The Angle
Spring 1999
A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This edition of The Angle marks the final issue for this school year and the end of my brief career as editor. It is with great honor and praise that I pass on the duties to Adam George and Monica Hopkins, co-editors for next year. I would also like to encourage all of you returning to Fisher in the fall to become involved with this little magazine that sounds with such a strong voice—your voice.

Spring marks change, and the format of this Spring edition is slightly different from those in the past—a section of selections from the Senior Writing Seminar is included. Holistically, the issue is naturally of a self-reflective nature; writing comes from within and allows us to better understand ourselves on multiple levels. Thus, in light of this self-examination and in hope of peace for the thousands of suffering refugees in Eastern Europe, I would like to open the window with the following personal reflection poem, “I Am”, written by Victoria W., a freshman at East High.

Finally, when I sat down to compose this letter, a few hundred names of friends, teachers, and acquaintances bounced through my mind. Yet, as I began to simplify I realized my only wish was to recognize those that have touched my galaxy, briefly joined my ellipse...fare thee well. Best wishes for your future, continue to constantly reexamine your position in the greater scheme of things. In close, I’d like to do what writers do best and swipe a line from a friend: “make all life your own.”

Shalom, peace, bless,

Erin A. Hopkins
Editor-in-Chief

I Am

I am precious and beautiful
I wonder if I look like my mom
I hear her voice
I see her shadow
I pretend she’ll be there when I wake up
I feel she is near watching me
I touch her face
I worry that she’s dead and I don’t know
I cry ‘cause I can’t be next to her
I am precious and beautiful
I understand it’s hard for her to see me
I say “You will always be my mother”
I dream we will reunite some day
I try to find you, but it’s too hard
I hope you miss me the same way
I am precious and beautiful.

--Victoria W.
THE WRITERS

Sydney Andrysiak
Mike Bailey
Tina Bianchi
Shawn Carter
Joe D'Angelo
John Edwards
Jen Enright
Carol Ferguson
Scott Grates
Erin Hopkins
Monica Hopkins
M. J. Iuppa
Meg Kelly
Bryan Mahoney
Aubree McMahon
Lisa Middendorf
Christopher Minsterman
Jeremy Peters
Joseph Souder
Dr. Bruce Sweet
Linda Uebelacker
Michael Zwetsch
Dear Namesake

I'm told they named me after you;
I tell myself it can't be true;
See, I'm alive and you are dead;
(you put a bullet in your head)
Now what I want to realize
Is if they saw you in my eyes,
Or did my father miss his brother
and hope that he would gain another.

I wish that you were here today
So that I wouldn't have to say
That it was selfish how you died;
I'm John because of suicide.

--John Edwards

Ode to a Dead Sam

Oh woe to those who knew him
this happy floppy fish.
A leap from home and out to
Had served his dying wish.

A carefree lad, and wet was
that gladly glubbed about.
A happy swim, a virile fin,
and food were he about.

All swathed in gold and viol
circling 'round the bowl;
the prettiest jewel of the ocean
his sin: my heart he stole.

At this one fun'rals passing
we now may proudly gush
repent, lament, and say fare
before old Sam goes flush.
Ode to a Dead Sammy

Oh woe to those who knew him, this happy floppy fish.
A leap from home and out to me
Had served his dying wish.

A carefree lad, and wet was he that gladly glibbed about.
A happy swim, a virile fin, and food were he about.

All swathed in gold and violet encircling 'round the bowl;
the prettiest jewel of the ocean his sin: my heart he stole.

At this one fun'rals passing we now may proudly gush
repent, lament, and say farewell before old Sam goes flush.

--Bryan Mahoney
What if?

I often find myself wondering, what if?
What if I played in the NBA?
Could I then do a commercial for Sprite,
and honestly believe that image is nothing?
What if I were a dog?
Would I consider man a dog’s best friend,
or would I rather talk to the fire hydrant out front?
What if I were God?
Would I have created the a perfect world,
or would I have taken all seven days off?
What if I were this piece of paper?
Would I be mad when you mark my white suit,
or would I gladly wear these words?
What if I were never born?
Would my dad have more hair and my mom less wrinkles,
or would they long for the son they never had?
And what if none of us are really here?
What if none of this really matters?
What if the person who has dreamed up this world finally wakes up?
Will we all come back when he falls back asleep?
Will we remember what we once knew,
or will we forget everything we have seen?
What if nobody cares?

--Shawn Carter
Love

I love to force emotion.

I love to pretend that I "get it."

I love to act modest, but I love attention.

I love to have people I call friends in private, but would never acknowledge in public.

I love weird line breaks.

I love that people love my weird line breaks.

I love that people love my weird line breaks even when they don't mean anything, and

I love the people that love my weird line breaks;

Without them I'm nothing.

Oh wait, did I say I?

--Scott Grates
Lover's Lament

Sunlight has never streamed through the window
And found him sleeping by her side, with arms entwined
Daybreak finds only a single silhouette
Buried under sheets that tell no lies
Where the moon cast two shadows on the wall
There is but one.

He stayed long enough to kiss what was not his
Of an imaginary passion she dreams
And wakes to find traces of him still lingering
But he, in the flesh, is gone.

--Monica Hopkins
The Fall

I find my way to the edge of the shore
And swim through the thickness of air
I have been here before...

Memories sift through my eyes
My body becomes numb
Subjected to this rain

...and then I fall to my knees
only to be consoled by silence
as silent light of the moon serenades
the night

the waves dress the sand
with their timelessness
to wash away the stained land
upon which I bore my pain

I cry out her name
And the ocean returns a solitary voice
Enshrined by a choir
Enchantment sates my pain
As she sings to me
Her angelic voice inspires

The harmony of our cries
Singing to each other
This love never dies
Our existence has been forever...

--Christopher Minsterman
Eve

So what?
I have an appetite for apples...
I think snakes are pretty cool...
And nobody needs to tell me
That I am naked.
I'm sorry if I deprived
You of your 'Eden'—
But to tell you the truth,
Innocence was beginning to
Cramp my style
I need room to roam,
And Honey—
Knowledge is Power.

--Joseph Souder
I want, I think, I would, I wish

I want to eat right and be healthy
   But greasy food, and late night snacks are so tempting.

I think drinking and driving is wrong,
   But I've found myself doing it.

I would give up something for Lent each year,
   But it's just not my responsibility.

***

I want lots and lots of children,
   But not the headaches that come with them.

I think television fries the mind,
   But write this as I watch.

I would be the lead singer in a band,
   But wouldn't wait for stardom.

I wish I was big and strong,
   But find lifting weights agonizing.

***

I want to get really, really drunk,
   But never wake up with a hangover.

I think graduation will never arrive,
   But working every day comes much too soon.

I would love to move far, far away,
   But know I would miss home.

I wish my bank account contained millions,
   But feel I would no longer appreciate the little things.
I want people to work for me,
   But frown on power positions.

I think everybody should see things my way,
   But love people's individual thoughts.

I would study hard 8 hours a day,
   But......................NO!

I wish upon shooting stars,
   But I still wrote this piece

And I wish, I think, I would, I want...

   BUT!

   There's always the other way that...

I wish, I want, I would, I want.

And I'm not schizophrenic,
   But I do have contradicting thoughts simultaneously.

   --Scott Grates
Only the Essentials

Express lane
Check-out
Sign above my head reads:
  Seven items or less—
  No exceptions.
I have eight.

The lame woman
  behind me
smells
like the inside of
my grandmother's
  hope chest.
She struggles
  with six bags
of cat food

and stares
  at my lungs.
Her cane lands
  at my feet.

I reach down
  deep down
she says, slowly
speaking through the flood
of air between us,
  Thank you, dear,
I fear without it
the lambs would not come.

Along with her staff
I hand her the moon.

--Erin Hopkins
Luxuries

A tall, cold drink would be a godsend right now,
As would a long, hot soak
new shoes
and a fresh start...
A nervous breakdown would be a luxury right now,
Something I can ill afford.
there are holes to mend
clothes to wash
and a trash bin filled to overflowing.

--Linda Uebelacker
The Sweater

Sometimes I don’t recognize the sensation of a sweater against my skin
Until it’s pointed out to me
That I do in fact have a sweater on.
I used to feel that way about you.
I was able to accommodate my senses to the idea that you were there,
So that in the back of my mind I’d recognize these feelings.
But I didn’t think about them until someone pointed out to me and I’d
have to say,
“Oh yeah, that’s right...”
But I didn’t think it would get to the point where I always realize
I’ve got this damn sweater on.
It’s huge! But binding at the same time
And it must be made of wool because it scratches the hell out of me.
Maybe it’s soft cotton and if I rub it against my face I could rest in it.
Sometimes I wonder and get a little nervous that the sweater
will go out of style and
I’ll be a victim of a fashion faux pas.
But I think it could be full of static and each time I try to pull it off,
My hair only suffers the consequences with becoming horizontal from
the Atmospheric distress.
Only, I can’t get the sweater off, no matter how much I try,
Even when I use some innovative measures.
I’ve realized, though, that I’m not sure I want to get rid of the sweater.
I recognize it against my skin, scratching or not,
And I feel my hair reach its horizontal maximums,
But I laugh at that now.
None of these things I accepted until
the sweater was nearly involuntarily
Stripped of my body.
Naked is not how I want to feel.
But the sweater is back to its rightful owner and the recognition
of its draping is a
Comfort and a reliable source of warmth.
I haven’t worn this sweater in the summer yet, but I get the feeling that
it’s a light, cool,
And uninhibiting piece of
Love...
I mean clothing.

--Aubree McMahon
Like a woman

you do not deserve me, yet
you have me.
you do not care for me as you
used to yet
I let you stay.
you want it when, where, and
how you want but
where is the "I" for me?
it is wrong what you've done, you
did it anyway.
where am I?
I would love to be you,
I wouldn't even care,

how unfortunate is it that

I am not like you? Instead,
I take it like a woman.
I take the shit you give me.
I want to give it back, sometimes I may.
but I think it takes a stronger person
to embrace your faults, and
love you not because I should, but
because I really do.
so don't misunderstand,
you are still a bastard, I haven't
changed by mind, but
life's too short to waste hating
you, I've never been good at lying.
I am not doing this for you, don't
mistake my kindness. I am
moving forward, maybe
one day I'll have all of you, don't
mistake my kindness. I am
moving forward, maybe
one day I'll have all of you, instead of
half the prize. Hurry now,
I'm here, with a word of caution to the wise:
keep an eye on your watch,
no waiting, I may not be here
by the time you arrive.
take that chance and tell me you
wonder why you even tried, saying
I am too demanding, attaching
'it's just like a woman' branding,
to which I will only reply:
Thanks God.

--Sydney Andrysiak
All Those Wasted Years

All those Wasted years I spent
casting out leaves of bread to
the ravenous birds of my soul.
At your insistence, I am now
to stop.
I'm sorry...
Hungry ravens live here now.
They feed incessantly on old
Promises
And Memories, mixed with my
moldy unspoken words of
Love & Hate.
They laugh at the fables and Lies we told.
I feed them still—never
wishing them gone—always
preferring their constant
eye-opening chatter to the
so-called "amicable" serenity
of You and Your
"Blind Identity"

--Joseph Souder
As We Eulogize

I pass this on through the pages of my world
A generation of learning
A generation of love

Introduction:

War
The earth groaned as it shook beneath their arrogance. It desired peace. A peace among the children that walk its tender skin. A peace that would never be realized as long as the arrows still scream through the air.

The learning:

I can taste the future’s shock as we return the bodies back into her womb. They are lifeless and tomorrowless. Their passions lay with the dead. There is shame in these acts that have scarred our world, but there is hope to change this as we can learn. We do not need this war anymore. We can learn love.

The lesson:

We are all born with nothing
Yet some are born unto lies.
Humanity jaded with ignorance
As we are all born under the same sky

Blanket the earth with war
We can all be so much more
Cast away this poison
For in this world I shall raise a son
We are no different that anyone

What is all this hatred for?

My child will learn love
But, how hard this will be
To tell him that his mother’s gone...

Why did this war have to take her?
Why must the earth swallow another body?
What is all this Anger for?
God, I don't understand
Please don't tell me this is part of your plan
Bombs that kill and have been designed by man
How could you let this happen?

Why must she lie in her grave?
For all that she tried to save?
God, I look to you for strength
I could see your strength in her eyes

And on this earth I have become their hatred
Their pitted and pointed anger
I am no different yet why must I suffer?

The blood continues to bathe the land
The end may soon be at hand
My son has learned this lesson well
Because the strength in him was the strength in her
Before she fell

I taught my son love
He will learn what I've said
Importance of heart
Not the blood that is shed

And now that I am dead
The lessons that I've taught are still in his head
And as we guide him from above
He will teach his daughter love
And that the color of all of our blood is red.

We are no different than anyone
We must end this pain and suffering
My granddaughter will live and love
Let the rain wash away this blood
So that she will not see her family die in vain...

--Christopher Minsterman
**Excerpts from “The Barn”**

We laughed, more at his incredible ability to let things roll off his back, than at the song. For a minute it was silent, though, and it seemed like we were all thinking the same thing— one of these days, Kevin is just going to explode. But the mood lightened when Jaime suggested that he take his cute little rhyme straight to Susie’s class.

By 1:30 we made it to the barn. Kevin of course took the ride with the rest of us. Six inches of snow had fallen since first period, and we all knew that he didn’t own a coat warm enough to allow him to walk. Like circus clowns, we piled out of the rusty, orange Pinto. I called to Jaime to toss me my backpack, which I had shoved under the driver’s seat to make room for my legs.

"Whadda ya wanna do?" Jaime finally asked, breaking the silence. None of us answered. I, for one, was secretly absorbed in Zeppelin’s Kashmir. He walked to the trash can, which we filled ice and used as a cooler to stash the beer his older brother was happy to supply. “Who wants a pounder? Mitchie, you want one?” He tossed it to me before I could say yes. Two more sailed across the chilly room to Kevin and Andy. I waited to see if theirs would explode before opening my own.

We emptied the trash can within an hour. Kevin began to experiment with the tunes, exchanging Zeppelin II for Guns and Roses and playing a mean air guitar for an imaginary audience. Andy was half asleep, sitting on the floor and resting his head against the hard, tattered wicker of one of the chairs. He called it ‘his’ chair, but he hadn’t lifted a finger to help move it into the barn. Then Jaime spied my backpack again and asked what the ten pounds of secret shit stuffed inside was. I looked around the room, and satisfied that we were the only two paying attention, I signaled him to come over to where I was sitting.

"We’re goin’ out back to shoot at cans. Mitch swiped his dad’s pistol. Can you believe that?" Kevin looked at me with contempt. I could tell I had hurt his feelings by not including him voluntarily. "Wanna go with us?" Jaime asked him.

Kevin moved his gaze from me back to Jaime and grinned a grin.
as if he were the cat who just caught the bird. He gripped the arm of the chair to steady himself. “Hell yes, I wanna go!” Once again, Kevin was quick to agree to anything, and my stomach did a flip-flop. He hurdled over the chair and grabbed my bag. “I’ll carry it,” he told us, rather than asked. He turned and headed for the door, jumping over Andy’s legs, which were still sprawled out in front of him. At the same time, Andy lifted his head and immediately began to irritate all of us, especially Kevin.

“Watch where you’re stepping, fat ass,” he chided. Kevin stopped. He turned around slowly and looked at Andy sitting on the floor. His face and ears were bright red.

“What’s with you two? You’re always defending Kevin.” Andy waved his arm as if to push us away. “Ah, you’re just a couple of pussies anyway. I’m outta here.” But he didn’t leave. Instead, he fell back into ‘his’ wicker chair, leaned over the arm of it, and puked on the floor. When he finished heaving, he looked up, wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and said, “There. That’s what I think of Kevin.”

Before Jaime or I could react, we noticed Kevin standing in the doorway. Physically he was there with us, but his eyes suggested he was someplace else. Someplace far away. His voice was barely audible. I had to struggle to make out his words.

Jaime tried to help. “Come on, Kev. If you wanna fight with Andy, go outside and kick his ass, but leave that here.”

“Now you wanna defend Andy? To hell with you and your games. To hell with feeling sorry for poor Kevin. You wanna play games? Let’s play.” Kevin spun the barrel around. The sound reminded me of three summers ago when I put a baseball card between the spokes of the tire of my bike. I wished I could be riding my bike right now.

“Okay, Mitch. It’s your gun. You decide. Who should I aim at first?” Kevin asked. I was terrified. The crotch of my Levi’s was suddenly warm and wet. I couldn’t speak. “Time is running out, Mitch. I need to hear your decision.” He seemed crazy. There was no remnant of the jolly Kevin who let things roll off his back. My mind was racing. I knew that this whole thing was my fault. I should have never taken the gun in the first place.

“At me,” I said finally, almost in a whisper, but apparently loud
enough for the others to hear. Jaime yelled out for Kevin to stop. He didn’t listen. Click. Then nothing: complete silence. Then I threw up.

Kevin picked me up by the arm, then put his own arm around my neck as if we were old college buddies. “You won, Mitchie. How ’bout that!” You made it through the first round. Now, round two’s a little different. You get to spin the barrel yourself this time.” He held the pistol in front of me, forcing me to spin it. By now, tears were streaming down my cheeks. He played a game of Eenie Meenie Miney Moe with Jaime and Andy, drawing out his words to the point where we could all have died from fear and suspense. He picked Andy. He pulled the trigger again. Again, nothing. Then I noticed the wetness between Andy’s legs, as well.

Kevin laughed out loud. “Well, that’s just my luck, isn’t it? The biggest prize goes free. Maybe I should try that again. This time I’ll let you spin your own fate. Would you like that, Andy?” Kevin turned and walked over to where Andy had wet himself. Instinctively, I grabbed him from behind and tried to take the gun. We struggled for what seemed to be a very long time, but Kevin was much larger and stronger than I, and before I knew it, he was free of me. He backed up into the corner of the room where the stereo was. It had been on all this time, but I hadn’t heard it until now. Andy never changed the music, so Zeppelin’s Stairway to Heaven was playing. Now Kevin had begun to cry, his shoulders bobbing up and down from his sobs, and his face buried in the crook of his arm. I was relieved, hoping he had come around and was ready to stop this insanity.

Then, Kevin squeezed once again. It was louder this time, and left a ringing in my ears. When I turned my head, I saw Kevin, slumped over himself.

“Kevin? Kev?”

He didn’t answer me. He just lifted his head slowly, and looking at Andy said, “I won’t be needing a ride today.”

--Tina Bianchi
Anger at 2am can ruin a Wednesday

Festering,
Growing like mold
On a rotted
Meat loaf
Keeping me
From my own growth
Like a daisy
In springtime.

I want
You to leave me
But you can’t.
It’s me
Holding on
Saving you for
Revenge

--Tina Bianchi
Choose

Situations and emotions are overwhelming.
Unbearable at times, you don't know where to turn.
Inner turmoil destroys your peace,
Confusion is all that is clear.
Indecision is your guide on your bleak journey
Down the long road, to the light ahead.
Everything will be resolved if you take the dive.

Outside of yourself, you look down at the world,
Reminiscing: you wonder if it's worth it.

A second, one moment in time could change it all.

Somehow in all of the haze, things begin to look less fuzzy.
Eventually you can start to see definitive lines.
Concentration is the key. There is something there, once jagged edges are gone.
Out of sight, out of mind?
Not in this case, but it does get easier every day.
Density is a state not easily released. It takes time to heal.

Cooperation between body, mind and spirit
Help us to see the truth.
Anyone can say that it's there.
Not everyone can see it and believe in it.
Cling to the truth and to yourself.
Eventually we all must choose.

--Jen Enright
The Mistake

On a snowy winter night, Max Thornton, a columnist for the New York Times, sees an old man waiting for the bus. The old man wears an agitated expression, and glances around furtively into the dark city shadows. His lips move noticeably, and Max overhears a panicked, subdued whisper.

"They're ready . . . already know how to use the gravitational assist. Jupiter is nearing occultation . . . soon . . . God help us! They know how to use it!"

The old man's voice rises in pitch as he utters these last two exclamations, and the reporter hears them quite distinctly. Intrigued by the venerable old man's queer words and wildly disheveled appearance, Max takes a seat next to the old man, who immediately stops muttering to himself and stares penetratingly at the young reporter.

"How do you do? My name is Max Thornton. Ever read the New York Times?"

"Ayuh. You wrote that bleeding-heart editorial about the Brady Bill. Want to get the scoop on something really big? If you knew what I knew, you might just start to rethink that article."

Thornton smirks at the old man. "Try me," he says.

The old man stares long and hard at the young columnist, sizing up his balls, perhaps, then begins:

"They're the reason this dang planet of ours is so messed up. It's all their fault," the old man spits out, along with a few small flecks of saliva that land on Max's cheek.

Wiping them off, Thornton replies, "Who exactly are they?"

The old man jerks his head around then spins it back again, as if he were trying to catch someone sneaking up behind him. He then answers the columnist in a low whisper,

"They arrived on our world in 1908. Remember the Tunguska Event?"

Thornton nods, having read about the queer explosion that occurred in the Siberian wilderness in 1908. Thoroughly unexplained, the blast had decimated the primeval forest for hundreds of square miles and had been estimated at being 100 times more powerful than any nuclear bomb.

"What are you saying, old man?" Thornton's smirk twists into a mocking grin.

"Listen I say! They crash-landed. Disrupted the space-time continuum, they did! They were desperate, though. Their star was in
the last phase of supernova, and their system was dying. They needed a new world to colonize, and ours was their primary target.

"They despise us. Want to know why? They're not compatible with our planet's life. Oh, sure, they are completely organic, and resemble earth-like organisms in every way, but their carbon molecules are left-handed! All life on Earth is based upon right-handed carbon molecules. They can't eat what we eat, mate with us, or contract any of our diseases. But they look exactly like us. And do you want to know what's worse? They want to get rid of us. They are gradually replacing all life on Earth with their life. Haven't you ever heard of global warming? Mass extinctions? Who do you think caused World War I, World War II, the extermination of the Jews, the Cold War? Who do you think killed JFK?"

Max stops grinning, and puts this question to the old man: "So where are these aliens?"

They are everywhere. When they came, there were only a small number of them. But now they've multiplied. They had to flee their dying planet very quickly, and they could only make a one-way trip. Good thing for us they must have lost their luggage along the way, too.

"But now, they're building a machine. It functions like a gravitational magnet, and it can transport an army of deadly weapons, machines, and equipment from their now dead planet in just a few hours. Enough firepower to destroy all human life on Earth, and enough equipment to terraform the Earth completely. And do you know what the only thing stopping them from doing that is? Just time. One year, three months, and 17 days to be exact. When Jupiter occults their star, and when their device will suck black death from the stars onto our world!"

Just then, the bus roars into view. It had begun to rain. The old man mutters a hurried farewell and scurries onto the bus.

"Wait!" Max cries, but as he looks into his wallet, he discovers he does not possess exact change.

The bus roars off, like a lion snatching away a juicy morsel. Thornton kicks the growing puddle underfoot, and stares at the bus receding in the distance.

What a crazy old man, he thinks. Where did he ever get that notion?

As he walks home, Max Thornton whispers into his tape recorder, which had been running all along: "He was wrong. We didn't shoot JFK."

--Michael Zwetsch
Oh honey it's a little baby boy
And he has my eyes and your ears
And your mother's nose.
He is gonna be a soccer player and
Play the guitar and go to Yale.
No, Harvard and my son is . . .
No, you may not sleep at Joey's house
You have a math test tomorrow
And you want to get into the good middle school
Don't You?
Because the good middle school leads to the good High school
And my son is . . .
An 85?
Unsatisfactory young man. I am extremely disappointed in you.
Go to your room. My son is . . .
Borrow the car?
You come home with a 1000 on the SAT's
And you want to borrow my car? Fat chance!
No son of mine will get a 1000 on the SAT's and borrow my car.
What about Harvard?
Where are your soccer cleats?
You have guitar lessons today and you better not miss them again.
You are ruining you childhood and . . .
Oh My God
My son is . . .
GONE

--Mike Bailey
Our Fathers

He'll miss the time he steals third base, and walking with her in white lace.
With wings of gold, I would fly
and ease the dreams that make them sigh.
So she could feel his scratchy face, and once again his strong embrace.
He could watch his son grow tall, and teach her how to palm the ball.
There are no wings to spare today, so comfort finds us in a way.
A future blooms fresh and new, although it holds a different view.
Signs of him on their young faces, eases the pain in empty spaces.
As dreams awaited begin to come true, I find myself wishing, if he only knew.

--Carol Ferguson
Extra Quarters

It was a dark, snowy night when Jack Hamill, a reporter for the Morning Star, saw the old man waiting for the bus. The instant he spotted this man, glimpses of his past ran through him: third grade, a saved picture, his crying mother. Why did he look so familiar? Jack thought. Oh well, give it up. It's been a long day, you need rest.

The bus came and Jack dug his change out, got in line behind the man who was digging for his change. He emptied his pockets, bringing out pens, pocket lint and some coins, but not enough change for the bus. Jack quickly jumped at the chance to help this familiar stranger out.

"Sir, I have some extra quarters." The man looked up. His face went white and he dropped his wallet. His panicked breathing turned into gasps and he collapsed on the sidewalk. Jack couldn't move. There was commotion all around him, but his mind was preoccupied reliving past memories. In the third grade, he had gotten off at the bus stop but couldn't find his mom. She always waits for me here; I don't want to walk home alone. Seeing no other choice, he started down the block. When he walked into his front door, he saw his mother just standing there holding the phone with a red, tear-streaked face. She never noticed Jack as he made his way to the kitchen. She just continued to mumble. But the war was over; he was on his way home, how could he have been killed. How? Who was it that just called? How did they know?

Jack's thoughts came back to the present and he glanced around. The paramedics were putting the stretcher into the ambulance. Disoriented, he began to walk away. But something caught his eye. The man's wallet, no one had retrieved the wallet. Jack ran over and picked it up. Opening it, he caught his breath. That picture, I know that picture. Jack quickly took out his wallet and opened it up. In the first flap, he got out a familiar picture he had kept since third grade. He sat down and put the two side by side. Then he realized it. They were identical.

--Lisa Middendorf
Blue Moon

Eerie isn’t it
The Quiet
What is it you fear
shame damnation death
time is the answer
to your holy riddle
spun in the dark ribbon as
idle hands stall
Children
become prophets
suffocated by sand
slipping
through fingers
scratching the concave
wall of the hour
Glass
and then silence
SILENCE
and you
and you
step outside yourself.

Not a breath beyond
this life
this second
this minute
will worries be weighted
with titles
starving for salvation
stops of the clocks
sounding alarms
the oyster tightens its grip
and I
and I
let go
of yesterday
the sand I grasp too tightly
and tomorrow

http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1999/iss4/33
tomorrow becomes the pearl moon on my watch.

--Erin Hopkins

Orémus (Let us pray)

I haven't got a prayer. Your words that cut me like a knife ring true. . . But somewhere in the firmament there is a Trinity of universal laws that aim themselves towards the blackness of your soul. Your soul that can criticize and chastise itself. Divinity is a state of mind-- we hallucinate that we are holy, or in the presence of someone holy, and we find our outward manifestations all reflect the shallow baseness of someone else's standards. What is good? What is right? It's not to be found in a book. But in you. Still, I haven't got a prayer.
Orémus (Let us pray)

I haven’t got a prayer.
Your words that cut me like a knife
ring true... 
But somewhere in the firmament
there is a Trinity of universal truths
that aim themselves towards
the blackness of your soul.

your soul
that can criticize and chastise and catechize--
Divinity is a state of mind--
we hallucinate that we are here and there,
or in the presence of someone who is somewhere
and we find our
outward manifestations
all reflect the
shallow baseness
of someone else’s standards.
What is good?
What is right?
It’s not to be found in a book or a bead--
But in you.
Still, I haven’t got a prayer.

--Joseph Souder
A Lesson
(for my students)

The bus turns down
At the end of the road
The lambs run to the edge
Of the whitewashed fence,
Hop straight up
On the other side of the children
Off to school, heavy-lidded,
Caped in dreams.
I think, stock still at the desk,
About how to jump with a cape like that.

The yellow bus blinks red.
The fresh faces nod to the lambs.
They leap and shudder,
Baa and butt, rub themselves
Along the lines of wood.
A boy reaches through the rails,
Scratches an ear, lets a tongue
Lick his hand.
I shut my book, switch off the lamp,
Ease out the window.

--Dr. Bruce Sweet
Selections from the
Senior Writing Seminar
First Kiss

My street was so narrow only one car could move at a time, but it didn’t matter too much, hardly anybody owned a car. Everything was crowded on the street; the houses were smashed together with only alleyways separating them, the yards were small and never used, but every house had a big front porch. Sometimes when I was walking home at night, I’d be startled by the quick flash of light as my father, sitting in the dark, dragged on his cigarette. It was a fun summer even though we wouldn’t admit it to anyone then. We didn’t do much more than play softball, watch baseball, or hang out at the pool in the daytime and play cards or board games at night. Friday and Saturday nights the routine changed. We’d head out to the local movie theater. It was a small, family-oriented movie house, so we went no matter what was playing.

Days, we spent the morning at the ball-field; after lunch, we’d walk to the uptown pool to cool off. There, the girls would huddle together, giggling, and looking so cool; all the time hoping to attract the boys’ attention. While the macho boys, with peach-fuzz just appearing on their upper lips, snapped their towels at us or pulled us under when we went into the water. Sometimes we’d have chicken fights in the water but the lifeguards were always blowing their whistle at us--Danny and I were the champs. Around four, we’d get dressed and walk home, frozen Milky Ways melting in our mouths.

Every night that summer, as soon as we could bolt, the seven of us would congregate on my front porch. The pungent odor of chlorine wafted off us; if the boys had a baseball game a unique mix of dirt and sweat blended in. I began to notice Danny was around more than the others--always wearing the same uniform; tight jeans and a white tee shirt with the sleeves rolled up; sort of a Marlin Brando wanna-be. As the summer went on, Danny and I seemed to be paired off more and more. The boys teased Danny a lot, his response was a quick jab at the offenders biceps--it usually shut him up.

It was a hot, sticky Friday night that it happened. For a couple of weeks Danny had been telling the guys that he was going to kiss me. Nobody told me, but I knew that something was up by the jerky way they were acting. That Friday night we sat in the dark theater watching the movie, holding hands, and sharing popcorn. There seemed to be more tension in the air than usual. The other kids positioned themselves in strategic seats behind us, so as not to miss
the action. Danny had his shoulder jammed up against mine, much closer than usual. He whispered my name as I turned to look at him, Kevin blurted, "he's doing it." We jerked apart, Danny spilling the popcorn.

The other kids started pelting us with popcorn, and there was a lot of chicken calling. "What's going on," I asked, as Joe, the usher, ran down the aisle threatening to kick us all out. We weren't too worried, Joe was only sixteen and didn't command a lot of respect with his pimply face, baggy jeans, and red bell-hop jacket.

"Nothing," Danny muttered, grabbing my hand again.

After the movie, Danny walked me home, still holding my hand; the other kids snickering along behind us. There was a lot of whispering going on. I heard Terry say, "Come on, man, you can do it, she won't bite." About a block from my house, Danny leaned in, kissed me on the lips and ran--the boys chasing him--hooting and hollering.

When Barbara, Anne, and I turned the corner onto my street, I felt like I was floating. My lips were tingling, cheeks blazing, and heart racing. They kept badgering me, "what's it like?" I couldn't describe the feeling, but knew I'd never forget it.

Saying good bye to the girls, I looked up at the quick flash, my father was smoking on the porch, as usual.

"Hi honey," he said. "How was the movie?"

"Okay," I mumbled, opening the door to get in before he noticed the difference in me.

"Sit here with me for a while, why don't you? Tell me what's going on. Anything new?"

"Geez Dad. You always ask me that. There's nothing ever new around here."

--Meg Kelly
The Bench of the Dock

And there they were--
   Sitting on the bench of the dock,
Just like an older version of us.

And if we weren't there--
   Sitting on the bench directly across,
They'd never be lonely as
   The birds softly sang.

And if the ocean's force never
   Crashed waves under the dock--
They'd still feel the cool breeze of
   A warm summer night.

And if the yellow sun didn't set into
   Her blue eyes on the dock--
He'd still see a burgundy tint
   From fulfilled fantasies.

And if all that were stressful in life
   Stormed down from above--
There'd be a dry spot around
   The bench of the dock,
   Where they were sitting--
Just like an older version of us.

Remaining in our subtle surroundings,
   Nature's elements corrode our flesh
Creating an illusion, which presents us older.

And in our hearts we're still--
   Two young lovers
Who look across the way in awe.

We admire the two who sit on
   The bench of the dock--
Just like a younger version of us.

--S.J. Grates
Around Me

My voice is always lower,
Time always goes slower,

When you’re around.

Pouring on the charm,
And always out of harm,
When you’re around.
Wrong turns right,
If you’re within my sight,
When you’re around.

I crave each and every noise,
That you emit with such poise,
When you’re around.

I’m at peace when I dive into your eyes,
I can always separate the truth from the lies,
When you’re around.

My thoughts are of you more so then not,
You drive me mad, you drive me hot,
When you’re around.
Always, until the end,
You’ve got yourself more than a friend,
When you’re around.

--Joe D’Angelo
Minimum Wage Payback

“Merry Christmas Kyle” said his parents with a laugh . . . Merry Christmas my foot, thought Kyle. Kyle was always patient on Christmas morning, letting his younger brother, Gregory, tear through his presents in no time. He loved it: everyone would have opened all of their presents and Kyle would still have a good five or six presents just waiting to be torn open. It was no different this year. Four presents left—T-Shirt (nice, but Kyle was a junior in high school so the Jim Kelly t-shirt was destined for bed time or baseball practice). Three presents left—CD (Mariah Carey, he would later look back and wonder why he ever asked for that). Two presents left—Calendar (Kyle got one every year; not exciting, but it would have been weird if he didn’t get one). One present was left; all eyes were on Kyle; he loved it. Kyle noticed an odd smirk on his father’s face. Tearing through the paper, Kyle saw a JC Penney’s box that was too light to have any clothes in it. He ripped off the lid to reveal the most cruel joke ever played on a 16-year-old on Christmas. Job applications! Burger King, Jubilee (the local supermarket), “Are you kidding,” Kyle squealed. “Merry Christmas Kyle” said his parents with a laugh. Merry Christmas my foot, thought Kyle.

“Are you kidding,” Kyle repeated still faintly hoping to hear a punch line. Kyle was beginning to regret leaving his presents for last. All of sudden, his audience had turned into a horde of hecklers. His Aunt Joanne yelled, “That’s so funny!” His Grandma and Grandpa joked, “Do you think that’s a hint Kyle.” Kyle’s mother sat in the background and basked in the praise her “witty” joke received. Kyle wanted to puke.

The day after Christmas came and went and the job applications remained under the tree. Kyle’s father said, “I know it isn’t that appealing to you, but your mother and I want you to fill out those applications today.”

“Whatever,” said Kyle.

“Well, I’m driving you down in two hours.”

“Sure, sounds great,” said Kyle with the sarcasm he got from his father, but that drove his father crazy when used at the wrong time. This wasn’t the wrong time, though.

“Cheer up,” said his Dad, “some extra money can’t be all bad.” Kyle never wanted money less in his life, and afternoons of homework never seemed more appealing.

Well, after getting rejected from Burger King (to Kyle’s incredible delight), Kyle got a call from Jubilee saying that he could start on
Monday. “Great,” lied Kyle to his new boss Mrs. Flannery. Kyle moped up to his room wondering if he was destined to be a stock boy or a cashier.

As Kyle found out on Monday, it turned out to be neither. Mrs. Flannery told him to take his bag lunch back to the employee lounge. The bright green couches and cigarette butts made him feel far from home. He still couldn’t believe that this was one of his Christmas presents. With an uncharacteristic boldness, Kyle asked, “So what am I? Cashier? Stock boy?”

Mrs. Flannery said, “Kyle, I’ve got something different in mind for you.” As she said this, she was grabbing a blue and red Jubilee parka with a bright orange reflective strip on back and sleeves. “I hope this fits you Kyle,” said Mrs. Flannery, “Cause it’s the only one we’ve got.”

“Am I going to be working outside?” asked Kyle remembering the snowy drive in and the chill he go upon exiting the car.

“Yes, you are, Kyle . . . parking lot . . . umm . . . coordinator; that’s it . . . we’ll call you the parking lot coordinator. You see, you round up the carts, shovel some snow, help old ladies walk in, that kind of stuff.”

“Neat,” said Kyle, trying desperately not to sound mortified. “Well, as long as I don’t have to park cars I’ll be fine, I haven’t perfected the art of fitting my car between those two yellow lines yet,” said Kyle.

“No Kyle, you don’t have to park cars, but Saturdays are busy and with our small lot we fill up quickly. We may need you to direct traffic.”

“Sounds good” said Kyle, not even believing the words as he said them.

The first few weeks went fast. Kyle organized the carts. He made sure that he put salt on the icy patches. He helped people in and out of the store. He made friends with a couple of co-workers. He didn’t have to beg his parents for money anymore, and the job itself really wasn’t that bad. However, he couldn’t let his parents know that. Kyle still felt that it was a dirty trick that they had played on him. He wanted revenge and prayed nightly for an opportunity to arise.

One Saturday, he got his opportunity. Just as Mrs. Flannery told him his first day, the lot filled up fast on Saturdays. Armed with his reflective parka, Kyle stood in the middle of it all, directing cars to the few scattered open parking spots. This was an abnormally busy Saturday, however. The next day happened to be Super Bowl Sunday, so everybody and their uncle was going to Jubilee to stock
up on party supplies. The store had only been open for a half hour and the lot was almost completely filled. In fact there was only one spot left. Kyle kept this in mind when he saw two cars pull up to the lot: one from his left, the other from his right. On his left was a boy his age, who he didn’t recognize from school. Kyle did recognize, however, the look in his eyes that said, “My mom got me up at eight o’clock on Saturday to do the shopping for her party at which I’m not even allowed to be present.” Feeling sympathetic for the guy, but trying to remain impartial as any good parking lot coordinator should, Kyle looked to his right. To his surprise, it was his father and mother. They liked to get their shopping done early in the morning so they had time to finish their respective Saturday to-do lists. Kyle hated those lists. Both cars knew there was one spot left. It was up to Kyle. One car would park and shop, the other would circle the block for a half hour or so until another spot freed up. Should Kyle sympathize with his fellow abused teen, or ensure a tranquil home life? With a nod of his head and a flick of his wrist, Kyle waved the young errand runner into the last spot. He walked d carefully over to his parents car and told them, “Unfortunately, the lot is full and Jubilee would appreciate it if you check back every fifteen minutes or so. Jubilee apologizes for any inconvenience. Have a great day!” Kyle saw that they weren’t too happy and he was pleased, but he knew he would have to make other plans for the Superbowl.

--John Edwards
Making Dinner

Dong... Dong... Dong... Dong.

The clock in the living room tolled four. It was the middle of December and was beginning to get dark already. Margaret sat in the kitchen peeling potatoes for dinner, while Oprah dragged on about some book that she had read over the weekend in the background.

Margaret was in her fifties. Her face showed years of turmoil and hardship. She never knew her parents. They had left her on the doorstep of a local church when she was three. Raised in a Roman Catholic orphanage, she had never felt like she had a home. Her days were constantly spent dreaming about a better life. A life with a home and a family... a loving family.

It took her almost forty years to make that dream a reality. Ten years spent in the orphanage. Another five out on the streets. She joined the Navy at the age of eighteen for a tour of duty that lasted fifteen years. After the Navy, she worked in a factory, sometimes ten to twelve hours a day, to save up enough money for that dream of hers. She met Dad in 1976, got married in '77 and bought her first house in 1978. She was 39 at the time. The house, just a pile of bricks and wood, so I hear, was her pride and joy.

Fourteen years later, that pile of bricks and wood is the most wonderful house, inside and out, on the block where we live. Every piece of the house, from the fuscia baseboard to the green shaded lamps, is my mother's creation. Her dream became a reality, but not before it took a toll on her. Dad, before he died, always said that she was the most beautiful woman he had ever laid his eyes upon, hardships and all.

"Hi Mom." I said quickly as I entered the kitchen.

"Where have you been young man?" She called me young man when I was in trouble. I guess it was better than my first and middle names thrown together in anger.

"I was out sledding with Jason." I answered in a respectful tone. My sarcasm and smart-ass remarks have gotten me in trouble too many times before.

"I told you three o'clock. When I say three o'clock, I mean three o'clock."

"I lost track of time Mom." I replied. "I'm sorry." That should do the trick I thought to myself.

"You're sorry are you. I had no idea where you were. You know that it gets dark earlier now. This neighborhood is no place for a thirteen year old after dark."
I started inching my way to the door so that I could have a quick exit.

"Come over here when I talk to you!" She started forcefully. She wasn't yelling, but I knew that I better do what she said. "You are all I have young man. If anything..." Choked up, a tear began to run down her cheek. "If anything ever happened to you, I don't know what I would do."

I couldn't say anything. I wanted to say I was sorry again, but it didn't seem appropriate.

"I want the best for you young man." She continued. "I want to do what's right for you. I don't you to go through all that I had to go through."

The tears were flowing quite quickly now. I would like to tell you that she had moved on the peeling onions, but she was still peeling the same potato she was peeling when I came through the door.

I didn't know exactly what to do or say until I heard Oprah say, "See you tomorrow." I leaned over to my fragile mother and gave her a huge hug. It was a hug like one a four year old would give his or her preschool teacher. As innocently as the hug was intended, I whispered "I love you, Mom."

Dong...Dong...Dong...Dong...Dong.

Embracing my mother, I hear the newscaster on the television say, "Here are the news stories for the fifteenth of December, 1992." It was then that my mother's sadness and melancholy made complete sense. It had been exactly ten years to the day of my father's death.

Pulling away from my mother, I grabbed a knife from the sink board. "Let me help you peel these potatoes."

--Jeremy Peters
Himself

A caring, generous Irishman
Who lived life to the fullest

Stepping down Main Street
Proudly swinging a Shillelagh
Sporting a big grin and a Kelly Green Derby

Ensuring that things were going his way
—The right way

No patience with ineptness
Unforgiving of those less honorable
Tireless for charity and community

His greatest legacy
—His family

The Good Lord took a liking to him
—all too soon

--Meg Kelly
In the end the voice of an adult speaks:

Not in the stern upbraid that hung
On your ear as a child, but
A voice like cold pearls is water
Moving underground,
Low-key, unwavering,
Telling you to collect your wits.

    Without melancholy
You look squarely into the mirror
See the face that is nearly you.
Across the floor, beneath the bed
Is the scatter of blue beads, a silver
dime of your birth year, a spoon
Left in last night’s bowl of soup . . .

You are intelligent.
You never threw anything away,
Only lost some things when life
Was a quarrel of moonlight
And hunger couldn’t be starved.

Hold your arms over your head.
No trace of muscles
That lugged losses, the ruins
Like cigarette burns.

Take relief
In your hot bath, soaking in suds,
Emerging with smells
Of petals and woods and moss,
Ready to live with thoughts
Few believe in, without
Being bothered—
Seeing beauty in daylight,
Making it alone.

--M.J. Iuppa