The Promethean
The literary journal of Concordia University-Portland, Oregon

Fall/Winter 2003-04
Welcome to the Fall/Winter 2003-04 issue of The Promethean. We are pleased to feature essays, poems, and artwork contributed by members of the Concordia University community during the fall semester. This is our most substantial issue to date and we are pleased with the breadth of perspective and genre that is represented. This issue features the three entries in our annual fall themed-essay forum: “Is the World a Safer Place?” The writers that participated, printed here, offer thoughtful reflections on our responses to September 11 and the war on terrorism.

Also in this issue local poet David Biespiel reflects on the process of reading new writing and shares his decisions for our annual contest for best student work submitted during the 2002-03 year. This is the second year we have invited a local writer of prominence to review the student writing contained in the year’s two issues and select what he or she believes represents the best work. Our intention in enlisting a local writer, rather than student judges, is two-fold. First, asking an outside and professional writer gives the contest editorial integrity. Second, student writers are given the opportunity to have their work read and noticed by a member of the local literary community, potentially opening doors for future publication.

This issue, like previous issues, will be distributed at places like Kennedy School, The Dahlia Cafe, and other restaurants and galleries in the Concordia and Alberta neighborhoods. If you have a connection with a local outlet – restaurants, coffee shops, bookstores, and galleries are often willing to distribute free reading material – please let us know. And if you enjoy the writers you read within, let them know; there’s no better way to encourage the literary arts at Concordia.

Lynnell Edwards
Faculty Advisor
The Promethean
THE FIRE IN THE MOUTH: REFLECTIONS ON 2002-2003 CONTEST WINNERS

David Biespiel

A writer seldom writes for laurels, or laurels alone. A writer writes to tell the truth and to achieve artistic integrity, should either be possible. It's the possibility, I suppose, that drives the writer on, poem after poem, or story after story. The Irish poet Seamus Heaney once said that a writer writes in one direction, "from delight to wisdom and not vice versa." -Things I was thinking of while reading the Fall through Summer issues of The Promethean.

It's a tough go for me, judging a contest like this. I didn't write in college. Certainly I kept an eye out for the bi-annual publication of my university's literary magazine, Ex Libris, especially the year my girlfriend was the editor. But I can't say I remember anything from those pages. Often enough the writing wanted only to tell the truth and so lacked artistic integrity (wisdom without delight, as it were) or writing that only wanted to achieve artistic integrity without telling the truth (delight without wisdom). So rare—as it always is—to find the pieces with artistic integrity that also tell the truth.

But what I do remember about Ex Libris is the thrill of seeing such brand new writing twice a year. I felt the same sensation while reading The Promethean. One could only wonder, as in a parlor game: Who among the issues would persevere & be writing great things in the future, great things that matter to readers?

But what does that matter, really, in the face of the desire to speak, that core desire of the writer to use language, to explore its mysteries and the sudden inferno of discovery? A literary contest is a crapshoot. But so is the act of writing. The sudden exciting phrase or sentence or paragraph or line or stanza I found here, throughout the magazines, reminded me of the risk of stealing fire that the name, The Promethean, implies. I clap for such daring and inventive risks.

First Poetry: "The Verge of Enlightenment" by Troy Sloneker
First Fiction: "Eve" by Jennifer Smith

WHO I AM

Debbie Holts

I am from sliding in the dirt,
Splashing in the mud,
Molded like Adam from the heart of the earth.

I am from church bells,
From pianos and organs,
Hand bells and voices lifted in song.

I am from bread baking in the oven,
Hot cocoa with whipped cream,
A roaring fire by which we stay warm.

I am from playing in the yard,
Running through the sprinkler,
The laughter of children in a cool summer breeze.

I am from rain,
The endless northwest drops,
Glistening on the tips of red leaves in the fall.
JANUARY 9, 1985
(EXCERPTED FROM THE LARGER WORK "POEM OF ORIGIN")

Madeline Peyton

a moon
circling
.7 degrees
south
of Neptune
while
the globe
is nine days through
the
New
Year
and
Vietnamese forces
have overrun Ampil.
The Goonies hit
a Theater Near You
and they call this decade
A Cartoon Ghetto.
Michael Jackson
moonwalks the airwaves,
and AIDS infects the voices after his hits
with public campaigns contraceptives.
Farther than the antenna reaches
a little girl in South Africa
cries for a mother
because
the world
is bursting at the seems
with 4.8 billion people
while another
slithers the womb.
I. B-52s

I was five when God thundered
From California skies and out of Pratt & Whitney engines
To carry dads across the ocean to protect us.

Monkey bars were the best place to watch the take-offs
That spawned vibrations from the hot summer metal
Through jeans into guts to dance through our lungs
And rise in echoing exultant shrieks.

A sister, fourteen, good as grown-up,
Told us where they went, our fathers and God,
And what happened to mothers and children over there.
What if the others had planes, too? She left us, sad.

The chaplain explained, and moms and teachers,
Only soldiers died, and that was good enough.
So we went to sister’s room and tore her
Doors poster from the wall in our own thundering shouts.

II. Street Scene

It shouted in marquee language,
“SNOWING SOON”
Sign of the sale-crazy auto dealer.

Twenty-first century seer
Prophesying white blanket profits
From his SUV inventory, for safety’s sake.

The rear-view exposed swaying crescents,
The kid’s heads, barely cresting the seat back,
And I wondered if I was letting them down.

We’re bad parents, I told my wife,
They deserve more from us and I pointed
To the oracle as we passed.

First, try driving the speed limit
She commanded and laughed
Into the night.
THANKSGIVING IN BAGHDAD

Tabitha Jensen

I was cleaning my room this Thanksgiving, as Air Force One jetted across the world so the Commander in Chief could spend two beautiful, P.R.-inspiring hours with the troops. The troops who have been fighting chaos and hatred for an exhausting eight months. Much longer in fact, if Afghanistan hasn’t completely evaporated from your memory.

Under my bed was the worst. Magazines tracing my adolescence—American Girl to Seventeen to Cosmopolitan. Clippings of Leonardo DiCaprio from Titanic. Old calendars, research reports from every grade, birthday cards from relatives I barely knew. All was easily tossed into an ominous garbage bag, until I came across my scrapbook. Nestled in a bed of unused stickers, themed papers, and die-cuts were the remnants of an epic project that wasn’t. Opening up the crisp cover, I discovered that I’d only completed two pages; a spread chronicling September 11th. Pictures of the tower before and after, a newspaper blurb about Ground Zero, a miniature American flag tacked on flag-tiled paper. What really caught my eye was a fancy ribbon; a burst of red, white, and blue set on a pin. I smiled, recalling that strange world gone by, when every Girl Scout troop and charity was feverishly tying them together to be snatched up even faster. When you couldn’t find patriotic ribbon still in stock at any store. When the country was still reeling from an attack that defied imagination.

When people still cared.

It was strange, the good such atrocity brought out of people. For a month or so, the entire nation reverted to a state of community normally reserved for storybooks. Virtue and goodwill replaced Louis Vuitton and Versace en vogue. We sent our prayers, our blood, and our tears to strangers we didn’t know and would likely never meet. Our causes became one another, with every penny drive evoking a generous passion in the masses. Our world was smaller and terror was much too close for comfort, but we were all there for each other. Not knowing what atrociousness lurked in the next day, we found comfort in the common threads of humanity that ran raw through us all.

The nationalistic t-shirts have long ago been donated to Goodwill, being anti-American is “cool” again, and pop stars have ceased breaking into “The Star Spangled Banner”. We count on our fellow man to uplift us about as much as we expect the toaster to water the flowers. Taking a vacation to visit one of our European allies should carry a travel warning. We hear about the progress that is made as the casualties of war mount with each passing day. We’ve been advised for two years to be on an elevated alert for terrorism, but we are not alert. We drift through with our eyes shut to the rest of the world, to the suffering of our neighbors, no different than we were on September 10th.

I’m not sure how you measure safety in the world. The number of terrorist scalps, the rate of violent strikes, how many nations we bestow the gift of democracy upon, or the amount of police per capita. Perhaps we are safer than we were the day suicide hijackers made their last journeys into infamy. With the military action, heightened security, and worldwide awareness, the likelihood of a large-scale massacre is far less than it was before. However, here in my own small world, I certainly don’t feel any safer. If I encounter trouble, my neighbors won’t be there to help out. The benefit of the doubt will no longer be bestowed upon my mistakes; I’m no longer a sister in the great United States. I’m another person in a sea, another barrier to selfish dreams. In the big wide world, we may have whipped the audacious into a tedious submission. In the process, we’ve abandoned the reverence for each other.

I contemplated the ribbon for a moment before closing the cover, leaving it to battle the dust bunnies once more. A part of me wanted to remove it from the display, pin it to my shoulder proudly to evoke that bygone era. But I quickly decided against it. It was just so out of fashion now.
HOME SWEET HOME: IS IT SAFE?

Sarah Honkala

Home sweet home—is there still such a place, and is it safe? After September 11, 2001, home doesn’t feel like a safe, sweet place. It could be that in the last few years our world has become a more dangerous, and fearful place to live, or it could simply mean everyone living in the world has received a greater awareness of the dangerous, and fearful events that take place.

The good old television set faithfully broadcasts the latest news to Americans day and night. These news reports are filled with depressing, and terrifying messages. It is amazing that Americans can listen to a news report and still leave their homes. The access we have to information on the war of terror is amazingly broad. Years ago citizens would not have paid as much attention to the information received about terrorist activities. Terror activities were foreign to Americans, because they all took place on foreign soil. Even as the pictures flashed on the TV screen, it was so far away that it wasn’t real. September 11th brought all of this closer to home and made it real.

Now Americans are very aware of terrorist attacks and activities. The leaders of our countries are leading campaigns against terrorist acts. News reporters are reporting stories of terrorists living among us. The focus of our country has shifted to show the balance between safety and fear tipping towards fear. News reports point out vulnerable areas that could be potential terrorist targets. We now have a system in place to show just how threatened we are everyday. September 11th has forced our government to share with us information that would have been reserved for only high-ranking intelligence officials before.

The world has not become a more treacherous place to live. Americans have just become more aware of a terror threat that has always been there. In a world where the latest news can be found on TV, computers, magazines, or newspapers, we perceive the information on terror threats differently when we know that America is not immune to terror attacks. The safety of our homes probably isn’t any different then before September 11, 2003. But each American’s awareness has changed. The awareness that each of us holds on terrorist acts makes it hard to feel safe anywhere in the world, even in our own—home, sweet, homes.

UNILATERALISM MAKES AMERICANS LESS SAFE THAN WE SHOULD BE

Tom Shuell

Are we as safe today, as Americans, as we should be? Emphatically NO! Environmental safeguards that are protecting our air and waters are being dismantled. Health care and prescription costs are becoming less and less affordable for a sizable class of our society. Food regulation is lacking the necessary enforcement to make certain our food is meeting the appropriate standards. Microscopic disease strains are mutating to resist our ubiquitous antibiotics. Poverty is becoming more prevalent in the US. However, the major issue that undermines our safety in the current world climate is terrorism.

We need to be careful of making terrorism a simple good vs. evil issue. Our country has historically cheered and supported many instances of terrorism. The fighters that brought our independence from England incorporated guerilla warfare tactics (e.g., terrorism). The French underground of World War II utilized terrorist tactics. The Algerians gained their independence from France with the help of terrorist acts. The United States contributed materially to the freedom fighters of Afghanistan as they used terrorism to confront the Soviet occupation. These are just a few of the instances that we as a country have endorsed terrorist acts to obtain the appropriate outcomes. It should not be surprising that groups that have different desired outcomes would use the same tactics.

In fact, if a country or a group is involved militarily against the United States, the only option available, short of a weapon of mass destruction, is terrorism. If an opponent postures its tanks in a classic maneuver, the air force simply flies over the top and bombs them. If a massive group of soldiers gets together to launch an attack, the United States simply drops a cluster bomb. The point is that traditional military tactics are no longer relevant against the United States.

What makes terrorism particularly dangerous for American citizens is the extreme resentment toward the United States foreign affair policies by a majority of the world. This resentment stems from an aggressive unilateral approach taken by the United States toward virtually every foreign affair topic. The United States unilaterally pulled out of KYOTO when the entire world was attempting to address the serious issue of global warming. The United States unilaterally pulled out of a discussion concerning a ban on biological weapons when the resolution was nearly decided. The United States unilaterally pulled out of the 2002 conference on racism in Durban South Africa because the
direction of the talks went in the “wrong” direction. The United States unilaterally removed itself from being bound by the world criminal court. The United States won’t ratify a ban on land mines that most of the world wants. The United States disregards the Geneva Convention by creating an ambiguous enemy combatant. The United States is contemplating the militarization of space, with an enormous price tag, against the desires of most of the world. The United States “accidentally” kills civilians and euphemistically calls it collateral damage. The United States is part of the United Nations, yet disregards its resolutions when they are “inconvenient.”

To diminish the threat of terrorism requires that we diminish the resentment. This must be done through foreign policy. We must move away from an aggressive view that prescribes unilateral United States decisions that impact the entire world. Rather, the United States must take the forefront in developing a multinational approach to addressing the major issues that confront the world today. We must allow all countries of the world to be part of the discussion that determines global priorities. Having determined the priorities, we must be willing to put our resources toward resolving them in a multinational way.

UNTITLED

Lauren Roberts

billboards over houses
advertisements in the fields
where the lilies once grew
commercials choking children
as they finish digesting
what the smiling capitalists
shove down their swollen bellies
mountains crumble
before the gods of Wall Street
and we all prostrate ourselves along wet sidewalks
rooted to sign of the dollar
the taste of greed burnt in our mouths
intentions of rape flood our streets
and course our veins
cracking, weak, repenting voices
cry and cry for more
a life we must
but never can achieve
whose dream is this
that you and I parade along
whose ideas are these
that we would kill just to cling to
creations of syntax
of grammar
punctuation we adhere to
a soiled rotten stream
we are so proud to die for
it makes me cringe when I say yes
and conform and become
it makes me ill to say no
and fight and fight
billboards instead of flowers
politics in the playground
DEVOTIONS

Lauren Roberts

Sometimes she talks too softly
And I do not understand everything that she is trying to give
So I nod my head
And smile delicately when she does
And hope that a response is not expected
Sometimes she talks a lot
And so consumed I become with all unjustifiable distractions
I simply do not listen
Sometimes she is silent and watches me
From what feels like oceans away
As I scream and cry out
Against the world to which I am ignorant
I wonder if she can hear me
Sometimes when I am hiding in dark rooms
Beneath forgotten blankets
She comes to me
Comforting like rain drops falling to my window
And there we laugh at my worry
My pity and foolishness
And in that pause
She whispers to me
I can hear you

I RAISE MY HAND

Craig Baxter

How many generations have to suffer, how many have to bleed?
Why can’t our generation be the one to plant the seed?
Why do we dance in the moonlight and play upon the sun?
Why is everyone always miserable, even though they’re having fun?
What do people think when they see a flower bloom?
Then find out that that flower is ultimately doomed?
What is the reason for warm love, if most of us feel cold?
When can we come together and forget the lies we’re told?
Why is everything take, take, take, but always at a loss?
Why can’t we see the vision, he left there on the cross?
INTERNAL WHITEBOARD

Kiersten Brady

My professor is a true writer. As such, she never speaks to us directly.

Never will she look us straight in the eye and speak rather she reads what she has written to us on the etch-a-sketch instructional whiteboard in her mind.

Words fly at us with meaning and purpose until words have run out, the brakes are slammed – she scrambles to clutch in, down shift, sketch more on the back wall of her cranium so her mind’s eye can read it to us and share her next segment so we too can see.

PRE-SCHOOLED POETRY

Joshua Mitchell

Handwritten, created with fingers Four-year-old fingers that beg To let him put a string under it. The moment colors me blue. Let me. Please. Let me create, draw, write, give Of myself. Hand me the pen or I will remove It from you. Give me the chance to create Something new.
WHISPERING WOODS

Joshua Mitchell

Actually, it is more a howl,
But through the double-paned, vinyl windows
It sounds as an impertinent child in church
Silently informing her friend that she
Is somewhere she doesn’t belong.
Her father is playing golf between the Scottie dog tees
At the base of a snow-capped volcano—
Has slept for a thousand or more years,
May yet awake in fury—
It demands the little girl and
Her father leave it alone
And stop all that infernal
Whispering.

SEEING ARIZONA

Jennifer Stanford

Dawn is just breaking as we bump down the dirt road in a rental car. The lights of Mesa and Chandler are behind us now, and the craggy spires of the Superstition Mountains loom ahead of us. The housing developments bordering the urban sprawl have encroached further and further out into the desert, until they cower in the shadow of the mountains; but there civilization has come to a grinding halt. Some would say it is because of the Apache Indian curses that blanket the Superstition Mountains, warning off all intruders who would presume to enter there. Others, that the harsh, unforgiving wilderness has averted further development. In minutes, we shall be swallowed up in the mountains’ grasp like the houses, leaving technology and all the comforts of civilization behind.

The desert has flattened out and now it is populated with low bushes, still green in the early days of June. Saguaro cacti loom above the green haze, their uneven spires stretching heavenward toward the faint purple sky. The moon is a perfect pale disc to the southeast. Whoever said the desert was not beautiful has never experienced it, I have decided. A roadrunner darts away from the car and disappears into the bushes ahead of us. As Dad maneuvers the white Chevy Cavalier through another washout, I wonder what the rental car company would be thinking right now if they saw the road we were taking their car down, straight into the heart of the mountains east of Phoenix, Arizona.

It is five o’clock a.m. when we pull into the gravel parking lot at the base of the Peralta trailhead. There are no other cars here, and my friend’s warning over the phone flits through my head. “Nobody goes hiking up there at this time of year. This is when they pull bodies out with heatstroke. You guys have forgotten what it is like here.” In the back of my mind I know she has spoken the truth, and I wonder if the day will vindicate her words. It reaches 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the Phoenix valley in June. But Dad and I are not dissuaded. Like nescient out-of-towners, we are taking our chances, entertaining the illusion that we will somehow be immune from the consequences of prolonged heat exposure and the possibilities of falling off a cliff face. I think of others who have wandered into these mountains, some never to return alive. Some dehydrated and others disappeared, swallowed up by this treacherous, yet beautiful wilderness.

I have not been back here since I was thirteen, but I find the mountains as vivid in reality as the picture I have retained in my imagination during my eight-year-long absence. Our lives have gone on; we are different people from the last time that we hiked this trail; but time has been suspended in this wilderness. These mountains are the same as they were the day we left them. I look over at Dad, sideburns speckled with gray, who is wrestling our
supplies into the army-green backpack. His life and career have taken marked changes in these eight years; I wonder if I dare to ponder how much I have changed. He is as excited as I to embark upon this adventure. We have ten 24oz. bottles of water in our pack, along with a first aid kit, and a twelve-inch long butcher knife, with Dad’s insistence, to protect ourselves from the unknown threats we might encounter from both man and beast, however unreal or distant they may seem to me in the quiet peace of early dawn. The mountain beckons and we answer its call.

The trail we should be following threads through a canyon with walls of red rock rising on both sides of it. Very different from the wooded hills of Washington, the jagged peaks surrounding it are solid rock and bare of vegetation. However, we have decided to take a different trail that veers to the right, and should take us to the same destination: the top of Fremont saddle. We stop for a moment on the first rise to survey the view. In front of us is a panorama of peaks and ridges running together in jumbled fashion. This is an inhospitable land, more accustomed to the gentle tread of the coyote and the slink of reptiles than the footprint of man. There is no sign of movement around us except a hawk that is circling in an expansive sky, and I feel very small. Silence pervades this place, and we can hear our own breathing. It is cool now, and the first sunrays are coloring the tops of the ridges behind us.

Dad and I stand on the edge of a cliff, looking far down on a small tan line that snakes through the bottom of the valley. If we had not decided to try a new trail, and taken a wrong turn over an hour ago, we might have been down there on that trail right now, on our way to Weaver’s Needle. But instead the cairns we have followed have taken us up a deer path that was obliterated on this ridge. The sun is gaining altitude fast, and we don’t have time to turn back and retrace our steps.

“That’s okay,” Dad says. “We’ll just cut across country and see if we can’t match up with the trail.”

We are confident in our sense of direction, and so we head off into the brush, blazing our own trail through the rocky terrain fraught with the chollas and little cacti that look like they could grace a clay pot in someone’s living room back home. The many-jointed leaves of the prickly pear sprawl among the single-stalked barrel cacti that are in the last stages of their bloom. There are saguaros too; the icon of Arizona and the substance of postcards. But these wild giants surrounding us, some over one-hundred-years old, bear unsightly gray scars in their waxy grey-green flesh, and their frames are riddled with bird holes. The century plants are in bloom, parading their showy yellow flowers on a single stalk taller than my head. Their base of succulent tapered leaves with spikes up both sides look like overgrown aloe plants.

“Watch out for those,” Dad says, pointing to one of the bases that is not in bloom. “If you fall on that, one of those spikes could go right through your chest and kill you.” I shudder and we move on.

We had been told the day before by a park ranger that the scorpions were all underground at this time of year to escape the heat. The rattlesnakes were all in their dens, and we wouldn’t see any gila monsters, we were assured. I had seen a stuffed gila monster yesterday at a museum. The poisonous, bumpy-skinned orange and blue-black lizards can grow to two feet long, but are usually nocturnal. Still, I keep a keen lookout where I put my feet anyway. I can just imagine, as we wade through knee-high dried grasses, that a diamondback coils there, ready to sink its fangs into my unprotected calf. I had almost worn pants, but then decided shorts and a thick layer of sun block would be better. Now, I wish I had chosen the pants as I survey my scratched legs. Jeep brush has found its way into my socks and pokes my feet with every step. We stop to empty out our shoes and I pull cactus spines out of my sole.

I can feel the sweat rolling down my body now, making little trails in the dirt that clings to my skin. The taste of dust is in my mouth. Dad takes off his pack so we can replace the empty water bottles in our hands with full ones from our supply, and I realize that the whole back of his shirt is wet. This water is our most precious commodity; without it, we would quickly be reduced to hallucinating wanderers slowly forfeiting our moisture to the merciless sun. The heat is becoming stifling. We have lost all sight of the trail now. The path ahead of us is impossible, but we have gone too far to turn back now; neither of us wants to wade back through the country we have just come from to join back up with a trail, and we are convinced that the shortest way back to the trail is forward.

By mid-morning we sight the tip of the Weaver’s Needle. Its sharp peak sticks up above the flat ridges, signaling that we are finally nearing our destination.

“One more ridge to get around, and then we’ll be there,” Dad says as I cling to a rock face that is covered in dry fungus. He has said this twice before, and each time, when we had finally reached the ridge, another loomed up in front of us, holding the Needle tauntingly just beyond our reach.

“You wait here, while I go ahead and see if we can get around this.” The fungus looks slippery to me as Dad climbs ahead. I am only too happy to do what he says. I watch the pack on his back flop back and forth as he teeters precariously on his perch. Below us, a rutted canyon plunges hundreds of feet, and one mistake will send him careening to his death.

“O God, protect him,” I breathe. For the first time in my life that I can remember, my dad suddenly seems old. I realize that he’s not thirty anymore; that magical age at which he used to seem always to remain—invincible—to my child’s eyes then. He’s nearly fifty; what makes him think he can crawl around on those rocks like he is twenty? I don’t trust his balance as much as he does.
“Dad, this isn’t worth it. Let’s go back,” I plead with him. But he has disappeared from my view, and I am left crouching on a hollow in the rock only big enough to rest my feet on, and I am wondering if any minute, with my legs falling asleep, I am going to plunge into that canyon myself. This mountain has dwarfed us; and we are left to its mercy. I crane my neck but the rock bulges out and I cannot see above it to where he has gone. I am left to ponder what I would do if he fell.

The maneuver over the rock face has shaken me, and I am still thinking of it as we crouch down to clear the smooth rock over our heads. I trail one hand across the white sand-papery rock streaked red and orange. I think of the pool ringed with palms back at the hotel, and for a second I wonder why we aren’t spending our time lazing in lounges around it. But that thought is quickly superceded with another: What handful of people in the world has ever had the privilege of seeing this raw, unadulterated desert that I am in the middle of right now?

We emerge from the rock shelf and we are in flat desert now. We still have the plant-life to contend with, but the cliffs are behind us. Birds are singing in the hot still air; I think they are Cactus Wrens. Another knoll, and we can see the saddle. Our pace quickens in anticipation of the long-awaited view. We see the lone pine first, just as it has always stood, garnedle by drought on the rock outcrop that juts into the canyon spreading out at our feet. Then Weaver’s Needle is in front of us, and all else becomes peripheral. From a small hill, in the base of the canyon, that narrow rock spire rises hundreds of feet into the air, towering above the long chains of ridges that stretch to the eye’s limit. From our vantage, it is like a needle; though viewed from the West, its spire turns into a half-buried heart. Named after Pauline Weaver, a famous mountain man who led prospectors into the area in the nineteenth century, it has long been the object of gold lore and legend.

A mountain ridge runs on the west of the needle, covered with delicate rock spires rising above the valley. I think of the Apache Indians who roamed these mountains in the 1800’s, finding this land’s brutality their safeguard from the U.S. military in the final days of the Old West. They have a legend that those rock spires are their ancestors, turned to stone during the waters of a flood in ancient times.

There is a breeze on the ridge, and thin clouds temporarily veil the sun. Our own voices are strange to us, in the great wide expanse of nothingness. We start to descend into the valley, still racing the sun. Now our water is too hot too drink—it almost burns my tongue—and we are counting bottles. It doesn’t matter, though, because we are almost there. This time we have a trail to follow, and our trudging feet kick up clouds of dust. All around us in the vegetation, the cicadas are droning. Bushes light off into frenzied buzzing as we approach them; the perpetrators are the size of my thumb to the first knuckle, staring at us unabashed with their bulbous eyes. They refuse to move, though we brush against the bushes where they cling. They are stubborn enough to persist through long summers in this land. We walk for another hour, until we have seen the sharp Needle spire transformed into a heart before our eyes. Then it is time to turn around. We didn’t get as far as we had hoped; the sun won the battle, but Dad and I both turn our feet toward home satisfied.

We are descending the Peralta trail, with its delightful familiarity under my feet. We are hot and sticky, feet aching and muscles sore. We fantasize the relief the pool would afford to us right now. The danger is behind us; nothing can happen to us now that we are on the road home, I think. We are carrying our last two bottles; the pack, now light, bulges with the bottles we’ve emptied today. The water sloshes in our bottles to the pounding rhythm of our feet. We cross rocky washes that are inundated with water in the springtime during flash floods, and little brown lizards dart from their sunning rocks into the bushes for safety.

As we approach a little valley filled with low trees, a stench reaches our nostrils. “Something died,” Dad, ahead of me, says. I don’t answer because my breath is caught in my throat. I breathe as shallowly as I can to prevent the contaminated air to enter my lungs. We walk another ten yards, and now the trail is wet in spots.

“She must have been down the trail this morning ahead of us,” I reason.


“Ugh! From what?” My breath catches in my throat a second time and I’m preoccupied now with keeping my feet out of it. It stains the ground and the rocks black for yards ahead of us. All we can do is continue.

“I bet a mountain lion dragged a deer down here. It must have been still alive, or it wouldn’t have bled this long.”

“Today?” I wish he wouldn’t be so graphic.

“Yesterday or the day before. This is fresh.” Dad answers. Every step I take is in fear of running into the carcass. The boulders littering the sides of the trail turn into a crouching cougar at every turn. I know Dad is thinking of the butcher knife in the backpack, still wrapped in the plastic we bought it in. Mountain lions are supposed to avoid humans unless cornered or very hungry; still, we are wary. We follow the trail of blood until it veers off a steep place into the bushes, and is gone; and it remains one more potential casualty that we have sidestepped today in this brutal land.

Now every step we take forward carries us further from the wilderness that has been ours today. Tomorrow we will board a plane that will take us home to the Pacific Northwest, with only a camera full of pictures for proof of the country through which we have walked. Those pictures will attest the truth, because months from now, I know I will not believe what we have done. I can’t
decide if we should be heralded for our accomplishment or disparaged as fools. Probably, we won’t tell Mom about the rock face we clung to, or the eight-foot cliff we inched down on our backsides, or she just might not ever let us come back.

Through the bushes, I can see the car, still alone in the empty lot. The sun glints off the windshield, welcoming us out of the 108 degree weather to its air-conditioned interior. So 8 hours and 240 ounces of water later, we take our leave of this mountain, wondering if we will ever set foot in it again, but knowing that we will find it just the same if we should ever again venture in its direction; a symbol of freedom and untamable nature. The wilderness has become ours today, but we have also left a part of ourselves here, to add to the long legacy of those before us. We have confronted nature and emerged unscathed this time, but we carry away with us a sense of how small and finite we really are.

Works Consulted


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**DONUT BOY**

Tabitha Jensen

Donutboy17@aol.com. It was one of those mass mailings to everyone on your list. I could identify everyone in the “To” line: Sara, Jamie, me, Josh, Jessie, at@hotmail.com...? Oh, that must be that boyfriend of hers, Andy Taylor. But donutboy17@aol.com. For the life of me, I could not figure out who on Earth that could be. And it was enough to nearly cut my ties with sanity.

Google couldn’t find it, and neither could the Yahoo! directory. I wanted so badly to reply and say “hey Lydia, thx 4 the letter... btw who is donutboy17?” But for some reason, some invisible yet poignant reason, I knew I couldn’t do it. It wasn’t my place to pry into Lydia and find out the stories behind new friends, new adventures, and new loves. My fingers itched to graze across the keyboard, click send, and be content; but it was in that moment I realized not only did I not know Donut Boy. I no longer knew Lydia.

Like a Hollywood paparazzi-stalked power couple, we were best friend extraordinaires. We did almost everything together, and if we hadn’t we could still recount it in perfect detail as if we had. We lived each other’s joys and triumphs, sharing them as if our lives were meshed into one grand adventure. We shared the hurt, the breakups, carrying together the utter angst that was adolescence. Hours we logged into our phone sets, gossiping about our petty enemies and the scandals enveloping the student body. Partners in crime, shopping confidants, small town liberationists. Lydia and Ellie.

High school ended. We tossed our hats, drank to the moon, and vowed never to change. It was in our yearbooks, after all. Best friends 4-evah!!! It had to be true.

After I moved away, I discovered all kinds of new things to relay back to Lydia. To keep her in my world. The great tree falling of 2003. The scary cafeteria vegetarian alternatives. The 1 a.m. fire drills. I’d call and be cut off short, she was always about to be picked up by the boyfriend I’d never met or the friends I didn’t know she’d made. She’d call back though, sometime, yeah. Oops, forgot. Sorry. Maybe some other time.

It was as if cutting me out was easier than pasting me back in.

Distance was too hard. I’d become inconvenient. Now I couldn’t imagine what she saw every day, or who she talked to, or what she learned. I know became I’d known.

Closing my eyes for one brief second I hit delete, not out of spite, but because there was no reason to keep it. Ambivalence was a tough teacher, but if Lydia and Ellie were broken, I couldn’t let Ellie be shattered along with them. I could still meet brand new people and go to exciting places and do great things without her. And maybe someday, when she’d inevitably become nostalgic and curious, I could give her a little taste of them. Perhaps at that
future rendezvous she would grasp, almost, how great a person she’d left
behind. A person no longer there, and in her skin was a woman made tougher
by challenge, and stronger by independence. Because I could already feel Ellie
flaking off me, piece by piece, with each day a step deeper into the unknown. I
had no idea what college and adulthood would make of me, but that was why it
made it worth leaving home, the familiar, and Lydia behind. I saw glints of the
ture Elizabeth shining brighter and brighter, taking over the dull shadows of the
old Ellie, who shared the limelight.

Maybe then Lydia would see that what you take for granted runs
through your fingers like sand. She’d best be careful. Soon she may not know
Donut Boy, either.
EX-BOYFRIEND

Katie Atkins

The gentle chills
sent tenderly amidst my lips,
is gone from the lust of your kiss.
White silk sheets slip smoothly
between my creamy beige thighs,
no longer open to your indignant tries.
Glaring moonlight licks
partially opened white curtains,
revealing brilliant skies as clear as
your adulterous sins
as you lie there naked
bearing much more than your skin.
A cool breeze gently kisses
the smooth curve of my silken spine,
the way your unfaithful lips
will never again caress
the soft skin of mine.
Morning sun shall lighten my day
with the shimmer of rays
and the burden of your ways
lifted from my heart’s dismay.
I’m ending things now,
my decision is made.
My heart is no longer the playground
for your indecisive masquerade.
And when you shall wake,
as I already know,
there is a wide open door
through which you will go.

WATCHING BEAUTY

Seth Jones

The leaves dance
Brightly colored in the breeze
You stroll from class
But have not seen me yet
I stare at you in wonder
Waiting
Anticipating
The moment our eyes will meet
That beautiful dimpled smile
Those deep eyes
Gazing
Softly
Penetrating every shadowed corner of my soul
Take my hand
And walk with me
My friend
Let the crisp autumn air
Penetrate our lungs
And may we feel - you and I
The day
The season
The moment
Together
ONE MORE FAILED ATTEMPT AT "THE MEANING OF LIFE"

Seth Jones

The melancholy moon
Shines hazily
Lazily
Down through the clouds
I sit
Shrouded in winter
Shivering slightly
Though summer is neigh
The freeway buzzes
Wordlessly
Across the chill air
Invading my writings
My thoughts
Without care
I dream of X-Files
And infamy
Of running away
My self-stagnant soul
Too weary to stay
I dream of the sun
And long for her warmth
Her passion
Her constance
The bustle of day

Words and philosophies
Rage in my mind
Desperate
Intent
Still seeking to find
That one bit of wisdom
To set us all free
Profundity penned
Defining my "me"

One phrase emerges
Kicking free of the rest
Assaulting the page
His mettle to test
"Live and live well."
But what does that mean
At the end of the day
I'm still just obscene

LULLABY FOR JOSIAH

Lance Raymond Eads

The sun is playing Hide-and-Seek.
The moon opens her eyes to peek.
She's counted high enough.
Evening proceeds from dusk.
Josiah, time to go to sleep.

The stars are winking 'cause they know
Exactly where the sun does go,
But they say that they won't tell.
They think it's just as well.
Josiah, to bed now we must go.

When dawn comes Moon will find the sun.
When Moon hides we will have some fun
Until it's time again.
The game goes on and then,
Josiah goes down with the sun.
**PATMOS**

*Lance Raymond Eads*

Heaven's 7 unleavened loaves have rose,  
Dispatched from ash that has been blown and glows  
Near as bright as the lampstand's light  
Echoing in cosmic flight  
Down to earth's strange aliens below.

Fission's vision's spinning toward fiords.  
As much will gush without support of cords  
As the might of the tide of night  
That caused good ol' Noah's plight,  
Drowning all the evil throngs and hordes.

This time the dime dropped in the brine is heads.  
The call after the fall is dead instead.  
It's been replaced through time and space.  
Humankind's the chosen race.  
To change the call is why the Savior bled.

Heaven's 7 unleavened loaves have rose,  
Dispatched from ash that has been blown and glows  
Near as bright as the lampstand's light  
Echoing in cosmic flight  
Down to earth's strange aliens below.

**MEDIA HACK (VISION)**

*Thomas Arnold*

The Harlot is wed in Babylon  
And the blood of innocents  
Runs in the Valley of the Garden  
Upon the banks of the two Rivers.

Mammon supersedes the Lamb  
And Justice is perverted in the Courts.  
Mercy is removed from the Law;  
False Words, prevaricated, are honey to the People.

Wormwood has fallen to earth (twice),  
Babel Towers tossed down upon  
A smoking column of flame,  
Seven twice fallen.

"Touch not the pieces,  
For they are Poisonous and Bitter."

Babel Towers, taken twice in  
Mammon's own corrupted Nation,  
Destroyed by some of Ishmael's tribe.  
Already struck once, the Romans still slept.

Blood flows freely upon the Banks;  
Plague and Pestilence not found there  
But brought by Romans in a new Pax  
But bearing Steel nonetheless.

Waiting and Hidden  
David's Bow lies close to the Lies,  
Not so far from Meggido's Hill.  
Israel's strength is not in Him  
But in a Temple  
Of some Angel Dark.
LITERARY AND ARTS EVENTS AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

The Yellow Wallpaper

February 20-22

The Yellow Wallpaper, a classic short story by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, traces the psychological unhinging of a late 19th-century woman. Set in modern day New England, the premiere of this stage adaptation was written by Concordia English Professor Dr. Lynnell Edwards and is directed by Sarah Grace Rondema. The Yellow Wallpaper runs one weekend only in the Fine Arts Building at Concordia University (N.E. 27th & Highland): Friday, February 20, and Saturday the 21st at 7:30pm and Sunday the 22nd at 2 pm. Tickets are $5 for adults and $3 for seniors and students.

Brian Doyle

February 26 at 7:30pm

Doyle is the editor of Portland Magazine at the Univ. of Portland and has authored four essay collections, most recently Leaping: Revelations & Epiphanies, and is editor of God is Love, a collection of essays from Portland Magazine. Doyle’s own essays have appeared in numerous periodicals including The American Scholar, Harpers Magazine, and Orion, and the Best American Essays of 2003, 1998, and 1999. Free admission.

Lenten Concert/Service

Sunday, March 21st at 3:30pm

This service/musical presentation will feature the Concordia University choirs and handbell ensembles and take place at St. Michael’s Lutheran Church (N.E. 29th and Dekum). Short meditations and scripture readings are included in this service along with appropriate hymns of the season that are sung by all in attendance. Admission is free. An offering will be accepted.

archy & mehitabel

March 26-28 and April 2-4

In a deserted office, a cockroach dives headfirst onto the keys of a typewriter, pouring out the ruminations of his soul. It’s “archy” (he’s too small to hold down the shift key), poet, philosopher, moralist and futile worshipper of “mehitabel,” the alley cat. Featuring a book by Joe Darion and comic legend Mel Brooks and a “cool” jazz score which remains one of the only examples of this genre in the commercial theatre, “archy & mehitabel” is one of the most daring musicals of its time, a beguiling, somewhat nostalgic modern-day fable full of wit, wisdom and the unexpected.

The musical will run two weekends: March 26-28 and April 2-4. Friday and Saturday performances will be at 7:30pm and Sunday matinees will be at 2pm. Tickets are $7 for adults and $5 for students and seniors. Group rates available.
The Edward de Vere Studies Conference

The Edward de Vere Studies Conference is the world’s largest convocation of scholars to gather annually, at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, to share new research on the life and works of Elizabethan court poet and playwright, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. The conference is especially dedicated to the presentation of scholarly research.

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.deverestudies.org.

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

Crystal Williams

April 22 at 12:30pm

A native of Detroit, Michigan, Williams is a professor of English at Reed College. Author of Kin and Lunatic, her poems, essays and reviews have appeared in countless journals and anthologies. A member of the 1995 Nuyorican Slam Team, Williams has performed in venues across the country. Celebrate National Poetry Month as Williams shares her powerful and provocative poetry on April 22. Free admission.

Spring Concert

April 25 at 3:30pm

Concordia’s final musical presentation of the school year will take place at St. Michael’s Lutheran Church (N.E. 29th & N.E. Dekum). Choral arrangements of spirituals, hymns and original works written for ensembles will be included. The Concordia University Choir, Christi Crux Vocal Ensemble, C.U. Concert Handbells and Concordia Ringers will all take part in presenting music in a variety of styles and from varied time eras. 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, 1 child and two hamsters. Writing about why he wrote “Media Hack,” he states, “A lot of reasons; mostly, relevance of today’s world to Revelation, hence the use of the imagery.”

Katie Atkins is a new face to the crowd here at Concordia after transferring here from Oregon State University. She grew up in a tiny town outside Eugene that you won’t find on any map.

Craig Baxter was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska. His Junior year he began writing serious poetry and states, “Poetry is an art form of expression. It’s as if you’re painting a picture with words. I have found poetry as a form of relief over the years and believe that you can learn a lot about a person from what they put into a poem… Poetry is truly one of God’s most amazing creative gifts He has given men and women.”

David Biespiel is the author of two volumes of poetry, Shattering Air and Wild Civility. A contributor to American Poetry Review, Poetry, and Parnassus, he also writes the “First Sunday on Poetry” column for The Oregonian. He now teaches at Oregon State University and is writer-in-residence a “the Attic,” a writing studio in Portland, Oregon.

Sara Bonacum is a Senior in the English program at Concordia and has a minor in Biology. This poem was written last September while camping outside at the Pendleton Rodeo.

Kiersten A. Brady is a Junior in the History program at Concordia, Portland. Special thanks to the Humanities Department faculty for their unending support. Fellow students: strive for areté!

Mark Brittain is a Fall 2003 Concordia graduate in Secondary Education (Language Arts) and hopes to continue masters education at Concordia after he starts working again. The poems here are essentially biographical and reflect on the subjective nature of the essay theme for this edition.

Lance Raymond Eads is in the MAT program at Concordia to teach art. All of his poems are song lyrics. Lance sings and plays guitar in the local band Duur Theo and is married and has three sons.
DEBBIE HOLTS is a Junior majoring in secondary education for Language Arts. She has lived in the Portland area all of her life, where she enjoys outdoor activities such as softball and running.

SARAH HONKALA began the MCL program at the end of October 2003. When not in school, or at work she enjoys writing songs, essays, and stories.

TABITHA JENSEN is a Freshman this year. She was inspired to write "Donut Boy" after growing apart from her high school best friend.

SETH JONES is a resident of Portland, Oregon where he is in his last year of undergraduate study at Concordia. He is currently pursuing a BA in English.

JOSHUA MITCHELL graduated from Concordia in 2002 with his BA in English and has been happily keeping the Concordia Web site up and running for the last three years. His wife, Diana, and his two children, Keeton and Mishya, often serve as inspiration for his poetry and everyday life. More of Joshua’s work is available at www.mobilehippie.com. (And no, his hair is not that long.)

MADELINE PEYTON is a Freshman at CU. This is her first time in print. She refuses to decide on a career path. However, in moments of anxiety-produced planning, her long list of options puzzles-out a dancing photographer who writes her own captions to the photos taken in [insert name of foreign country]. We’ll see. The poem featured is in homage to the faculty and students of the California State Summer School for the Arts.

LAUREN ROBERTS is a freshman currently at Concordia majoring in Language Arts with a minor in Spanish, but she feels that is subject to change. She writes, "I enjoy a good game of ping-pong; as I have found that it helps resolve any issues that may be causing tension in my life."

TOM SHUELL is associate professor of Mathematics at Concordia. His interests include brewing beer, cricket, current events and raising a 4 year old daughter. He writes: "I am very concerned that current foreign and domestic policy of the United States is acting to fuel internal and external animosities. It is my hope that policy can be turned around to ease the animosities and the world can be a safer, more compassionate place for the entire world population. In particular, I would like a safer world for my daughter."

JENNIFER STANFORD transferred to Concordia this year as a Junior. She is an English major/Spanish minor who also has an interest in history. She lived in Tempe, Arizona, for a couple of years during her childhood. The essay “Seeing Arizona” was written after a return trip to the area last summer, and inspired by her love of Arizona and nature.

http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol12/iss2/1