Cover Page Footnote
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A Letter From the Editors

It is once again time to take a trip through the minds of some of the creative writers at St. John Fisher. It truly is a journey to read someone else's work, especially when it is collected and intermixed with the works of many different authors, as in this anthology. Each work rolls into the next, offering a new image or idea. It's like traveling around the world, each country has something entirely new to offer, a taste, a sound, a feeling, or a thought. So, look at this issue like a scrapbook. It is full of bits and pieces of other people's lives.

This issue really offers a good mix of different themes. There's poetry, short stories, humor and drama. We have everything from alien children and peanut butter and fluff to suicide and aging. So, enjoy the little trip we've prepared for you but be careful, your journey may end abruptly.

Sincerely,
Sarah Crimmins
Monica Hopkins

Co-editors-in-chief
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR THE ANGLE

The following submission guidelines must be followed for the Spring 2000 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. Do Not include your name or personal information on your submissions.

4. Contain 1 work per page only if writing a poem or haiku.

5. All submissions, including short stories, should not exceed three typed pages.

Regrettably, we are unable to accept any piece which does not follow these guidelines. If you have any questions concerning submission guidelines, please contact the Editors, Sarah Crimmins or Monica Hopkins, in the Writing Center (basement of Basil 210) at 385-8213. Thank you.

You may submit pictures, drawings, computer generated images as well as many other types of artistic expressions. Please direct any general or specific questions to Sarah Crimmins (slc8600) or Monica Hopkins (mlh4216) at your convenience.

The deadline for the second issue of “The Angle” this year will be Friday March 31st, 2000 by 4:30 p.m.

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

**All submissions are judged anonymously.
The Angle

March 2000

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Leslie Karla
Bryan Mahoney
Lisa Middendorf
Corey Sherbino
Linda Beckwith Uebelacker
Jennifer Wagner
Stacy Wittmeyer

Prize Winners

First Prize – Stacy Wittmeyer
Second Prize – Leslie Karla
Third Prize – Lisa Middendorf
First Prize

The Ghost That Lives in My Bathroom

This morning he is a sigh of light, 
one flicker, almost unnoticeable, 
as the night sky becomes Rochester gray 
and I stand under a waking stream 
of water, shampoo, and body wash, 
trying to remember if I dreamt in color 
or black and white.

This afternoon he is a drop of water, 
browned with age, 
left on the bathroom floor, 
or trickling down just right of the mirror 
as if he were trying to see himself, 
but was afraid to look.

Tonight he is a whisper past the door 
as I brush my teeth and wonder: 
is he the ghost of someone already gone 
or someone yet to come?

--Stacy Wittmeyer
Second Prize

Asphalt Grave

There lies a cross at an intersection:
memorial of some woman I would never know,
just her story in newsprint tragedy.

My tires are dishonestly tacky against the wet cement,
sound like flypaper escapes.
They are boats on this sound asphalt sea.

Headlights smear in front of me.
This corner is a holy place,
and I am now a mourner.

My wipers lap against the windshield
like a dog's panting tongue,
a hymn for a moment at the stoplight.

Boundary lines blur in rain and reflection
On the cross that lies at an intersection.

--Leslie Karla
THOMAS, COME IN OFF THAT TRAMPOLINE IT'S STARTING TO RAIN!

Lisa Middendorf
THOUGHTS AFTER CONFRONTATION...

HOW CAN I TELL HIM WHAT HE DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR? HOW CAN I EXPLAIN TO HIM HOW I WOKE UP ONE MORNING AND KNEW THAT THIS JUST WASN'T THE RIGHT WAY? HOW CAN I SAY THAT IN THAT MOMENT, IN THAT TIME, I RELEASED A PRISONED EMOTION AND TRUTH-I DID NOT LOVE HIM ... HOW CAN I TELL HIM THAT HIS VOICE NO LONGER MADE ME SMILE; IT MADE ME TURN AWAY; HIS TOUCH WAS NO LONGER PLACID ON MY SKIN; IT WAS JUST A COLD MOTION; HIS EYES NO LONGER REFLECTED BLUE IN MINE; THEY WERE JUST GLASS. HOW CAN I SAY ALL THIS AND NOT CRUSH A SOFT SPIRIT, NAIVE PRINCE. HOW CAN I ADMIT I'VE DONE HIM WRONG? WHY CAN'T HE ACCEPT IT AND MOVE ON? I CAN'T TELL HIM THAT HE WENT FROM BEAU TO BROTHER, FROM LOVER TO ACQUAINTANCE, FROM ENIGMA TO MUD. I DON'T WANT A LIFE OF ACCUSATION, FALLACY, INSECURITY, AND REGRET. OUR FUTURE TURNED BITTER, LIKE MILK ON A PICNIC TABLE. HE CAN'T LOVE ME THE WAY I NEED, AND I CAN'T LOVE HIM THE WAY HE WANTS. I AM NOT HIS DESTINY; I AM HIS LESSON. I TAUGHT THE UNDENIABLE TRUTH OF CHANGED FEELINGS, FIRST LOVE, AND FAILURE. I DON'T LOVE HIM. FOUR SIMPLE WORDS THAT CAN NEVER BE SAID TO HIM...

--Melissa Japp
The End of Time

When time comes crashing down
and judgment day is near
Through stares we’ll join our hearts as one
to calm impending fear.

Our hands will grasp infinity
together we’ll remain
Until forever fades away
and time begins again.

If chance should steal my heart
from yours somewhere in flight
My roaming soul will search for yours
through all shades of the night.

And when as fate has planned it
we reunite in air
We’ll shine as stars in endless sky
infinitely a pair.

--Sarah Crimmins
First Kiss

Loud music; dark room; people everywhere.
Floor is sticky from beer spilled because of dancing.
I am swept into the mass of bodies by nameless arms,
Which grab me from behind and gently squeeze.
The gentle hands end at the sway of my hips.
Still nameless, we face each other. Someone else comes up behind me.
The three of us continue dancing, quickly, closely, abruptly.
The faceless guy behind me goes, leaving me with my nameless stranger
once again.
We move closely, hard, against each other.
Rough hands in my jeans, hungry lips on mine.
Maybe it was from the shots a few hours before or maybe it's just me.
Something let him violate my large personal space, my comfort zone.
His hands were unkind, but his kiss was gentle.
Still, I turned my head away at times.
We didn't dance at his car like he wanted to,
But we did remain close on one another within the crowded walls of this
place.
The wandering hands were from both of us.
Mine, however, were a little gentler.
I embraced the male gender that night as I never had before.
In the morning, all I had to show for my night was an unquenchable
thirst, and a bruise
   between my thighs from our dirty dancing.
An unsatisfied feeling: was that really the magic of a first kiss?
It was a night that I won't forget, but it wasn't magic.
Oh well, there's always next time.

--Jen Enright
The Spirited Sun Came Over To Me

The spirited sun came toward me
This morning to give me some shine
But tripped over the horizon
Dawn.

He flew through the sky
For several hours
And screamed heated obscenities
Day.

The sun landed on the other horizon
With such a large thump he made
The sky turn red and orange
Dusk.

Embarrassed by mishaps
He hid behind Earth
And took with him his shine
Night.

--Corey Sherbino
Waterbottle of Desire

it sits alone
in a cold, dirty fridge
deceiving in its Spring Water decor
everyone knows it is a guise
simple tap water in a recycled bottle

yet everyday I am drawn to it
mornings awakened with a raspy throat
evenings when the liquor still coats my tongue
sweaty fingers groping after Billy Blank's
heated attack

it's not real and I already know this as
I pull the silver handle on my boxy
red fridge
as I swallow greedily I accept its faults

come on now - haven't we all been the
Genesee River, envious of the
Poland Spring?

--Sarah Beales
Ode To High School

In Heaven,
I will have the appetite
Of the Quarterback
I will have the metabolism
Of Lisa Crotsley
I will have the golf swing
Of Adam Cole
I will have the wise cracks
Of Mr. Lovecchio
I will have the smile
Of Krista, the Homecoming Queen
I will have the boyfriend
Of Shelly Maus
Or Sharon Dembrosky
I will have the brain
Of James Penn

In Heaven,
I will have musical fingers
Of Billy Stevens
I will have the voice
Of Sarah Frank
I will have the rebelliousness
Of Michelle and Julie
I will have the car
Of Dan Barton

In Heaven
Life will be a Senior Skip Day
Or
Snow Day
And I will have the
Smile of knowing
Myself

--Lisa Middendorf
Little Old Man

Little old man
wants to have a drink
wants to see some art
wants to be a part of the
suit-clad business men’s
happy hour.

Little old man
doesn’t know how to dress
talks too loud on a
borrowed phone
wants to bring a man,
not a woman to this
Friday night event
where business people mix
wine and art like a cocktail.

But little old man
doesn’t know art from
elephant dung
or old from young
and the receptionists
laugh at him as he
walks out the door
smiling.

--Monica Hopkins
Broken Down

Again.
On the side of the road
In a dying machine.
Time passes.
The wheels won't move.
I exhale.
A cloudy mist of me
Disappears somewhere
Into the cavity
Of this cold dying machine
Where I sit
Waiting
For help.

--Corey Sherbino
Europe On My Back

England is
Camden Town is the Tube is
High Tea is Solomon’s is
All we found is Lennon’s ghost is
Strawberry Fields is Brixton is
Wondering is Lisbon is
Christ is Barcelona is
Parc Guell is Paella is
the Mediterranean is
Sentimentality is Verona is
Immortality is Budapest is
Poverty is Charity is
Germany is
Black Forest is Amsterdam is
the Herb is Prostitution is
Sadness is Home is

a fisherman’s wharf, Westminster Hall & the Thames & Ecstacy which is the Right to Rave & Lancaster Gate, Hyde Park & Peter Pan Flying Harrods but not Harvey Nichols & 50P Jameson on St. Patty’s Day & Hash & People all the same & in Liverpool, right near Penny Lane & an orphanage, I think that’s quite a shame & till dawn dancing, toilets, fish & chips & kissing women’s beautiful lips & pink, yellow & blue & in the sky, watching you & red, brown & green veerrry trippy & something I never ate & a soft soothing sea & capturing the memory & where Romeo & Juliet took their lives & still hearing their tragic cries & also strange, gypsies there stole all change & dancing on the street & giving them Forints because they have no feet & very straight & more than cherries and cake & very cool & a precious jewel & red lighted rooms, 2 for 1 if you first assume & freedom that rarely lasts & right here, and it’s very, very vast

--Alicia Hoffman
My Day With You

Our morning would begin with sweet hazelnut coffee to wake and warm us like soft fleece blankets fresh out of the dryer. The summer heat and the heat of our stares will melt us like maple syrup.

A radiant July afternoon urges us to play outside. Our hearts will sing and our bodies will dance under the raging, clear waterfalls-only to run and hide in the tunnels to share butterscotch kisses as the mist kisses our faces.

When the clock chimes three times I’m wound up in you like peppermint in a candy cane-lying in the sunken hammock you can nestle up against me and I will read our daily horoscopes.

When the nighttime takes over, we will watch TV the way teenagers do-sneaking in the bad shows and munching on Cracker-Jacks. Darling this is how all our days could be-hardly whispering words-you could be my emotional candy.

--Katy D’Arduini
Justice

1973
27 years
ago
sentenced to prison
2nd degree murder
1st degree injustice

no more
HALLELUJAHs
on Sundays

because
a foreigner
was found
with his head bashed ribs fractured tie yanked so tight had to cut it off

tried
guilty
innocent man languished imprisoned
guilty man free

2000
27 years later
people fought
said cops lied
and someone finally listened

innocent framed
somebody finally listened
light shone
innocent free

HALLELUJAHs
ring
on Sundays

--Lisa Middendorf
In an Office Where I Work

Cleaning lady,
   Why did you not answer me
   When I said hello?

Just pushed around your dented
   carpet sweeper, hunched over, close to the floor, gleaning the specks
   of paper or crumbs
Left by women who hold higher
   positions than you.

   But I said hello
And you looked away, flinging
open your new trash liners, making balloons
as they caught the air

   In this office where
Educated women chatter and gossip, sipping
   coffee and eating dry roasted soy
nuts; ignoring you as you pick
up after them and everyone
else that walks through the department, spreading
   rock salt from the street
All over the rust colored carpet . . .

   I said hello to you
And you did not answer me.

Now I am silent.

--Monica Hopkins
I sat on my bed in the house on Linden Street, angry with my parents for sending me to my room. My mother had just found out what my sister and I had really been doing all those times we were quietly playing under the kitchen table. The underside of the table displayed crudely drawn characters, which spelled out every swear word that my 7-year-old mind knew. My “innocent” 5-year-old sister had even told me one of them. It didn’t even matter that the magenta and teal crayon writing would come off - I was busted.

Just to spite my mom, I jumped on my bed once - if I jumped any more I would be stuck in my room longer. I pushed back the pink frilly comforter, revealing my sacred Rainbow Brite sheets. I gave in and sat down, crossing my legs into the Indian Position and thought about ANYTHING other than why I was sent there.

I finally surmised after 7 whole years that my parents didn’t know what they were doing. They had just sent a genius to her room. In the end they’d be sorry for ever doing that. They weren’t my real parents anyway - I was an alien genius.

I wasn’t stupid, and I knew that there were things that my parents were keeping from me so that I wouldn’t find out the truth. Maybe my parents weren’t smart enough to see it, but I did and I knew that there was too much proof that I was an alien.

Once my mother had told me that I wasn’t born like most other people; she had to have a caesarean. I had no clue what that word meant, but my imagination had already snatched it up and started to tug at it. Caesarean. The word rolled off of my tongue and onto the body of proof that I was an alien; it had to mean that I wasn’t born as a human.

Later my mother told me that the layers in my placenta were in a different order than what was usual. That intrigued the birthing doctors so much that they sent it to Albany to be examined. Placenta. That also must be an important alien word, and further proof that I was one of them.

I uncrossed my legs, flopped onto my back, and stared at the green traces of slime that my sister and I had once hurled onto the ceiling. I was an alien - maybe that is why I liked slime so much. I also hated asparagus, so aliens probably hated asparagus, too. It was all coming together now!

Of course, being an alien, I was also a genius. I was smart enough to figure out that I was an alien. I was also smart enough to know what those bad words were that I crayoned on the table. That wasn’t worth getting punished for. My human parents really didn’t think of the possible consequences of punishing me. My real alien parents would be very upset.
I rolled onto my side and clutched Bruce, a brown bear that my earthling parents had given me for Christmas. They just didn't understand what sort of genius I was. My teachers at school had always told me that I should be moved up one grade. My ignorant parents had told them that it would be best if I stayed where I was. Didn't they understand that my whole alien race could be at risk if I didn't advance fast enough? I was probably sent to Earth to discover some grand cure for an alien disease. My home planet was in danger and I was the only one who could invent the life-saving medicine. Or maybe my mission was to come to Earth and study the mistakes that all of these humans make. My parents were prime examples. After all, I was being punished.

A whole alien year had passed by the time my mother finally cracked my door open. She asked me if I had used my time productively thinking about why I was punished. I said yes and smiled sweetly, satisfied that I had finally figured it all out. I promised her I wouldn't write bad words again.

The alien genius was released to complete her mission! I leaped off of my bed and ran into the living room so I wouldn't miss my favorite show - "My Favorite Martian."

--Anne Genduso
Fastest Man

Spend your whole life running,
Running so fast you don't see yourself
Wasting the only life you have left in you.
Going to break a record,
Running away from your thoughts that just go
On and on.
Running away - from what I ask -
But you're head is so busy racing that
Your heart doesn't have time to answer.
Don't you know no matter how fast you go
You can't run away from yourself
Keep on running to the finish line of forgetfulness.
But, no matter how hard you try
You still can't stop that tear
That's running from your eye.

--Kelly Ambrose
Almost a Year Later

The sun soaks up the water
seeping from the root-rotted daffodils
as I suddenly remember
I will never see her again.

A small stream escapes the sun
and webs down the driveway
stopping just short of the street.

It does me no good to think that she is here,
part of the water, the flowers, the soil.
All I see is the web on the driveway
creeping away from me, the sun.

--Stacy Wittmeyer
Cold Night, January 18

Crisp night air magnifies winter's beauty
Frigid footsteps tap quickly over
frosty sidewalks

If I were eyes without limbs
I would enjoy this evening

Instead my heels click loudly
over pavement sprinkled
with diamonds

Red, dry eyes overlook a milky
sky scattered with stars

Winter's wonderment lost on the girl with the red nose

--Sarah Beales
Silent Echo

A thousand times a day you've looked past me
On the fog-shrouded fringes of a dream,
Countless moments in time you never see
And still you hold back heaven while I weep.

In a twilight wind you softly call my name
Faint whispers ripple on my skin like a honey-bath,
A thousand echoes yet you never hear me scream
And you hold back time just to spite my wrath.

You're nothing except a shallow heartbeat
And prayers falling beyond a vacant heaven
Where angels remember yesterday sweet.

There's nothing you can give but my soul-seized
up in molten words bit down hard forgotten,
You stepped away just moments before the heat.

--Linda Beckwith Uebelacker
Driving With You on a Snowy Night

We spun around in circles-
like a car hitting black ice.
the snow falling, looking like a
disco ball. The ground is
solid ice, my hands are purple, but my
heart has melted.

--Katy D'Arduini
Orbital

The facade shines brightly overhead
It isn't the sun
Or the moon
Or even florescent

Yet it is still there
Shining so brightly that I think
It might be blinding me

Or perhaps I just need to
Open my eyes

The orb behind my lids is
What keeps me
Tossing

Writing when I should be
Sleeping
Laughing when I should be
Crying

Pretending what I know is real
Isn't

--Sarah Beales
A Portrait of My Parents

Their children are gone
stolen from them by
first steps, loose teeth,
driver's licenses, and
graduation robes.

They shuffle through the house lost,
knowing that they must
again find each other, themselves,
without the looking glass of
unmade beds and Kool-Aid stains
on the counter.

She remarks that everything
is smaller: the laundry, the meals,
even the mail.
He just smiles, but thinks about
how it all seems
so much bigger.

--Stacy Wittmeyer
Chronology

I may be 19, but when my back is sore, my knees are tight and my foot hurts, I feel like I'm 80.

Then again, sometimes it feels like I've lived for 50 years when it seems like I've seen enough of the bad things in life, when those I love die or leave, when things couldn't get any worse, when I've seen it all.

I think I'm having a mid-life crisis, melt down, or insanity attack so that must mean that I'm in my late 30s/early 40s, or I'm losing my mind.

I'm insecure, have panic attacks and don't know where I fit in so I feel like I'm 13 again. Or maybe 12 - someone asked me that once.

Some days, I want to play with toys, sleep in late and watch TV all day and naively believe that the world is a good, safe, happy place. That must make me 6-years-old.

Then there are those days that I just want to cry, scream, be a bitch and not care, and throw a huge tantrum. That makes me 2.

Most days I feel like I'm 50, not 19. I'm getting to the point where I don't even know how old I am anymore. All I can say is that I'm too young to feel so damn old.

--Jen Enright
... Things To Come

There was a place,
a secret place,
a corner where the house and porch met.
Lilac bushes
rose from the sandy dirt beneath
where nothing else would grow.
I sit there,
all alone
playing in that dirt,
singing my own songs,
reciting my own poems,
gazing up between the purple blooms
to the sky
and dream of things to come.
Of my first bike,
of going to school,
of growing up,
having kids,
getting a house.

Today,
there is a place,
a special place,
the corner where the house meets the porch
and over-grown English Yews
create solitude and secrecy.
My son sits there,
all alone,
playing in the dirt
where nothing else will grow,
singing his own songs,
reciting his own poems
and imagining
all the things there are to come.

--Jennifer Wagner
What I have always wanted to know, but am still afraid to ask.

Our conversations had never been about anything much more significant than how school, college, or my summer job had been going so I am not surprised that my Dad seemed confused when I asked him if we could talk about his life.

"So what do you want to know?" asked my Dad.
"Honestly, I'll listen to whatever you'll tell me," I replied. I was lying. I wanted him to tell me everything he knew about my Uncle John's suicide. I wanted to know if he was there and, if so, what he did. I wanted to know if he found him and, if not, who did.

"I suppose you'd like to hear about your Uncle John," my Dad said. We both knew that's what I wanted to talk about.

"If that's what you want to talk about," I said. Looking back, I can't believe I said that. I don't know what I would've done if, in my attempt to play it cool, my Dad took me up on the offer to switch subjects. He didn't switch though.

Well, I was here when it happened. I was home from college and I was doing homework in my room. I was only a few months older than you are now. John was 19. He hadn't talked much to me that weekend, but I didn't think anything of it. I was finishing up a story for a science-fiction class I was taking when I heard the shot. It was loud. Our rooms were right next to each other. They are the same rooms that you and your brother have now. Your brother's room is my old room. Anyway, I ran over and the door wasn't even shut. I wondered why. I almost think that he was hoping someone would stop him. I walked in and he was lying on his bed. There was blood everywhere. I could see that he was breathing, but I knew that he was dead. I turned to call for my father and he was already halfway up the stairs. I was only a junior pre-med major, but I was the local health expert as far as my father was concerned. He said to me, 'He's dead isn't he? ' I told him that I thought so, but I wasn't crying when I made that pronouncement even though I felt like I should have been. 'What's wrong Bob?" called my mother from downstairs. My father told her to stay downstairs, but that only sent her up faster. I've broken the bad news to many families in my life, but no reaction has stayed with me like my mother's. I expected her to scream. Her mouth looked like it was trying to, but there was no sound at all. Her eyes welled up and she ran for him, paying no mind to the incredible amount of blood. I hadn't even been looking at my brother. When I saw him there in my mother's arms, I realized that someone needed to call an ambulance, so I did. It came fast; I was glad. I'm not sure if I wanted it to be over for him, if I wanted it to be over for my parents, or if I just wanted him out of the house. I didn't go to the hospital. Your Aunt Mary was at a friend's house. She was only fifteen and my Dad wanted me to be home when she got
back. He didn't have a hard time convincing me. I love my mother, but I couldn't bear to see her in such pain. My parents got back before Mary. They got to break the news to her. It wasn't until I heard Mary scream that it really sunk in that he was gone. To tell you the truth, my strongest emotion at that time was anger. I was pissed that my little brother thought that it would be better to kill himself than to walk into the next room and ask me for help. I guess I still am. My mother has never been the same. Is that pretty much what you wanted to know, John?

My Dad was staring at the floor or the wall, but never looking me in the eyes. The room had grown slightly darker and I thought that we needed more light, but I decided against it.

"Yeah Dad, thanks," I said. "I'm really sorry." I was looking at the floor, too.

With his small release of emotion back in check and the realization that he could still get part of the lawn mowed before it was completely dark, my Dad said, "Yeah... Well..."

--John Edwards
**Preservatives**

"can fluff go bad?"
my friend asks with a smile
knife poised, ready to plunge

half inch sludgy bottom
creamy colored murk
collected, congealed
saccharine, aspartame, sugar

non-pasteurized, homogenized
two slices white wonderbread
souls bared - waiting to be
smothered in peanuts and preservatives

not jelly or jam, rather
the existential fluff
the kind we joke will keep us
whole, when we've really been
gone for years

--Sarah Beales
Conversation Peace

I

Tertiary-

begun in motion
with little thought of the end.

Last night I saw my mother's poetry,
my references were borrowed.

In morning new light-new warmth-births
new water.

In years new sense drives meaning
from second-hand words-

tried to speak to it,
these ideas have no shadow,

In the beginning there was silence-

A world devoid of sound.

Pulled back into motion,
a stream of buildings-movement cannot be achieved without.
In 1972 the lands of southern New York flooded.
My movement pushed upward-brother was born.

"Meaning," my mother said, "is grounded in your work.
The lazy man never achieves meaning."

Airlifts were provided where expansion proved too much-

Heavy with sleep-without thought-without existence.
Heavy with time-in birth given words-
In the beginning there were no words.

"Your brother," she said, "was born the day after school ended,
as though he knew I had been fired."

Tightly, the words spun around me enclosing
my past into conscripted citations.
Eves are failing beneath the wake
of glow floating just beyond contained edge.
Grounded absence distracts moments
that bubbles fail to protect.
This division passes through me displaced by time’s move/ment

In movement-

Presence still exists in time
without place.
Place still exists
without physical trace.
In time existence provides
trace for end.

This movement passes through
me, a strain of existence
proving past presence
with present mass.

In motion-

Reoccur in me, a change for the end.
As I tread on leaves,
no limit will affect me.
I abort, I conclude,
I do not repent
I revert-

resistance lacks movement.

Resistance lacks body.
These bodies remember,
my body fails.

Protection exists in body-

Reach and consume-,
reach to consume,
consume my reach.

This morning I awoke and consumed my body whole.
Movement does not exist,
-broken silence again.

III

Tissue slipped, lost form after given space.

Secondary— begun in motion with little thought of the end.

Dreaming, sleep-like, but awake, sight still not there.

But here, the words slid into darkness, our night begins here.

-This is where shadows live, all time, no space, less space between us. Where we stand, awake, drop-like and aware, nonexistence still exists.

One path, and another.

But dreams survive, where speech fails. In words, our expansion gives space.

No more silence-, this is where we move.

IV

Sliding, down, up, into-
space opens spaced in spaces.

Our meaning is slipping-it had no place left to go.

Too much borrowed,
Need-
    new references,
feeling too old in these clothes.

But,
the space stretches similar-
    now I can write letters to myself.
Spaced, still and silent,
clinging through every last-
    these words have no shadow.

And no space.

Nothing broken, nothing less than
    into,
nothing more than silence.

V

Coming awake suddenly,
    eyes peer through air
grasping for the spaces between dark and night.
My mother sits passenger side,
    face tucked tight to glass,
mumbling something out of reach.

"Mother! Mother I cannot hear you! Mother I cannot understand!"

Primary-
    begun in motion as the end.

More tissue has slipped,
    there was no place left to fall,
or hide.
    Broken by literature-
    ideas are no longer pure.

Needs have deserted-
    to find space between flesh and words.
I am ashamed of the language I speak.
The language of the body,
the language of lost lines.
I cannot transcend this.

Losing feeling,
lost timing.
More body --- Less words.

"Your poems," she said, "never change anything."
Only statements of things past. Nothing new."

Our histories are the same,
stationary,
failing
while the masses rally in
together, all empty in blankness,
one by one fading
out of time.

VI

Into
the abyss.
Still true-
empty.
And beyond all gone,
need still present-
end History.
Everything passes through,
barely held together-
stitched.
And beyond all, needs still present.
Fall in front-
and into
what we may never see.
Fall in front
and into
the quiet noise destroying our spaces between
what speech may come next,
or what silence may end.
Speech holds tight-
when the end comes,
I will quote myself.

--Mark Bowers
Family Portrait

There she stands, alone in the world, a sad little gray haired woman with no past. No memories to guide her through a sea of unfamiliar faces. There is a ravenous beast loose inside her body, it grows stronger every day, feeding on the memories of the people she loves and cherishes. As the beast grows stronger, she grows weaker until one day, she will no longer exist.

A man stands beside her; he says hello to his wife Mildred. She looks at him, confused and frustrated. She exclaims that her husband is a young man and has a full head of strawberry red hair. This man, standing in front of her, is old, overweight and has thin white hair. She points at her daughter and calls for her mother. The family tries to explain that her mother has been dead for years. She shakes her head, stubborn as ever, and asks for her boys. Another man steps before her. Mildred yells, this man before her is not her son. Where are her boys? She shouts at the strangers surrounding her. The family wonders if she is looking for the son who died many years ago. She replies forcefully, telling them she knows Andrew is dead. She wants to see her boys. Mildred only had two boys. The family wonders if she is searching for the young version of her grown son.

Now she holds her hand out to her granddaughter, a flicker of recognition. The granddaughter steps forward and grasps Mildred’s hand. Mildred pats her granddaughter’s hand as she has always done in the past. She looks at her granddaughter, fear, trust, hope for an answer in her eyes. She asks her granddaughter to tell her who these strangers are that stand before her. She looks sadly at Mildred and sighs, they are her family. Mildred shakes her head in disbelief. As a final effort to convince Mildred, her granddaughter points and tells Mildred who each person is. Slowly she turns to her granddaughter and asks to go home. Her granddaughter sadly tells her, this house filled with pictures of relatives alive and long dead is her home.

A family, defeated, stands before Mildred. A woman they once knew as wife, mother, grandmother. She is just a shell of the woman she once was. A disease with no cure eating away at the memories of the people she loves and cherishes. The woman who was once the caretaker is now the one who needs to be taken care of. The woman who once was the teacher is now the one who needs to be taught over and over again. The woman who was once an integral part of the family before her is missing, gone, lost to the world forever.

Today is a bad day. Mildred does not recognize anyone or anything. She is living in a time long past, searching for the faces that existed back then. The family wishes for the good days. Those are the days when she recognizes her family and is able to communicate. The good days are the days she lives in the present and looks back to the past. The good days are the days the family regains hope, only to have it dashed again by a bad day.

The family stands together. They have hope for a cure. They know it will come too late for Mildred, but maybe not for them. The family lives in fear that
someday, this beast, this destroyer of memories may come to visit each of them. One by one, slowly stealing their memories away.

--Kim Gurdziel
Stepping out on Lake Ontario in Mid November

As my cold gaze mimics the
temperature
of the fog-laden ice pond, I
relax; sit, stare
watch the midnight black earth
crumble and soften beneath my heel,
the burnt wood smell
slithers over the ground behind me,
creeping up my back,
covering my head ears eyes nose

Early morning energy invades,
burns my lungs, heavy breathing
gets slower as I watch the smaller puffs
of breath join their brethren over the pond.
I ask myself, “Where have all
the boats gone?” I look for
the ice shanties that bespeckle the surface
of the mushy blue waters
like kernels from a pepper shaker.
They have all left me alone
with a small seagull at my side
looking up at me as if to ask me,
“Where have all the boats gone?”
The sky, melting away its look
of the inside of an eggshell,
returns my blank gaze,
beckoning me to go and forget
this cold and lifeless dream of ice.

--Bryan Mahoney