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2007 Writing Contest

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2007 WRITING CONTEST

Letter from Johanna Stephens, Managing Editor

During the fall semester of 2007, The Promethean staff decided to stage a writing contest for all students, faculty, and staff. We posed two pieces of art as muses. Contestants were asked to write about one of the muses using their choice of poetry or prose.

Former Promethean advisor Anna Dzirkalis agreed to judge the entries and award them first, second, and third places. We are extremely grateful to her not only for her expertise in judging our contest, but also for her leadership in expanding and improving The Promethean, an already remarkable publication, during the 2005-2006 academic year.

On the following pages of this section, you will see Anna’s impressions of the top three finalists, an image of the muse the writer chose, and the winning contest entries.
FLY THE NIGHT

The imagery in this poem is memorable because it manages to be both fresh and more conventionally romantic: “newborns/clothed by the warm breath/of the growing tides/as the moon's soft light/sets in our hands.” The tenderness of these images, when juxtaposed with the energy expressed elsewhere in the poem, presents us with interesting contrasts; there is both a quietness and restlessness about this poem conveyed through its images and rhythms.

A. Dzirkalis

a restless touch
enfolds this moment in its beaten wings
to tarry awhile, a faithful sigh
shattering the haste of sunrise
stilled like glass, trapped in
tinges the night lingers on into the morning,
unashamed and unafraid,
whispering dreams that tremble in their bareness
upon the white sands, newborns
clothed by the warm breath
of the growing tides
as the moon's soft light
sets in our hands
The poem charts the arc of a love relationship. When trying to point to a milestone in the relationship (“I know that once long ago we held hands for the first/Time”), the speaker finds it impossible to identify the exact moment when love took hold—memories “blur into one overall joyous portrait.” The poem underscores the persistence, yet surprising incompleteness of these memories. While exploring this difficulty, the speaker admits perplexity: the speaker cannot tell how love took hold, but can only acknowledge, by the poem’s end, the “truth” of this love.

A. Dzirkalis

When was the first time we held hands? Was it a timid and cutesy experience or a passionate strangle? My memory is so full of times of togethernesses that they begin to blur into one overall joyous portrait.

Our first times together - they almost seem lost now, almost nonexistent. Almost.

I can’t recall what we were like, how deeply we felt for one another. But I remember it happened at one time or another. I know that once long ago we held hands for the first Time.

Knowing that is like a permanent ink blot etched onto my brain. I can see it; so it must be there. The feeling must be real.

From such a generically bland and commonplace life, you are one of my very few truths.

Benjamin J. Miller

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THIRD PLACE

SO LOVELY THE COLORS OF GREY

This poem, as its title suggests, explores the positive potential of dwelling in ambivalence. It shows us that we should embrace what is difficult—even though the easy answers may seem appealing, or might appear to offer a kind of refuge, these answers ultimately may not be the most satisfying or true. Resisting this too pat resolution, the poem shows us that we can learn to appreciate ambiguity: “white and black both lack the language to say/How lovely they are in the colors of grey.”

A. Dzirkalis

SO LOVELY THE COLORS OF GREY

Katy Lawson

There on the page it always does seem
There are ten thousand eyes but not one to see
That that which you pride when the lights are on
Is the same thing you covet when everyone’s gone.

In your black and white you’ve found some protection
From the forces that weigh on your grey imperfections
And they give you the space in which you may run
Until your heart beats still and your soul is numb.

Turning back the clocks which govern both time and space
You segregate purity from sins until you’ve no face
Your indeterminate shades will soon be no more
As you push all your shadows to the tar colored shore.

Indeed you’re no prisoner for this is clearly your choice
To sit on your page and pretend there’s no noise
But neither are you free from that which you’ve fled
For the presence of beauty is now haunting your head.

So you desperately search for ways to simplify life
And you’ll bleed all your colors until you’re just white
And you’ll stand in these shadows where you may keep guard
Over all the dark suffering which made your life hard.

But soon you will find that these colors you drained
Were not only your challenges, heartaches, and pains
For these are the events that have made your life tough
But are also the mothers of joy, peace, wisdom and love.

Be brave dear soul and embrace this imperfect life
For living in contrast is no way to thrive
And white and black both lack the language to say
How lovely they are in the colors of grey.
After the three winners, the staff felt there was one more poem that deserved recognition. This poem's imagery stood out to us, particularly the fifth stanza: "I can smell the burning death/Waiting inside me with bated breath/I exhale and it escapes/Taking on demonic shapes." The writer has a solid command of language and rhyme, weaving black voids with stark white and presenting hope amidst despair. The theme of a bloody inner battle to vanquish darkness is well matched to our theme of Revelation.

J. Stephens

I can feel the darkness in the light
The ever present blackness amidst the white
There's an evil dwelling inside
Way down deep it tries hide

I can see the blood behind my eyes
Watch the fury destroying lives
A sea of red consuming me
Desperately vying to be free

I can hear the voiceless screams
Devastating souls and innocent dreams
Echoing inside my head
Filling me with raucous dread

I can taste the crimson rage
Breaking down the walls of its cage
The shadow bubbles over my lips
Tasting like one cent copper chips

I can smell the burning death
Waiting inside me with bated breath
I exhale and it escapes
Taking on demonic shapes

The battle rages inside my soul
Darkness struggling to gain control
I alone stand and fight
Hoping darkness succumbs to light