutely need.
2. All dwellings where solar heating of water is practical must have working solar panels to heat the building and water.
3. Before any sheet of paper is recycled, both sides must be used.
4. Unless you are printing something to be faxed, always print on both sides of the paper.
5. All sinks, including those in dwellings, must have on/off movement sensors.
6. Laundry must not be machine-dried on warm, sunny days unless it will dry too slowly for the amount of material (pillows, heavy blankets, and other stuffed objects).
7. Walk before using cars, and carpool before driving alone.

After a few years, everyone got used to the no-waste laws, and you could tell by your utility bill how well you were keeping them. I remember when I was little, I used to remind my family about them. It was a good way for me to memorize them, but it drove everyone else crazy.

Another thing that changed was the school system. Before the late ’90s, all schools were buildings where students and teachers would go. Along about 1997, a new wave of technology, distance learning, caught on. People could attend schools in chatrooms on the Internet, see their classmates and teacher via digital videocams, and work on collaborative projects that way. This change was very gradual and not mandated in any way but that of a long-lasting fad that turns into routine. My brother went to a building for elementary school, but I did not. We had recess from our classes at e-school, and so we were able to socialize with other kids in our neighborhoods during those times. Both of us did our high school and college coursework via Internet learning rooms.

Slowly but surely, the world was planning for the Waiting time. Nobody wanted to be caught unprepared when the environmental disaster hit, so they tried to plan for everything and avoid it if at all possible.
2. Mending

By the time I was eight or nine, the world’s prognosis was a little better. There were forty “alternative transportation” vehicles to one 20th century vehicle. That term “alternative” always made us kids laugh, because everything labeled that way was our norm! The air quality was, if not better, not any worse. Our central community, Clarkport, had been in place since 2005, and we were getting along pretty well for having been rival communities on different sides of the state line. Needless to say, all political boundaries had changed to accommodate the new communities. There was just no sense ignoring your closest neighbors if you depended on them and they on you.

My older brother was taking classes in the middle school chatrooms, and I was in the elementary ones. These were much like what my mom and dad tell about their school days, except we were not so disruptive. Some ways of goofing off were impossible through the ‘Net. Everyone was going to e-school, except in those families who ignored technology. The mail system also had changed. The no-waste laws had been altered to accommodate the ever-present e-mail system, and all correspondence except package delivery was either in-person or via e-mail. Packages were sent to a central spot in the community, usually the library, and then an e-mail was sent from there to the recipient. Now, of course, we have tracking notification tags that we can use to trace packages electronically, so we know when they have arrived, but those were just starting to be produced back in 2006.

My favorite part of those childhood years was my service hours with the Earth Managers program. This is where I learned about what happened around the time I was born, and where I learned how to properly care for my world and help others care for it also. There were many environmental agencies, as there are today, but they were all separate in everything. When I was seven, I remember hearing the announcement that the biggest environmental merger in the history of the world had just been created! The Environmental Coalition, or EnCo, was formed. It was not a true merger, but a joining of all the environmental organizations to use their various powers and agendas to the good of all the groups. Each organization retained its autonomy, but banded together with the other EnCo affiliates on mutual missions. EnCo started the Earth Managers program. EM is still operating today, but it has a different focus now. Back then, it started because EnCo needed a way to catalogue all the habitats and populations of the world. It was an all-volunteer organization, like it still is. People of all ages volunteered for three months at a time for as many times as they could or wanted to. At first they did not get paid, but once the program really got going, they were paid a little to cover expenses and community outreach.

I was in one of the first groups, back when I was eight years old. I learned all the no-waste laws by heart, took field trips to different communities to see their water and greenspace use, and did many servant projects (as my parents called them). By far, my favorite project was species counting just outside our community. EnCo was very interested in what species had survived the early years of the changeover, so all the EM-ers were sent to do population counts. Some teams counted the diversity of plants and animals within the community, but I was lucky enough to be placed in a team that traveled up and down the Columbia River. I had never known there was so much river! That year I counted trees, insects, many species of fish, birds, and snakes along a 50-mile stretch, including what went through Clarkport. I am still surprised that my mom let me be outside the community for two days every week for that long, but I guess she also enjoyed nature when she was that age and wanted me to experience it. My dad was on my side all the way. Each member of our team wrote weekly re-

ports, published them on Clarkport’s EM website, and answered questions from the whole community. One of my teammates, who discovered a new species of bird, was even chosen as a delegate to the third annual EM convention in Washington, D.C.!

Looking back, it seems those years were the most inventive and productive in this whole Waiting. Our world was on the mend, and we were helping it and mending with it.

3. Rejuvenation

Now it is 2024, and I am 25 years old. Time has gone by so quickly, but writing this I see I was so busy experiencing changes that my world never did slow down! My generation truly is the generation of change. I am now an EM team leader, working with EnCo’s western division. My job description includes everything from leading volunteers to keeping the public informed of how the wild animals in our habitat preserves are faring. My favorite part still is the river population count every spring. When I was voted a team leader, I requested that section.

As part of my own volunteer hours with EnCo, I am correlating our region’s data with that from other regions in the world which have similar habitat preserves. Our learning chatrooms are always open so that people from around the world can ask detailed questions about habitats they have no chance of ever seeing. We get so many wonderful questions, and some that we build team studies around. The teams have expanded so much that they now make their own agendas and carry out their own observations apart from EnCo. EM still reports to EnCo, but our duty is now more to the communities and other EM teams than to any environmental organization. This winter, our team elected to try to put vodcasts in an abandoned beaver’s dam and publish the results on the web. We shall see how that goes!

EM is now the focal point of the community. Most of the learning room teachers are retired EM-ers, and give their students many ideas for projects which also allow real-time social interaction with classmates while helping reach EM goals. Everyone goes to the learning rooms, including adults who want to brush up on some skill or knowledge area.

Pollution levels have been down considerably in these last four years since Clarkport became a fully self-sufficient community. We now walk or bike everywhere, and electric cars are mostly used only for traveling to habitat preserves or other communities.

We are still Waiting, though. Some species that we have been working with in the habitat preserves are making a good start at a comeback, like my friend’s bird species. Others, however, we have lost completely. The world’s last elephant died one year ago today, and the whole human population mourned the loss of one of the gentlest animals known. There just was not enough variation in the gene pool to be able to save them. I do not know if we could have saved them even if they had started habitat preservation back in the 1980s. The gene pool might have still been too small. I wonder how many more species we are going to lose because we did not make the necessary changes sooner. I hate to think what our world today would be like had we not begun Waiting when we did. Disaster is still upon our heels, and signs like the elephant will remind us of that, but we are trying to stay one inch ahead still. I wonder if it will be enough to rejuvenate the earth. We have so many things still to do to secure our children’s children’s children’s future. Maybe by the time they are our age, the Waiting will have ended. That is the world’s hope. Our vision, like back when the Waiting began, is to do everything possible to make that hope a reality.
Electric Christ

Electric Christ rides an elephant
preaching a gospel of greed.
He leads a dark procession:
parading elephants
trunk to tail
blind and following.
There are great numbers of the beasts,
In endless promenade.

"Miracles are too expensive today."
Just not cost effective.
30 pieces of silver serves as poor dividends
for the shareholders of Corporate Christi.
The moneychanger on the 15th floor
of the Solomon Towers Building
faxes demands to the coalition of the Electric Christ.
"Plug him in, and program a new parable!"
User friendly, PC compatible, fully upgradeable, Jesus 98.
Extolling the elephant's sermon
at the altar of the high mass market.

The elephants thunder along
proud of their following.
Gaps widen under their terrible feet.
They don't see what they trample
blinded in the glory of the Electric Christ.
Levites shivering, wet from the river,
are crushed underfoot.
Lazarus begs at the security gate.
"Get a job!" cries the Electric Christ.

"What a wondrous thing is our Electric Christ,"
the delighted elephants chant.
It twists words of compassion into hate.
Quotes Leviticus as the pork roast simmers.
Sits in judgement on the right of the father.
Casts stones.
Starves many times five thousand.

"Let us all march in step
to the rhythm of the words
of our wonderful Electric Christ."
He was very expensive
but well worth the price.
And so the parade thunders on
a million elephants long
trunk to tail
blind and following.
Their deafening footfalls
drown the soft words
of a poor man from Galilee.

--Sean O'Skea
Your Window

The battered steering wheel slithers through
My hands like a submissive petrified snake.
As a child I would pinch and seize the gentle
Snakes with the beautiful yellow stripe dividing them.
How many flawless lines of silent symmetry
Have I created with such careless invading hands?

The idle police car's angry red and blue lights
Intrude your window, the passenger window.
You wince and cower and reluctantly turn
Towards me, I know that blue shouldn't be an
Angry color: red, of course, is an excellent cast for
Animosity but blue is the color of your sleeping eyes.

The window, your window, is now peaceful
And freckled with distorted pearls of lost rain.
I know you have pearls I gave you pearls once
On your birthday, a string of immaculate milky
Beads pretentious in circumference and luster.
But are there any humble freckles on your nose?

The windshield wipers sound a hypnotic cadence
Steady as the rise and fall of a sleeping child's chest.
"Twelve," I say aloud staring at the unswerving yellow line
That divides us, "You have twelve tiny freckles randomly
Scattered across the bridge of your nose, and the one
Closest to your right eye looks like a skinny starfish."

The engine murmurs and vibrates with mechanical pride
As you silently abandon your window and, moving towards
Me, rest your cold cheek against the newfound warmth of
My chest. I gently separate the thumb and forefinger of an
Invisible child and silently watch our dividing yellow line
slither and
fade away.

--Brian Blums
The Jaguar’s Den

At the edge of the mountains I meet a cave
That to me looks like the Devil’s den
Into the entrance of the dark cavern’s face
Past its veil of blackness I proceed and descend
The noise beyond me is that of a furious battle
That rages deep within
There my hounds have found him
The jaguar king that today contends
I strike a fire to a pine stick torch and
Inside the cave I recognize the remains
Of the Mayan people whose civilization
Has long since come to its end

Six hundred feet before me the cave opens
To a sacred room with an altar
Where once people sacrificed even their kin

Before me a jaguar king sits high up in a cathedral corner
Perched the god of ages the Mayas wondered
His imaged carved on the cave walls all around him
Put there by Mayan priests who feared and revered him

Even through the darkness
I can see determination staring at me
Determined to keep his kingly status
As ruler of the earth and Mayan heaven
Now I see him clearly perched
High on a ledge looking down upon me
Looking staring glaring through maddened eyes
He challenges me from where he sits
Enthroned upon his altar

The torchlight illuminates his challenging face
That stares in defiance as his shadow looms upon me
Holding a sacrifice in one hand suspended he shows me
that he holds my blue hound in his grasp
With one thrust he thrusts his claws into Blue’s ribs
And holds him there suspended in the open to show me
That death awaited all the rest that
Dares to challenge the kings
Of the rainforest
With all Blue’s breath he bawls for mercy
But truly there is nothing that I can do for Blue
And the god before me knows it’s true
Now in defiance he flashes his fangs whipping them as a show
And swiftly flays Blue’s neck in an instant
Leaving him limp and lifeless on the altar
Blood draining down the altar to the ground
It cries out to me for vengeance
Quickly he released the limp bloodless body
And glances glares and disappears before us
Gone for the moment deeper within
The bowels of the earth

Just as quick, the rest of my hounds
And dip into the darkness below with cries
shaking the wall of the caverns within
Sounds of a horrible bloodletting battle

Into the bowels of earth’s passages which descend
To Dante’s hell where suffering gods of old are held
Waiting for the end to ascend for another
Possible showing of false glory

Today the challenge is mine in the game of gods and men
To retrieve this jaguar from this pit
To claim his crown to be mine own
To rise from Dante’s hell and wear my crown
Even as Roman conquerors returning home
Were hailed and glorified in their hour
Now is my day and my hour
To rise above this jaguar god
And show my manly valor

Now he stands just before me
Snarling flashing his long white teeth
His voice, rough rasping rolling like thunder
Then I raise my pistol to his head.
With one fiery blast I bring this jaguar god
To his knees and his end

Now silence I feel
For there is nothing left
To confront my challenge
Of being a god upon the land
In this day and hour

—Tim Tanner
Photo by Tim Tanner
Why Did You Write this Letter of Recommendation?

You don't know me outside of the office or class
You could not possibly taste all that I am
You take my mask at face value
Type into your formatted style
And write your letter on sad letterhead
You see the smile
Not the home life
You received my Christmas cards
Not my opinions
You asked me for a list of my qualities
You don't care for my direction
I'll just ask for a correction
You'll just spell my name wrong again
You know my hair color and you've seen my eyes
But not me, not my dreams
The way I dress and my promptness is calculated
This is how your lines are stimulated
Write your perception and lies
Hurry and sign it
Go about your day
Shake my hand and hold your breath for the phone call
When you will say
That I was great
That I was helpful
and quick to learn
Courteous and careful
And if I get the position
I will write you a letter
One of gratitude and
Reciprocal plasticity

—Jillian Olsen
Summer Vacation—Getting There

Curled on the floor board of the '57 Pontiac wagon
it seems an endurance test,
to survive from one bump to another, the gas sta-
tion to the redwoods.
Over hills, my brother and sister's feet in my back
or face, and through a day and a night.
Past a myriad of mysterious emerald placards
Along the grey paths into forever to my
grandmother's and fresh air.
I breathe.

--Ackmed Shadu

Walk-in Closet

I've got some skeletons hiding in my walk-incloset
That I like to revisit every once in a while
They like to keep me well informed
They keep trying to purge my lack of style

There are monsters in my closet
And demons under the bed
Reminding me of the filth in my life
And the garbage in my head

I keep trying to walk away
But they're always catching up
And Jesus, he keeps trying to lift me up
But I'm held down by my feet of clay

My inclinations tend to lean toward my flesh
I've got cords of decay 'round my feet and hands
The road to Hell is paved with the cement of intentions grand
But this path I travel is so dark and narrow

Well, there's a bounty out and a price on my head
But you paid that price and became the bounty

Only for you may my heart bleed
Scatter these skeletons and crush my apathy

--Tim Winterstein
The Eunuch Opportunity

I knew a girl, in the Biblical sense.
The image of youth, so curious and sweet
often with a hunger nearly insatiable that astounded me.

We grew into intimate friends, she and I,
and I think our relationship could have grown closer still,
but for the fact that she married at nineteen.

The first year, as the distance between
grew dark, jealousy raged within me.
He brought her anger and pain
and tears that I had never seen.
My yearning was profound and deep.

I saw her infrequently over the next twenty years
but it's hard to make love when you are
surrounded with baggage.
More and more she would arrive with
grief, fear, guilt and desperation in her grip
all the time it lay on the bed.

From the imposing millstone 'round her neck,
she broke free of the turmoil it brought.
Then she met another man with whom I was acquainted.
He welcomed me into her bed one night
and rekindled a fire within.

He remains her friend, not a overseer like the other
encouraging her to stay in touch with me,
but preferably when he is around.

Socially, with the standards that she keeps,
she chose the high road with the eunuch's mask.
Though, when all is still, and the hunger too great
we meet each other, in that area
between night and day and satin sheets.

--Ackmed Shadu
Wild Orchard

A sultry wind.
A moment more
till October spins the vane round.
The crows dips low
over fallow fields
and the sun too soon will follow.
So little time
as autumn nears
to savor summer’s closing.

And so, my dear
I’ll pull you close
as we lie hidden in the high grass.
We’ll find the lost grove in the wood behind the steeple.
and wander through old apple trees
limbs bent with unclaimed harvest.

We’ll pick the fruit
warmed in the sun
and taste the spice of living.
For all too soon
the fruit will fall
and the vine will wilt and wither.
St. Peter’s book
it has no fields
for status, rank, and balance
but did you love?
and did you learn?
and shun every kind of hatred?

So now my love
before summer’s gone
let’s make the most of living
The ancient, tangled, orchard obscures the canon’s aim
And shields us from its thunder.

So lie with me
where limbs entwine
between the tree’s age-old rows
Its canopy
we will not need
to hide us from the heavens.

The setting sun
still warms us both
though all the world’s in shadow.

-- Sean O’Skea
Eno Eegufer

by Jones One

Great America! "Land of the free. Home of the brave." Home of the level headed—Hulk Hogan, Hugh Hefner, Marilyn Manson, Mike Tyson, Michael Jackson, Jesse Ventura, and Dennis Rodman. Free as the bald eagles, for she's not imprisoned by fear of guerrilla warfare, coup d'etat, revolution, tribal rage or carnage as in Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan or Sierra-Leone. Not submerged beneath a stifling blanket of darkness, for she has sunlight by day and electricity by night. Cozy, for she has comforters, heaters and fireplaces for the cold and huge humming air conditioners for the heat. Like Moses in the wilderness, America gets cold or hot water from indoor waterspouts. At the click of a mouse, America receives information the size of the universe from the heavens and from the earth.

We feast like Arabian royalties. Not on carrots, celery or lettuce head, but on fish head, goat head and cow head. Not on peanuts, prunes or pickles but on ox tail, cow legs, chicken feet and gizzards marinated with jungle herbs, seasoned with exotic flavors and spices. Mmmmm! It makes the nose drip slimy juices like a Kampala winepress. Our soup is not chowder, split pea or lentil but Agbonor, Ewedu and Egusi complete with Anu-Ofia, Okporoko and Dawadaw.

Dessert is not Jell-O, vanilla ice cream or chocolate chip cookie, but Akara, Agidi, Moi-moi and Ube. No unhealthy colored sweetened water refreshments for there is abundance ofogogoro, kai-kai, bi-ukutu and tombo. No cocaine, heroin, dope or LSD for Arogbo, Gworo and Otaba transfer from generation to generation.

Africa! Authenticity personified. No heavy cloud of Calvin Klein, Oscar da la Renta, Tommy Hilfiger or Avon perfumes. No toothbrush, no Aquafresh, no Crest, no Colgate, no Scope, no Listerine. No bath cubes, bath oil, foaming or bubble bath. No Dove, no Irish Spring and no Oil of Olay. Only Atu: great medicine chewing stick of the gods. All relationships, all feelings, all smells, very real, very strong, very natural.


Like little Nwan-Nza I fled to America. I relish her peace, her quiet and her sophistication. I relish her technology: Internet, e-mail, faxes, pagers, phones, videos, computer games and satellite dishes. But not her IRS and INS for both are like severe toothache. I love America deeply but not nearly as much as African Nsala, Ofe-ose or Isi-ewu.

I pant for Africa like the deer pants after the water brooks, but I see no way back, for hell and its demons of war, blood, destruction and desolation have taken the gates of the Land. Like a wild animal caught in a snare I am trapped betwixt Africa and America. Frozen solid like a piece of Kilimanjaro, I have become schizophrenic. In reality, I want America less but in practicality more. In reality I want Africa more but in practicality less.

In sleep and dream I live in Africa.

Inwardly, I am African but outwardly I look American. Despising and rejecting what I do have, I keep reaching for what I can no longer have. Inward turmoil leaves me stranded betwixt Africa and America as in the proverbial "rock and hard place.”
The possessions that accumulate in our lives are as great bodies of water. Their value is equal to the purity of their source. Their wonder is in their ability to reflect our own image of the heavens back to us and, thus our own mortality.

—Freda Mae Knott
Oh Holy One
I ran though the fields
and gathered flowers
of a thousand colors
and now I pour them
at Your feet.
As the wind blows through
these flowers
till they dance
in the ecstasy
of creation
send Your Spirit
to blow through my being
till I too bloom
and dance
with the fulness
of Your life.

Calligraphy-Pam Van Den Broek
Text-Ishpriya RSCJ
Forever

Walk with me,
Down the path forever weaving.
Smiling and running with the stars beneath our feet.

Come share with me
That which invokes rage and jealousy,
Poetry, art, and everything great.
Kiss me once so I may taste eternity
And our souls may be joined
By mingling breath and twisting tongues.

Let me show you my world
A world devoid of ration and logic.
Dance with me and relish the feeling of freeness
Forget everything but the taste of my skin
Salty and moist
Follow and I’ll show you my world.

I’ll make you weep in wonder
Feel like a newborn infant.
Throw away the curses of society
Believe that God is found within such beauty
Find my world and let it become yours.

Move like water
Sensuous grace to my heartbeat
Bend your body
Twist with the ecstasy that fills you
Take my hand and never let go.
Become part of my world.

--Christina Leccesse
The Writer

A writer must first learn to listen to themselves, for they are not only their first reader/Audience, but usually the harshest critic. Everyone has their own unique perspective on life in general, and are the experts on their own life experience. When a writer realizes this truth, it produces a wonderfully authentic and authoritative voice in the words they compose. This "voice" will not always be the same, as the writer draws from experiences throughout their lifetime, from childhood through old age, but it will always carry the authority or ring-of-truth when written from the heart.

A writer must also learn to listen to the world, for not only does it give the writer a greater perspective, but may spark creative ideas, good works of literary art and characterization. The art of being able to step out of oneself to listen and appreciate the words of others' voices or in print is key to growth as a writer.

A writer must learn to share their works in a safe and nurturing environment where they can receive the encouragement to continue expressing themselves. The courage to present one's work to others is the means of providing the unparalleled pleasure of recognition.

A writer is a creative artist whether they are painting a broadsheet for newspaper publication, or their canvas is lyrical, poetic verse to serenade a lover. Ideas, words, thoughts and images blend on the writer's palette with every stroke of the pen or keyboard. Whether simple self-portraiture, complex abstraction, sweet nostalgia or clinical commentary the aesthetic is wonderfully unique and masterfully heart-felt as every word portrays a new, vivid world for the reader/listener from the writer's viewpoint. The soul is the source of artistic wealth and healing, as it is the warehouse of wounds and grief. The writer/artist who is encouraged and therefore empowered can tap into that wealth of healing to release a balm of refreshment and wholeness.

--Lindsey Grant
About the Contributors

Brian Blums—loves talking about himself, but hates writing about himself.

Christy Eller—has a B.A. in English and is working at Concordia until she figures out what she is doing with her life.

Lindsey Grant—is a prolific and successful journalist, screenwriter, poet, student of Concordia University and life, as well as a respecter of her own life’s journey.

Freda Mae Knott—is the pen name of a writer who wishes to remain anonymous.

Anthony Lathan—After a life of exploring as a military man, radio and club disc jockey and United Nations photographer, Anthony decided it was time to do something worthwhile. In 1997, he started ministry school at North Portland Bible College and transferred to Concordia as a freshman in the pre-seminary program in January 2000.

Christina Leccesse—is nineteen and from Kamano Island, Washington. Other than writing, she likes biking, swimming, and running over small children with her bike.

Jillian Meredith Olsen—has been on the staff of the Promethean for three semesters and is Editor-in-Chief of the Concordia University newspaper.

Jones One—is a social work major graduating this May.

Sean O'Skea—works as the marketing director for Concordia’s Performing and Visual Arts Department.

Michael Schultz—is stark, raving mad. If you want to know more, come talk to him.

Ackmed Shadu—is the pen name of a writer who wishes to remain anonymous.

Suzanne Smith—is a senior majoring in English at Concordia University.

Tim Tanner—is from Belize, where he spent the last 30 years. He is a graduating senior and is returning to Belize to teach English at the university.

Karen Thompson—is a senior completing a B.A. in elementary education. The main character of her story and she share a love of nature and a hope for the world’s future, but that’s where the similarities end.

Pam Van Den Broek—was born and raised in the Land of the Midnight Sun. She plans to return to Alaska to teach high school biology.

Tim Winterstein—is a sophomore pre-seminary major. His work is dedicated to God and T.D.P. Ezekiel 36:26-27.