



# SIGMA TAU DELTA

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

Potpourri is a publication by Concordia University, Nebraska's  
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*Potpourri*

50th Anniversary Edition

2015

# Potpourri

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## A Note from the Guest Reader

Dr. Bruce Creed, Professor of Communication

If, as Emily Dickinson suggests, a book is like a frigate, then poems and short stories must be like skiffs. These little skiffs aren't sturdy enough to sail the seas, like frigates do, but rather they are light, nimble, fast moving boats that carry us on short journeys through waters that are deep enough for us to dip our toes into, stir up our memories, and give us pause for reflection.

Indeed, there is nothing like reading a book, a short story, or a poem. These journeys of the mind take us to places that we fear or that haunt us. They take us to places that we love, or even to fantastic places that can only exist in our imaginations. They make us cry, laugh, dream, or just think. They are cathartic. They allow us to rejoice or to mourn without self pity, and help us to stand, if only metaphorically (and only for a moment), and reflect with unselfconscious emotion.

Kenneth Burke theorized that we humans are, first, symbol makers, symbol users, and symbol misusers, and he posited the suggestion that in symbols we see ourselves. Walter Fisher suggested that our most reliable sources of personal truth are narratives. I find these claims to be intriguing, and I tend to want to put them together, and to believe that symbols, which are the basis of our meaning-making processes, and also of the processes of reading and writing, are intricately coded into our DNA, which may be the reason that writing and reading are so important to us. I believe that people are irresistibly drawn to good narratives, which are typically rich with significant symbols reflective of our human nature and of our quest to understand ourselves and our world. Ultimately, these symbols, narratives, poems, and short stories (though not really theological in any overt sense) connect us to and help us understand the most significant aspect of our lives as Christians—that is our personal relationship with Jesus Christ, Our Lord. That, for me at least, is what a volume of original prose and poetry, like this issue of Potpourri, is about.

So, I hope that you enjoy reading this issue of Potpourri. I have been reading Potpourri for twenty-five years, and I have especially enjoyed the privilege of being this year's guest reader. I have selected three of the poems and one of the short stories as favorites in this volume, though they are not intrinsically better or more worthy than

any other entry selected by the editors. These pieces I selected simply spoke to me a bit more deeply, more personally, as no doubt other entries in this volume will likewise speak to other readers.

I selected these pieces because I found them to be agile little skiffs that quickly transported me to an enjoyable place, either by techniques of narrative suspense, or as particularly evocative symbols that resonate in my memory. I don't want to presume to understand specific meanings in the selections that stood out for me. I only want to lift them up as moments that, for me, were evocative of my youth, memories the fears of time passing, or life passing me by, or of particularly lovely, stirring images that are quite enjoyable. In the case of the short story, I really enjoyed the subtle, very effective building up of suspense and foreboding.

At the editors' invitation, I have also included a poem that I wrote many years ago, when I sort of fancied myself a writer.

Congratulations to all of the authors who were selected to be featured in this edition of Potpourri! God's blessings to each of you! May He continue to inspire you to put pen to paper (or fingertips to iPad, as the case may be).

In Christ,

Bruce Creed

P  T

P O U

R R I

## "Poetry is This"

Danielle Jarvis

Poetry is this.

A river: not rocks, water, stones, moss,  
But motion, covering, smoothing into beauty.

The moon,  
Reflecting.

Not the brush, not the canvas, or the paint or the clay,  
But the art, seizing the soul.

A heart poured as ink  
Filling paper.

Looking forward at the past,  
Back at a filled void, raining.

Children living in a landfill,  
Souls amidst trash.

Not wind, thunder, clouds, waves, rain,  
But the storm: essences combined.

Essence: in, with, and under paper and page,  
Communing in the realm of the written word.

Not emotion or feeling,  
But the memory of feeling.

Refuse emotion; still exists:  
Refuse poetry; still persists

## "Sestina"

Cadence Klemm

Dancing flames  
crackle on the hearth, warming the girl  
who sits with her words,  
not scribbled in black ink upon white pages,  
but soaring on painted wings through her mind,  
waiting to be released into the world.

She remains alone in a world  
full of vacant speech that flames  
like wildfire, consuming all meaning. I don't mind  
the loneliness, the girl  
whispers to the empty pages  
resting in her lap, but I long for my words

to mean something more. If only I could take hold of my words  
and set them upon this hollow world.  
Surrounded by the busy pages  
of thoughtless scholars and critics, she hears the flames  
cry out to her in hunger. The girl  
feeds the ravenous blaze because, in her mind,

she knows it is nothing more than paper. You mind  
your vapid masters, you vacant words,  
she sighs, you have no purpose. The girl  
does what she can to rid the world  
of insignificance as into the flames  
she hurls the cluttered, empty pages.

Freed from the vacancy of intention, she returns to her open pages,  
barren, but brimming with the possibility of worth. Her mind  
is fixed upon the passion for meaning that flames  
within her chest. She reaches out and grasps the words  
that she will pour out to fill an empty world.  
Now, in her hands, the girl

holds the power of purpose, and this girl  
pens what streams from her heart to the numbered pages,  
enough to choke the world  
and stifle its meaningless murmurs. From her mind  
soar the winged words  
that burn even brighter than the flames.

And the girl doesn't mind  
that flames consume the world  
because now, these are her pages, and the fire is her words.

## “The Storyteller”

Cadence Klemm

It’s almost as if the inescapable passing of time is finally evaded when I notice him, the hunched man shuffling his way through the library. Everyone else might ignore him. They might continue their reading, or searching, or whispering, oblivious to this pause in reality, but I cannot. I don’t exactly know what it is that I find so intriguing: is it the sharp gleam in his eye, or the muted thud, thud, thud of his black rubber-tipped cane as it prods the ground? Or perhaps the wrinkled, midnight skin draped across his features, or his head, frosted with time-bleached hair? But whatever the reason, I am incapable of overlooking him as the rest do.

He carries himself with an aura both noiseless and humble, although his portly figure is a presence to reckon with, amply filling the spaces between shelves. He’s aware of his protruding stomach, covered by a maroon, collared shirt; as he navigates the narrow passages he’s cautious not to let the green, geometric tie that rests upon his belly brush up against the dusty spines of shelved books. His formal attire is matched oddly with a pair of worn, dark tennis shoes that peek out from beneath carefully pressed black slacks. He must wear them for comfort. They must be his favorite shoes. He must have bought them a year ago when he needed a new pair, and he must have liked them so much that he abandoned all others. He’s used them so frequently that they’re beginning to wear out, just like him.

I detect a slight limp in his shuffle as he meanders through the walls of books. The gleam in his eyes tells me a story entirely as tangible as the ones sitting dormant on the shelves: he injured his left knee years ago thanks to the icy steps of his front porch, and his stride was never quite the same. But that’s not what he would tell me if I asked. No.

“I was drafted,” he would begin in a rumbling, gravel voice that would saturate the room, causing people to pause their reading, or searching, or whispering, “when I was a young man, only thirty.” And I would hide a smile because that hardly seems young. But he would continue, “They sent me to Vietnam. Got a bullet to the leg, I did, right in the knee. War doctors tried to fix her up, but it was no good, no good, I tell you, ‘cause I’m still limping to this day. Have been for the past forty years.” He would release this little sigh that he intends

to be like that of a tired, cantankerous grouch, but his gleaming eyes would betray him. He never could resist an audience to whom his fabricated fantasies might be told.

He remembers when he still had someone to listen to his stories. When his family was young, he would arrive home, after a seemingly endless day at the tailor’s of hemming stodgy suits and dowdy dresses, and he’d be brimming with untold tales. His three girls would gather in the parlor, perched on furniture that there was never quite enough money to replace, and he told them stories. Stories that were true, stories that were almost true, stories that had not a bit of truth to them, but that sprang from his lips like water from a falls.

But now, his audience had vanished. A heart attack had taken his wife a few years back, and the three girls were all married and moved away, but that’s not what he’d say. “My wife, Theodora, beautiful thing she was, died at a right, sorry young age of thirtyfive, only a year after I got back from the war. She died giving birth to our youngest, she did. Youngest of eight.” Eight children? I would wonder. “Darn right, there were eight of them,” he would say with that impish glint in his eyes. “And their names all started with a D. Hardest thing keeping them straight. When you meant Diana, you’d call for Daisy, and David would hear wrong and come running.” Then he’d pass his cane from his left hand to his right, because the left was weary from gripping the curved plastic handle, and he’d tug upwards at his belted waistline to be sure it wasn’t going to slip over his portly belly.

“Yes, it was a busy place, our little house, at least, ‘til the circus came through.” The circus? “Yes, the circus. You know, with the lions and elephants and acrobats and all that nonsense. Anyway, every last one of them my kids, I mean well, they all got up and joined the circus. They were clowns, and right good ones they were too. I’d never see them, though, ‘cause they’d go here and there, but they’d never go home.” And I’d wonder where they were now. He would grin. “Oh, somewhere round and about, I expect, wearing big shoes and bright red noses. They are quite the performers. You should have seen them get shot from those cannons...” and the longer I listened the more fantastic his stories would become.

He would weave his tales for me, tales of wonder and excitement so incredible that I would be tempted to believe them. He would keep on, rambling and creating, until a tired librarian would hiss that it was closing time. He and I, we’d both look around and realize that there was not a soul left besides the two of us and the librarian with her tapping toe. He’d be in the middle of a tale, but glancing at his corroded



silver watch, he'd see that he was tardy for a skydiving appointment or at least that's what he'd tell me with a spark in his eye. "I'm going to be late because of you, you troublemaker," he'd growl, but the exasperation wouldn't reach his eyes. He'd just shake his head and begin his lonely shuffle down the aisles of words and out of sight.

And maybe tomorrow I'd return to the library and I would find him again. I would ask him how his leg was holding up. "Never worse, never better." And then he would continue with a mischievous show of his pearly teeth, "Did I ever tell you that story? I don't think I did." I would open my lips to protest I had heard his tales of war but he was already beginning, "It was a cougar attack, it was. You don't know how sharp those claws are until you feel them rip straight through your knee..."

And I would smile because I would know the stories were on their way.

## "Follow"

Mary Carnoali

There is no place where the fire bends,  
where the wind is choked,  
her cool breath stalled  
in the crusty rivets of the sand—  
this place where the shadows run  
and twist  
and grow,  
where the sun hides  
and the moon swells,  
where the souls of the faded relinquish their hold with grim acceptance.

I travel there, to this place beyond the edge.  
I tell myself with each labored step  
how I am different.  
How I will reach this place,  
how my path will be littered with the bones  
of those who were not as strong as I,  
who came  
and tried  
and failed.  
But I am a fool, as they were fools and fools alike,  
for there is no place where the fire bends  
and the crunch beneath my heel  
is only the crunch of a path  
well worn.

## “Oblivion”

Cadence Klemm

Death’s call is a  
frightening summons  
when all that awaits is  
oblivion;  
when with death’s kiss,  
dreams of love  
and love of dreams  
fade into nothingness;  
and when all worked for  
hoped for  
waited for  
will slip into the darkness.

So run,  
though it might be in vain,  
run like madmen,  
ignorant and reckless.  
For it only takes  
one step  
to trip  
and slip  
into the oblivion  
anyway.

## “The Photographer”

Naomi Iltis

The coffin lid clicked shut, and Marilyn squeezed her eyes shut. Her hands clutched shredded tissues, and Marilyn knew that it was time to say goodbye.

Don had slipped from her fingers much too quickly. Marilyn had awoken as normal and had rolled sleepily towards the middle of the bed to see if Don too had stirred. Instead of seeing his wrinkled cheeks, Marilyn had faced a shadow of her beloved Don. His gray, pallid face and cold skin had been all that remained.

The funeral was a simple affair. Marilyn only invited those who knew the couple best; only four couples took their seats in the hard, wooden pews. The smell of fresh flowers permeated the stale air of the old church.

The haunting melody of “Taps” filled the air and gunshots echoed through the trees. Marilyn shuffled to the large hole, and dropped a single, white tulip onto the polished wood. Turning from the gravesite, Marilyn walked – as steadily as she could manage – into a life without her husband.

Three days later, Marilyn was exhausted. Family members, distant relatives, neighbors, and even people she had never seen had constantly come and gone. Her daughters chattered in the kitchen; her sons carried boxes of Don’s belongings into the dark attic. While Marilyn had welcomed the busyness, she was ready for the soft peace that enveloped her as the last family drove away. In time, she would be lonely again, but for the moment, she felt at peace.

Marilyn walked slowly through each room, straightening magazines, folding blankets, plumping pillows. Satisfied with her work, she made her way to the winding staircase, but paused on the first step. She turned slowly to her left, her tired eyes falling on the closed door. The small, windowless room had been Don’s sanctuary. Marilyn gingerly turned the knob, and swung the door open. The musty yet comforting smell of Don’s cologne filled her nostrils. Marilyn’s eyes came to stop on a box of books, their spines cracked and faded. Taking a deep breath, she ignored the creaks in her knees and bent down, picked up the box, and walked out of the study. She climbed the stairs to the attic.

When Don had first built the house, Marilyn had despised

the attic. Drafty and dark, its exposed rafters had been perpetually festooned with spider webs. Shadows loitered in the corners, giving Marilynn the feeling that she was being watched. All the same, it was a large room and had been very useful as their house had been filled with children. Marilynn stepped into the attic and made her way to the back of the room. She found a spot and placed the box on the scratched, wooden floor. Satisfied, Marilynn turned to leave the attic. Her eyes landed on a small, blue wooden box with the words "For Marilynn" carved into the lid.

Marilynn eagerly lifted the lid, anxious to see what might lie inside. Stacks of black and white photos, torn and wrinkled at the edges lay nestled inside. Marilynn's eyes filled with tears as she gazed upon the photos, photos she could not recall ever seeing. Curiosity got the best of her and, forgetting her confusion and the lengthening shadows of evening, she settled in.

The first photo captured a group of chattering teenage girls walking down the sidewalk, Marilynn at the center. Marilynn, tall and willowy in her youth, strolled home after school. Marilynn relaxed and soaked up the laughter. Oblivious to the conversation, she let her mind wander. Don. He was quiet, not especially good-looking, but his dark hair and eyes gave him a mysteriousness that Marilynn liked. One way or another, she would get to know Don.

It took longer that Marilynn had anticipated. Since she had turned sixteen, she had grown accustomed to a constant following of boys. Always polite, she had turned them down. One boy in particular had asked her numerous times to the movies or to Bessie's for a soda. She had always declined, not at all interested. In fact, she felt uncomfortable around him, for he hung in the shadows waiting for her. But Don was different. He lived in his own world, completely oblivious to Marilynn and her charms. Fed up, Marilynn decided it was time.

"Don, do you want to go out with me or not?" She spoke confidently, not at all concerned with the forwardness her words suggested. Don finally met her eyes and was not at all taken aback by her boldness.

"I knew you would get impatient one of these days," Don replied calmly. "But yes, I would. I was planning to ask you, but you just couldn't wait, could you?" He laughed. Marilynn joined in, loving the way their laughs sounded together.

A woman gazed down at the ring on her finger, her face filled

with love. Barely six months had passed when Don made up his mind to ask Marilynn. He had known from the moment he laid eyes on her that he would marry her. Yes, it had taken him years to get up the nerve to ask her. Even then, he didn't do the asking. She did. But he liked that about her. Marilynn was not afraid to go after what she wanted. This time, however, Don knew that he would gather his courage and get down on one knee.

He worked harder than he ever had to save enough to buy Marilynn a ring. He wanted her to have the best, even if it meant exhausting himself. Finally, he had enough. Don purchased the ring, placed it in a blue velvet box, and hid it in his pocket. He had the whole evening planned.

The walk was wonderful. The picnic perfect. Don held Marilynn's hand as they strolled along the lake. The moon shone down on them, filling the night with shadows. Don paused, bent down, and looked up at Marilynn. He pulled the ring from his pocket. Marilynn's eyes filled with tears as he slipped the ring on her finger.

Marilynn smiled at the memories of that night. He had completely caught her off guard. And she loved him all the more for that. Of course she had said yes. Don had been so thoughtful, so sweet. At that moment, she realized who had taken the photos. Don had! He had captured these moments so that she might have something to cling to when he left. She would be all right.

A beautiful woman waved her hand in a tearful goodbye. The letter had arrived only a year after their wedding. Marilynn awoke early that morning, anxious to tell Don about the baby that would turn their family of two into three. She had received the news only yesterday; impatient as she was, she knew that the time had to be just right.

Later that afternoon, Marilynn hummed as she washed the dishes. Everything would be absolutely perfect. Marilynn slipped on her shoes and strolled down the twilight-bathed lane to collect their mail. As she neared the mailbox, a shadow disappeared around the corner. Marilynn blinked, uncertainty filling her. She gathered the mail and hurried back down the lane. A thick, white envelope in her hands caught her attention. Addressed to Donald Schultz, it filled her with a sense of alarm. War had begun, and Marilynn had the sinking feeling that this was the letter every household dreaded.

Don had been drafted. How could this be happening? Everything

had been wonderful. How would she tell Don about the baby? She certainly did not want to add to his worry and concern. Yet she wanted him to have something to hold on to, something to give him hope. For once in her life, however, she would wait.

The time came quickly. Marilynn and Don walked slowly towards the train station, Don clutching a suitcase in one hand and Marilynn's hand in the other. Marilynn wanted to say something that would bring comfort to Don, something that would reassure him of her love. She wanted to tell him that everything would be all right. She especially wanted to tell him about the tiny life inside her. But there was nothing that she could say. Don dropped his suitcase and gathered Marilynn in his arms.

"I love you, Don. You know that, right? I love you more than anything." Marilynn finally spoke, her tears streaming down her face.

"I know that. And I will think of you every day. And before you know it, I'll be home again." He kissed her, then turned towards the train.

Marilynn dried her tears. For the first time in her life, uncertainty held her captive, uneasiness settling around her like a cloak. Summoning her courage, she smiled and raised her hand in a wave.

Once again, Marilynn pulled herself from her memories. What an incredible gift Don had given her with these photos. Gazing down at the photos still in her gray hands, she flipped through them quickly. She chuckled at the images of birthday parties and family vacations. Marilynn sighed at the memories. Then paused. The photo she held was brightly colored and glossy. In this particular image, Don and Marilynn smiled at something in the distance. Marilynn sat still. Don had taken these photos of her... so why was he in this one? She flipped to the next. She and Don worked in the yard. Marilynn's breath quickened. If Don hadn't taken these photos, who had? She flipped through the rest of the photos, her suspicion growing. She forced herself to recall their neighbors, their friends. Who could have gotten so close? Marilynn reached the final photo. It photo depicted a church filled with mourners and a dark, wooden casket situated in the front of the church. Marilynn recognized herself bent over the casket. The photo was obviously from Don's funeral. But where were all the flowers? And who were all the people in the pews? As she studied the photo, she noticed a very distinct shadow marring the edge of the photo. Marilynn turned the photo over and found a letter attached.

"My dearest Marilynn," Marilynn read. "I see you finally found

the photos. Each of the photos captures a precious moment. There is one, however, that I especially wanted to share with you. I saved this photo for last. While you mourned, I rejoiced. Let me start at the beginning. I have admired you since I first saw you. No matter what I did, however, you were always out of reach. Then Don entered the picture. I was devastated. But I was not willing to let you go. I remained hidden in the shadows, but I was always there. In my own way, I remained a part of your life. I captured your life and made it mine. I wanted to wait until the right time to make myself known, and I was afraid I would have that chance. But the time has come. I will be back. The Photographer."

Marilynn dropped the letter. Picking up the stack of photos she had perused earlier, she quickly glanced at each one. What she had overlooked before now became the only thing she could see. In every photo, an unmistakable shadow darkened the lower corner. He, who had called himself The Photographer, had put himself in every picture. He had worshipped her all this time, and he was coming back. A cold dread swallowed Marilynn. Whoever this man was, he would return.

Her breath came in short gasps. Her mind reeling, she turned the door. A shadow, dark as night, crept its way through the doorway and across the splintered floor.

## “Reach for the Dead”

Johnathon Carnoali

We called her home, and we called her mother,  
and when the time was right we abandoned her.  
Floating as she was, lost and graceful and listing gently,  
we abandoned her, casting our indignant eyes backwards  
towards her, towards home, one last stagnant prayer  
flickering in the half-light.

She stared back, her rotten eye focused far past us.  
Focused on the far off accomplishments of her children.  
Her children, her love, her pride, her quiet murder.  
We left her in the shade of her burning porch,  
and when her world became too parched,  
left her to the rolling mercy of the sun.

“I understand,” she whispered  
stretching her crinkled brown hands before her  
and gritting her yellowed teeth  
“After all, your pain is my pain, my child.”  
“I loved you once,” She called after us.  
“I loved you with all my heart.”

When we reach for the dead everything becomes nothing  
But we do, because our home is frozen and empty.  
We’re despicable, slanderous, convicted  
And we, with our guilty, pregnant sympathy  
could only ever answer in silence,  
could only ever run from our twisted creation.  
Our brown, sickly mother.

She was beautiful once, our mother.  
We were told that, for a time, she was lovely.  
For a time, her verdant curves and valleys unfurled  
and opened full and gentle over our slowly drifting oceans  
Our heartbeats frantic and afraid next to hers—  
soothing, steady, loving, selfless.

## “Pimple”

Izaak Wendorff

As if Earth were invaded  
By a giant mountain preparing to release  
The toxic carbons, sulfur, and oxides,

It stretched the pores. I made it  
A promise to myself to cease  
Thinking of its rigid sides

Which I simply hated;  
The volcano likes to tease.  
POP! First the white lava, then the crimson  
red resides.

Oh, joyful eruption!

## “Great Nation”

Marcel Hallaert

Sweet serene solidarity,  
it serenades the soul.  
But gates to hell don't shut  
in the mind of a maniac.  
One or two,  
like flowers in the dirt,  
a Columbine, seasonal.  
Around only when skies are blue  
and sun shines—deceit.  
Like rain with no clouds,  
unexpected and unwanted,  
securely unsafe and unseen.  
Cannot be undone.  
Scared.  
A Millard South mindset.  
A monochrome t-shirt  
in Von Maur.  
A look in the eyes that says:  
“I don't care.”  
“I've lost it.”  
Like a Sandy Hook  
stuck in the abdomen of  
a once great nation.  
Controversial laws are proof  
that where we live now  
makes the 1930's mafia  
look like Project Peace.  
Batman left his suit at home,  
he's not visiting Aurora tonight.  
Go to Virginia Tech.  
Learn something new.  
Read it in the news,  
and take no action.  
Just remember that a life lost  
is another hindered.  
Like the twitch of a spider's web,

it spreads.  
Attracts the others.  
A psychotic rampage  
that blows the mind.  
Blows it onto the walls.  
It locks us in a phone booth,  
and forces us to dial 9-1-1  
on September 11.  
Like the 16th president's Booth,  
a John Wilkes world.  
The image of Harvey Oswald.  
A Luciferous lot of jargon, it  
spreads across social media  
like patting the dirt on the grave.  
Our country tis' of thee,  
we are too blind to see.  
When twins fall like towers  
in a kindergarten class,  
and blood pools in the legs  
of lifeless innocence,  
human rights don't matter.  
Land of the free  
and home of the insane.  
Like a statue to the damned,  
they become household names.  
Frothing at the mouth,  
the rabid dogs of media eat  
it up like a wounded bird.  
Mend a wing and soar  
through flaming forests.  
The grief falls over victims'  
crying families.  
Like termites in the woodwork,  
we feed on their sadness.  
Say we're sympathetic  
and change the channel

to see how the Kardashians  
are spending their inheritance.  
The 4th of July comes every year,  
365 days of it, like a  
pyro-hypnotic flare  
singeing the pupils of the fed up.  
All the while, the hollowness  
of it cackles inches from our nostrils.

God Bless America.

## “A Self Portrait”

Michael Winckler

As I sit there, he looks at me with a smile full of grace, a smile that I can't imagine someone having more than a few times a year, maybe even a lifetime. It's a smile that invites me to forget of the stress that forges my thoughts into stone. I then begin to realize he sees my heart exactly how it wants to be seen. I'm convinced he exposes one of these grace-filled smiles more than a few times a year.

Beyond the smile, his dimples are deep and his beard is coarse. His eyes are tenderly intentional; I can tell he isn't afraid to feel deeply, yet it is a gaze for which I would be comfortable going into battle. His laugh invites me to do the same.

I observe him as he walks back to where he was sitting. The laughter has subsided, but my captivation has not. He sits down, relaxes his shoulders, and looks out the window. I catch him leaning on a memory. He furrows his brow and crinkles the side of his mouth. His shoulders are relaxed no more, they seem rather to be bearing something that would suffocate stronger men. His look deepens and has an aching sense of otherness. There is nothing outside that he is looking at in particular—no, he is looking much too far. I can see in his eyes something frighteningly different than what I had just experienced. In no time at all, he looks to have aged years. A sadness that I've never seen before is being forced out of his woven hazel and green eyes. I wish to have never seen this, for I know the only thing that would cause his thoughts to wander so deep, so far into his soul as this, would be a broken heart. For I know that no one looks at someone else's heart as he had looked at mine, unless he were searching for his own.

## “Inverse”

Hannah Fortna

Dark  
pinpricked sky  
Warm pockets  
Tiny shoes that make me  
feel top-heavy  
Clamorous moon  
floodlighting  
the entire world  
Maybe looking for me

Low  
throbbing, phone-in-pocket  
music, thick  
hushed smoke  
Dark  
hunched-shouldered, swaying  
out of sync

I almost didn't see  
him  
standing there because  
I  
was looking at the  
stars

## "A Feeling of Regard"

Ellie Fransmeier

I have a queer feeling of regard towards you, he said  
as if there was a cord attached somewhere under my left breast  
and the other end in yours  
So that is exactly what he did. He took up a piece of string and  
secured it  
First round his own heart, for that was easy enough  
Then he gently reached under her ribs and plucked out her organ of  
veneration  
from its hitherto untouched residence and held it beautiful and  
fluttering and wild in his hands  
and tied the other end of his string around it and placed it back in  
her chest  
And now you are truly my little bird, he said  
And we will be together always, for if you leave me or stray too far  
The cord will be snapped  
And I should take to bleeding inwardly  
And I will die  
And why, she sang, would I ever wish to stray too far from you.  
And these words petted and soothed him and smoothed the furrow in  
his massive brow  
So she sang them every day  
So that when the day came that she flew away so far that the cord was  
pulled taut  
He knew she didn't mean what she was doing  
That his chest was in no real danger of breaking open  
Because she would return to him of her own accord

So he didn't pull the string towards him to ease his pain (even though  
he could have done so and no one would have blamed him)  
He only called her name and the reverberations of his voice were  
carried along the string  
And hit her with a force that knocked the breath out of her  
And though she would not cut the string, she tried to ease the pain  
She turned her heart to ice and rock  
But the string chipped away at it still  
So she used the shards of rock  
As flint, but the string would not catch fire  
And so she left everything she had found (her freedom her chance)  
And followed the cord back to him  
And the closer she got to him the more comfortable he felt  
And when she reached him they both agreed she had come back of  
her own accord  
And she was glad to see his heart still enclosed in its casing, as warm  
and strong  
as it had ever been.



## "The Ruins as They Were"

Johnathon Carnoali

The ruins as they were,  
crumbled,  
constricted by the thorns and branches  
of too great a distance  
and too great a desire.

The ruins as they were,  
lost under violent growths  
of green moss and bright venom.  
Each cap-stoned arch  
faltering and piling,  
vines embracing the tiled ground  
and curling there like vipers.

The ruins as they were  
led to foyers  
and neglected alcoves,  
led to lonely shafts of pale light  
dying in rubble strewn throne rooms.

The ruins as they were  
can never be again.  
Touched or held  
or trusted to hold a foundation.  
Can never be warmer  
than the empty spaces  
between the verdurous walls.

The ruins as they were,  
punished and trampled  
for rising too high,  
for overtaking the sun  
in the wrong direction.

The ruins as they were,  
now damned and twisted  
stretched six ways  
like a cracked pane of glass.  
Struggling for too long  
while sanguine moss grows and flourishes  
and smothers a two-faced friend.

## “At the top of the building a decorative ledge”

Hannah Fortna

At the top of the building a decorative ledge  
runs all the way around, sticking out no more

than enough to interrupt the rain  
if it streams down the bricks. Next

to the building stands a tree,  
one single skinny branch of whose

rests against the ledge. That must be how  
the squirrel got up.

Up the skinny branch, down  
the narrow ledge to the corner, where

he perches with tiny feet  
gripping the edge and tail

kinked up over his back, chattering  
with great insistence to the world

in general. Yes,  
I told him, I do believe you are

the king of the world  
up there. What a tragedy

would it be if he  
were actually

calling for help?



“Idea Book” by Grace Hollenbeck

## Guest Reader's Selections

Dr. Bruce Creed, Professor of Communication

“Poetry is This”  
Danielle Jarvis

“Follow”  
Mary Carnoali

“Oblivion”  
Cadence Klemp

“The Photographer”  
Naomi Iltis

## Dr. Bruce Creed Biography

Abigail Connick

Dr. Bruce Creed currently serves as the professor of communication and the English, Communication, and Theater Arts department chair. He will retire after the 2014-2015 academic year.

Creed began teaching after he completed a Masters in Communication with an emphasis on Oral Interpretation in 1975. After a few years of teaching, he became dissatisfied with the profession and resigned from his teaching position. Following his career change, he worked a couple of smaller jobs before he was hired to work for a United States government contractor.

In the late 1980s, Creed decided to pursue teaching again, and in 1989, he was hired as an assistant professor in communications and theater at Concordia.

“This was kind of where I landed on something that was really meaningful,” Creed said. “God literally gave me a second chance (at teaching).”

In his 26 years of service to Concordia, Creed taught various communication and theater classes. He also directed and acted in plays. Creed and Professor of Art, Lynn Soloway, regularly took students on international trips to western and central Europe. Creed also participated in several short missions with students, including aiding tsunami victims in India and Indonesia, building houses in Mexico, and teaching English abroad.

Creed is thankful for his opportunity to teach at Concordia. He said that his job has “truly been a vocation.” Creed has immensely enjoyed the Christ-centered atmosphere of Concordia that emanates from both the faculty and the students.

"5/19/79"

Dr. Bruce Creed

Teacher

Like barefoot, happy children  
(products of some other loves)

You  
bounce  
leap  
spin into my life whether I want you or not  
so  
I am involved . . .

Each of you in some way large or small is a part of me  
more a part of me each day

We meet at scheduled hours for meaningful exchanges of words  
sometimes quiet  
always intense

Professionally I try to see you all as lumps of clay for me to squeeze  
and mold with my eager fingers (the metaphor of the process is not  
clear)

Too often I am thinking of the hot fire of the kiln and not the clay  
about to burn

I  
am  
never  
finished

Or perhaps it's a play

Our scene continues and we the actors are left to search for an ending

The lights get hot  
some lines are lost to mumbling  
and  
there we are

Each of you bouncing spinning leaping

I  
lurching after several at once

Mad to make my mark upon the clay

## A Note from the Editors

Stephanie Coley and Carolina VonKampen

Dear Reader,

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to be among such talented people here at Concordia University, Nebraska. The selection of short stories, prose, artwork, and poems only is a glimpse into the creativity that our fellow students possess. We selected pieces for this publication that stir the soul and challenge the mind to look deeper.

Both of us are English majors with an unending fascination with literature and its magic that casts spells and opens eyes. Being part of different worlds or leaping inside someone else's head could prove to be the most eye-opening experience that life has to offer. We hope you are whisked away and enchanted just as we were by these pieces. As the gift was given to us, we wish to extend the gift to you.

May you adventure into poetry and dance in the flames, sit down and listen to a story from an old man's mouth, then perhaps follow him down a well-worn path to oblivion and the unknown. Take a mental picture of this place beyond the edge and find the shadows in the photograph. Let your heartbeat be frantic as you reach for the dead to something beyond, to some joyful eruption (perhaps like a pimple). Ponder the mind of a manic. Look at a heart the way it wants to be seen. Then, inverse everything and notice it all, from the feeling of regard to the ruins as they were. At the top of one of those ruins, on a decorative ledge, find the adventure in the leap, although if one must, one might call for help. A teacher might be there to cushion the fall, or you might just splash into the literary ocean and drown.

We would like to thank all of the students who submitted their writing and artwork. Your participation was greatly appreciated. We would also like to thank Dr. Bruce Creed for being this year's guest reader and for providing us not only with remarks on our selected pieces, but a poem of his own as well. A special thanks goes to our fellow Sigma Tau Delta members who helped us read submissions, select pieces for publication, and format the magazine. And finally, we would like to thank our Supreme Advisor Dr. Gabriel Haley. Our Advisiest Advisor was essential to this process and we could not have done it without him.

Stephanie Coley and Carolina VonKampen,  
Potpourri Editors

