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The Angle

December 1997

St. John Fisher College
A Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the Winter 1997 issue of The Angle! This is our final issue of the year and we look forward to publishing two more issues in the Spring. I would like to thank everyone who submitted their work; we received an overwhelming 51 submissions! I would like to congratulate Mark Bowers, Veronica McGlynn, and Monica Bradbury on their prize-winning submissions.

The Angle accepts original poetry, short stories, essays, and short plays, as well as artwork and photography, from SJFC students, faculty, and staff. The submission deadline for the next issue is Friday, February 6, 1998 at 4 p.m. All submissions must be typed and must include the author's name, address, and telephone number. Submissions should be dropped off in the Writing Center (Science 225). Once again, we will be offering prizes for the three best submissions.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Sean Christie for giving up his night off to proofread the issue as well as Chris Holdridge for his last minute proofreading help. I would like to thank The Angle's outstanding staff members for all of their hard work and dedication. With your help, each issue gets better and better. And, I would like to thank Dr. Theresa Nicolay for all of her continuous support and encouragement. Each of these people worked very hard to make this issue a success. Thank you all.

I encourage each of you to consider submitting your work to The Angle. It is a wonderful opportunity to receive recognition for all of your hard work.

Enjoy!
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR THE ANGLE

The following submission guidelines must be followed for the February 1998 issue. All pieces must:

1. be typed (space according to your preference)
2. include a cover letter which contains the author's name, address (campus or off-campus), phone number (home & work), and the title(s) of the piece(s) submitted
3. not include the author's name or personal information on any pages of written text
4. contain only 1 piece per page only if writing a poem

Regrettably, we are unable to accept any piece which does not follow these guidelines. If you have any questions concerning submission guidelines, please contact Editor Heather Ruffalo in the Writing Center (Science 225) at 385-8219. Thank you.

*** Please note: if you would like your submissions returned after the issue is published, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

First Prize Winner

Jazz

I walked outside in mid-October frost lightly backed by the memories of summer jazz, my toes were curled up in grass that almost felt like sand, fire blazed across my sky and I was home in suburbia without you, it's funny how the last time we talked all I could think about was the difference between then and than, it's funny how the last time we talked you told me that I wrote too much, that I analyzed and analyzed everything until it became nothing, that you wouldn't tell me everything because you didn't want to be apart of some damn song for the world to hear, but it's funny cause I can't sing and I don't write songs, it's life that writes the jazz songs that I feel too easily, I can feel the desire and the grace but when I pick up the instruments my fingers clumsily slide over the strings, it's the jazz that lives improvising new chord changes on stage, the jazz that seizes its audience, that seizes me, that changes summer into fall the way you once changed my writing into song, if you were here today together we could escape this coffee-stained jazz bar one last time, this afternoon we could drive to Oswego chasing night across this state, this afternoon I would still follow you before fire escapes from my sky defying the scales and the notes of this song.

--Mark Bowers
Second Prize Winner

Freedom

The gentle,
raindrop
drumming of
fluorescent wings
stretched across
a violet canvass,
feverishly pumping,
dodging swiping nets,
and chubby fingers,
higher and farther from
chaos.

--Veronica McGlynn

Third Prize Winner

We almost died climbing the falls
and I loved it

smiles of exhilaration nearly cracked our heads in halves
gallons of blood tried to escape my skin
    pulsing &
    pushing
from behind my sternum and shoulder blades

I remember you sitting on the cold cement step of the arts &
crafts lodge:
    when we came back down the mountain
    yelling
    spinning circles in grass that had never been so green
as then
    I wanted to sit with you
    but I couldn’t

I had to run
    spin
    yell
you laughed with us, at us, whichever
and laughing said to me in that offhand way of yours
    --as if it didn’t matter--
    “You’re cute”

--Monica Bradbury
haiku

Van Halen's keen riff
craze me with your tortoise pick
pinky in air

--Kristine L. Shanahan

--Aurora Bewicke
The Awakening

I pour myself over you--
A bath of bread, milk, and honey
entwined between your fingers,
slipping
into the ocean of your eyes,
falling
against the sweet stem of your soul.

Desire cradles me in lethargic kisses
embossed across my spine.
Sliding
into your skin and
filling
sugary-coated walls with nectar

Our bodies ebb and flow
keeping time with the high-tide at moon’s pull
Thrusting
me into the depths of your hunger
Bursting
open primal fever, unleashed and sacred unto ourselves.

—Heather Ruffalo
Dear Ex

I hope this letter finds you well, that
after all this time you are happy

Somebody asked me the other day where you were
I don’t know, I said
I heard he moved in with his mother-in-law but I don’t know, I said
(because I don’t)
Oh, he’s married?
Yeah, a few months after I had the baby
Wow Does he send money? they asked
everybody asks that
No, but his parents write us checks at Christmas & birthdays, I said
(That makes me feel bad, you know, but I need the money)
Does he see the baby ever?
No, I wouldn’t let him if he tried
(And I’m glad you don’t)

It took months for the nightmares to stop, you know
I used to wake up with a closed throat and too much
blood in my veins, in my neck and ears
some nights twice, three times, more
Because you bragged to your friends that you
were going to take my baby away from me
He sleeps in my bed, even now, because I needed to see
him there, safe
as soon as my eyes opened
Every night
Every time

The fear has abated now

That’s not to say it isn’t there--
I will always wonder
I will always watch
And I will never let you touch
my son

I hope this letter finds you well, that you are happy
I wish you were dead but I hope you are happy
I really do
Best Wishes
The Mother

--Monica Bradbury
Wandering

On an ordinary day
I look for a way
To become unpreoccupied.

Catch a train of thought heading south, or north
Before it leaves
With your arrival.

Hummingbird wings draw my eyes
To the window
Suds drip down my fingers.

Blue and white teacups rattle on saucers
Cinnamon scent loosens the longing
Tugging on my sleeve.

Tiny cups clinking, girls and dolls dreaming
I blink, and giggles bubble into champagne
Tickling my nose.

I laugh to think running away would do
Rather, I embrace the moment
And find you.

--Anne Steger

'Resident Alien'

Her body was born to be
Worked to death
used up
thrown away
I don't remember, when she was last
not tired
not sad
not scared?
I vowed, I would not be like her
Her rough, cracked hands and lined face
Yelling at me in her grease spattered uniform
her support hose snaked by a run

Fate is wicked,
it tricked us both, drowned our dreams
Our reflections are the same
We both know what it is to want
what you're never going to have.

--Suzanne Wood
You don't have to leave the light on
I know you're asleep and could care less
it's all just a display of artificial concern, I know.
afraid your baby will come home stumbling drunk?
well, stumbling drunk is nothing new.
my first steps were as a stumbling drunk
remember mommy?
or maybe you don't.
maybe you were too drunk yourself to notice.
ever since the day I could learn to walk
I've been trying to teach you.
Mother
the girl you once knew
has started anew
I refuse to be part of the clean up crew
of your party of fools.

--Ann Gray

--Steve Huff
Confession

Sara lifted her heavy eyelids to the bright flashing red lights dancing on her walls. She lay motionless and hypnotized by the quick circles of light painting her bedroom. She recognized the scraping of shoes against the tiles of the kitchen floor and the hushed whispers hanging in the darkness. Sara heard the faint clinking of metal and a final CLICK. She knew. It was over. She knew it when the toothy, big haired woman on the television said it. She knew it when it stared back at her in black and white. Now they would all know it.

From the top of the staircase she peered through the narrow doorway into the kitchen where she saw her brother huddled on the floor. His hair was wild and his hands were trapped behind him. Two men in crisp blue suits stood over him waiting. Waiting for the collapse of a family. The final blow.

"Brian, did you do this?" Sara recognized the weak, nearly broken voice of her mother. Brian cried huge tears. Heartbreaking, slow, sliding tears that formed gradually in the corners of his blue eyes—glistening, shapely tears before they collapsed and inched down his cheeks. He cried, quietly, almost privately.

"Jesus made me do it," he whispered as he tore at the mess of dark hair upon his head. Sara's mother's eyes widened as she gasped and quickly reached for her husband. Leaning on her husband and foolishly thinking she was sucking strength from him, she buried her aged face in his broad shoulder. Her thick, salty tears stained his cotton shirt.

"What the hell is he talking about? Tommy, please, do something," she whispered in quiet desperation. Gently, he placed his hand beneath her chin and lifted her face to his. Their eyes waged a battle. Tommy, defeated and drained, spoke first.

"Kate, there's nothing left to--"

"Don't you dare," she hissed turning her back to him. Tommy stood silent and felt the pain of too many words unspoken slap his body. He let out a low, agonizing sigh and looked down at the crumpled stranger on the floor. His son. For months he felt him slipping deeper and deeper into the formless darkness that now surrounded him. Tommy tried to fix him. He tried, but Brian only clawed at him, driving himself farther and farther away.

"Why?" The hollow word floated through the room like a bubble waiting to burst. Now it was their turn to wait. Sara, her mother, her father and the two men waited for a reply.

"Jesus made me do it."

Sara found herself on her knees atop the staircase silently praying and slowly coming apart. The mask she had been wearing, that they all had been wearing, as much for themselves as for others, was beginning to splinter. She could hear ice cracking and seams breaking her face into pieces. She listened to her mother weeping and whispering hold on to herself as she rocked side to side. She closed her eyes and remembered the toothy, big haired woman telling of the boy who had been killed. She thought of the bloodied rock lying in the red soaked snow next to his young body. She thought of Brian. Her brother. He was lost in his own darkness. She knew. Now they all knew.

--Veronica McGlynn
Caretaker

You waged a winless battle
against an enemy unseen

His body racked by illness
that never should have been

You knew the final outcome
but that did not deter

Your love
Your presence
Your giving all you were

And now that you have told me
what happened in my absence

I wonder,
when he was dying
and you were grieving

Who,
was taking care of
you?

--Anne Steger
Catch

Her smile pelts my heart
Like snowballs thrown in April
Delivered unexpectedly
Breathtaking and delightful.

Icy corkscrew cacti
Pierce skin, scalp and tendrils
Shivers of runny curliques
Tiptoe past my temples.

Rivulets form and droplets slide
Down crew neck unprepared
Cold shower of melting torture
Neither spine nor chest is spared.

I'll pitch one back, toss gently
Snow powder borne on wind
Explosions of crystallized sunlight
Burst from your chattering grin.

--Anne Steger

Seaglass

The sign reads private road, 5 mph, as I make a quick left off the Ontario State Parkway and am welcomed by a sailboat mural marked Sandy Harbor Lane. My eyes run across the cluster of bird house mailboxes stalling on number 19--Riners. The pond on my left remains covered in a thick blanket of seaweed and cattails jut up through the water refusing to advance to dry ground. The smell of seaweed and the cool lake breeze attack me as I close my driver side door and advance to the back of the house. Awfully quiet, I think, the only sounds that touch my ears are the light waves and squawking seagulls awaiting their morning handout of week old bread.

I pass by the back door and make my way around the right side of our brown lake house. I leave my shoes at the shift from the grass to sand and allow my toes to be nuzzled beneath the morning grains. The sun rests low to the East and the beach is empty. I'm thankful for the moment of peace. The pall and shovel, floaties and swim shoes all still rest in their storage bed. No activity this morning. I slowly make my way to the water's edge. The sounds of my papa's educated warning rings in my ears, "Lake Ontario rolls, baby. One day it's seventy degrees and the next day it can be fifty, you never know." Then he would go into one of his repeated stories about when he was a kid at the lake. My big toe is the bravest and it is that toe that dares the depths today. The surface of the lake is broken and a shiver darts through my foot and up the back of my leg. The lake had rolled, the mystery of silence is solved.

Mother spots me reflecting by the break from beach to chilled water. She makes her way from the screen porch with the green and white striped awnings towards me, coffee in each fist. "The lake's turned. Your father took the boys out on the boat."

She smiles and warm coffee stimulates my chilled nose. We both sniffle softly and watch the waves rhythmically pound the sand. I bend over and pick a rock out of the water noticing its cool, smooth surface and allow my thumb and forefinger...
to warm it with their caressing motion.

"Another one for your rock collection Anna, or is this one a skipping stone?"

"Not flat enough to be a skipping stone, I offer with the air of a formal education in shoreline pebbles.

I drop the yellow stone in the front pocket of my khaki shorts. I know it will end up either in my car or on one of the window sills at my apartment joining the rest of my trinkets and treasures.

"Did Missy go on the boat with Dad and Noah and Jacob?"

"No, Missy still hasn't braved a Sunday morning with your dad and the boys. We've gotten her out on the dock this summer but the poor little darling still fears the water like none of you other kids ever did."

"Is she awake yet?"

"I think so. She's in her bedroom. Please talk to her Anna, I worry about her being so much younger than the rest of you."

I kiss Mom and pivot in the sand. I eye Missy's bedroom window and wonder what a four-year-old is doing in her room on a beautiful summer morning. Making my way toward the front of the house, I chuckle to myself. The front of the house is actually the back but proper lakeside vocab dictates the side facing the water is the front (I still call it the back). I open the screen porch door and smell the familiar almond coffee keeping warm in the pot.

"Missy?"

I call out to Missy letting the end of her name get a bit louder in my throat as to question whether she has braved the sunlight of a new day. I ascend the spiral staircase in the corner of our living room that leads to the second floor loft. Here the boys share the room on the left and Missy's is the one on the right. I rap lightly on her door and slowly push it open. Missy is rummaging through her dresser drawers, perhaps trying to find the perfect purple shorts to match her pink and blue striped shirt. Her summer streaked blonde hair is half in a ponytail—a Missy ponytail. She claims her independence by dressing herself in the morning.

"Miss, whatcha doin?"

"Getting dressed."

"Need help, baby?"

"Anna, I'm not a baby."

"Why didn't you go out on the boat with Dad and the boys?"

Her sweet little voice informs me she is going treasure hunting. She slips her tiny feet into her lake shoes that allow her free run atop the rocks at the shallow shoreline.

"What are you hunting for?" I pry a bit, trying to build a little trust in our relationship this morning. "Seaglass."

Missy eyes me, questioning my motives. I know company is what she most desires but would never ask. At only four years old, she is a Riner and is already very stubborn.

"Seaglass? Mind if I come with you?"

She cracks a smile and I am reminded of how important a partner is when you're treasure hunting—someone has to hold the map. Missy allows me to retie her sun-kissed hair on top of her head and leads our exhibition down the winding steps, across the heat-gathering sand and along the blue water of her calculated shores.

Seaglass is not a precious metal and is not very rare. Up and down the shores of Lake Ontario an array of seaglass hides about the smooth stones. The pieces of glass are no longer translucent and their rough edges have been worked smooth by the water and sand. Beer bottles, soda bottles, and Aunt Jemima syrup bottles all produce the pieces of brown, orange, white, and green fogged glass that harmlessly decorate the beach.

Missy informs me the boys always bring home the orange and green pieces that are scattered every ten feet along the sand. She squats down as she speaks and retrieves a large orange piece.

"See Anna, here is Noah's favorite."

I gently reach for the continent shaped crystal, running my thumb along its smooth borders. The clouded orange piece is rolled over and over between my fingertips. I lift my gaze from the find to question its worth.

"Miss, you want to keep this one? I bet it's bigger than any the boys have found this summer."

"No, not that one," she lets out a short sigh.

"But Miss, I try to argue, but Missy is already twenty feet ahead of me. I eye the piece in my palm and drop it into my pocket. Ahead of me, Missy is now down on her hands and knees.

"What is it, Miss?"

She rises with her small fist closed tight. Her eyes sparkle. I know she's satisfied. Missy juts her arm forward but keeps
her hand closed.

“What do you have there sweetheart?”

I try asking her again. This time her tiny fingers slowly unwrap to reveal the most magnificent color blue I’ve ever seen. Azure like ocean or sky but softened by its life in the lake. We both stare, admiring the small piece that rests in Missy's palm.

“Mama says they come from perfume bottles. Mama says they are the lake’s sapphires.”

We share one long moment staring at the gem the water has produced. I kiss Missy’s forehead and she proceeds to drop her sapphire into my front pocket.

To my Brother:

I felt your apprehension
The tears that willed to fall,
Hanging restlessly on the edge
Of your soft eyelids.
Sweeping lashes
Kept them hidden in the cave of Secrets
The heart of unopened treasures.

The drive home that day
Through the emerald
ing rolling remnants
Of time
Weaving along the calm, quiet
Whispering waters
I remembered when
I had been you.
Senses reeling in five directions.

The blue abyss above
Smiled
Warm, moist, drops
Shed in compassion understanding connection
Crystallized, magically,
Momentarily
a smooth arch
waltzed on the wind

--Erin Hopkins
each step
a hue
Guarding the foothills.

My mother giggled.
"Rainbows are good luck."

The colors sang
With ease
and I made a wish
for peace and harmony
to befriend your shadow.

--Jennifer Jonaitis

All I know About Nobody

Nobody is somebody who could've
taken the blame for everybody
Nobody makes sense whenever this
question is asked, who are you?
Nobody is the name of everybody
Who might not be liked by anybody
Nobody is disrespected by everybody,
and not knowing that somebody still cares for nobody
My name and your name was
nobody, but everybody picked
a real name and put nobody to shame

--Ben Frimpong

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Freedom Under Fire

A dark form becomes a voice in the darkness.
Surprisingly enough,
I'm not at all startled.
I've heard his voice before.
"You're not like the others" he spoke.
"I wouldn't dream of it" I replied.
"I want you to know then," he said
"who is your guide?"
The stars or Buddha?
Money?
Jesus?
Passion or fear?
Or is it, instead the fact
that you are simply a screen
filtering out what you don't want others to see?
speaking not what you don't want others to hear?"
"It's not any of these." I reply.
"I respect, not follow,
for I am free.
I make you uneasy because you are not.
This is why you question me."

--Ann Gray

--Aurora Bewicke
They Call Me Names

they call me Names
(on the color line...)

they call me nigger;
they call me black;
and/or colored.

they call me minority;
they call me alien;
and/or foreigner.

they call me immigrant;
they call me legal;
and/or illegal.

they call me uncivilized;
they call me uneducated;
they categorize me “other”

they call me names;
I hate them all,
with total hatred.

Hate. Why hate?
Hated begets hatred.
regardless,

I hate’em all.
because
they’re all derogatory.

the names they call me,
the terms they use
to describe me,
do not define me
as person complete
with dignity and right.

they do not reflect
my humanity.
instead, they refer
to the color of my
skin, or to
how I look externally
to the size of my lips,
to the tone of my darkness,
and/or to my talent.
to how I speak
the white man’s language,
and to my “accent”
to how I dress,
to how I walk,
and carry myself.
to what I deserve,
to what I don’t,
the list’s endless.

but, hey!
I’m not just color
or appearance
or talent
or language
or cloth.

I’m not just a person
with basic needs;
I am HUMAN too.
HUMAN: with dignity,
intelligence,
and reason.

I may be
immigrant
of African descent
So what?

I didn't choose
to be;
I was stolen.

Yes! my ancestors
have been reduced
to slaves.

however, should these
factors make me
less human:

with less respect
with less right
with less will

with less education
with less skill,
and low status.

Hmm! I wonder!
resentment and cheap talk
about white folks

won't do me
any good either;
I want to heal.

I need to heal
my psychological wounds
to be able to "integrate"
in the so called "white culture"
without really losing mine.
I HOPE...

--Amanuel M. Wolde
A Realization

His character astounded me. His vast knowledge on most everything a tool for dealing with a world infested with self-centered, ignorant people people who speak only of what appeals to them. A narrow, shallow world. ALWAYS MAINTAIN THE UPPER HAND. The dark eyes probed my brain each time we spoke searching for the thoughts I may keep hidden even from him. His eyes twinkle when I smile perhaps a reflection of my own but my mirror is cracked my vision of myself often inaccurate and flawed. His insecurities equal mine yet his are not as clear to me as my own. It's amazing how you can give advice to someone whose roughness mirrors yours. Rather hypocritical AREN'T WE ALL?

--Jennifer Robinson
Toronto

Watermelon rain pierced through the clouds
And pelted my face.
I was sitting on a park bench
Somewhere deep within Toronto.
Somewhere in the land of maple leaves
Where sap flows through trees
Like blood flows through veins.
I was sitting underneath America's shadow
blowing in off the lake
and clouding the sky above.
before reaching Toronto I looked
to bring back times when words
would crawl out the back of my mind
and jump onto paper,
now I struggle for every word and for
every line.
before reaching Toronto I learned
how snow feels,
white outside with
a frozen core.
Now I lay on a park bench in Toronto
with America on my mind,
the sun is whispering its last breath
and my thoughts
are slowly bleeding,
as rain turned to snow
And day turned to night
I drove out of Toronto
While fog swallowed the CN Tower
And the dim glow of the road
Enveloped me.

--Mark Bowers