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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Each new academic year brings waves of renewal. The same is true for The Angle. We are looking forward to the continuance of the full-color gallery insert, which includes artwork from faculty. In addition, we are delighted to showcase work that embodies diversity.

We were astonished with the amount of quality work, both writing and artistic, we received for this issue. With the mundane rituals of school setting in, we were thrilled to receive work with fresh voices.

We hope that you will continue to find The Angle an expressive and creative celebration of our community at St. John Fisher. We look forward to continue sharing your voices in our magazine. The next Angle deadline is November 3rd, and we encourage you to submit your artwork, poetry, and prose.

Thank you,
Jodi Rowland, Editor
Stacy Colombo, Editor
TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER ART NANCY FARRELL

ANGLE’S HOME GROWN AWARDS.................................................................1
MESSAGES..................................................................................Catherine Agar.............2
A SEMI-AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL
STORY ABOUT A BOY.................................Evan Abbey.........................4
PARK AVENUE......................................................Jonathan Charod King...5
THE SCAR..........................................................Emily Ryan.....................6
TILT-A-WHIRL......................................................Erin Dorney.................7
FREE....................................................................Kaylene Tran.................8
BETWEEN LINES.................................................Linda Wert...............9
ART GALLERY................................................................10
PRINCESS..........................................................Evan Abbey.....................14
TRAGIC SEPARATION.................................Rachel Kooy....................15
A PERFECT FIT....................................................Robin Buda..................16
WHERE IS THE MOONLIGHT?...........Margaret May.........................16
CATHEDRAL......................................Catherine Agar.....................17
LITTLE FALLS................................................Jodi Rowland....................18
LOCKS OF LOVE.....................................Stacy Colombo..................19
FORESIGHT......................................................Megan Lindley............20
BEACH DAYS......................................................Emily Ryan.................21
RAIN..........................................................Marie Heberberger...........22
HAiku OFF OF A BLESSING..............................Robin Buda....................22
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES................................................................../home.sjfc.edu/theangle/
ANGLE’S HOME GROWN AWARDS

READERS’ CHOICE
FIRST PLACE Catherine Agar . . . Messages
SECOND PLACE Evan Abbey . . . A Semi-Autobiographical Story
ABOUT A BOY
THIRD PLACE Jonathan Charod King . . . Park Avenue

ART PICKS
ART AWARD Nancy Farrell
FACULTY ART AWARD Mark Jacobs

Nancy Farrell

I
CATHERINE AGAR

MESSAGES

When you were ten, your father took you to the opera. You had to wear a dress. You liked the scenery, and looking down into the orchestra pit, but when the singing started your attention wandered.

You studied the man on your right. He was probably in his thirties; had nice brown hair and eyes. Your brother had been telling you about mental telepathy and you tried it. Can I put my hand in your lap? It took a minute for the message to get through, then the man looked at you. He looked from your face to your legs and back. You're a kid, he answered. He wasn't even amused. He looked at the stage.

At intermission, you asked your father questions about the opera so he would think you were interested. While he was talking, you watched the people milling around the lobby. You picked a youngish man and sent him a message. Can I sit on your lap? He didn't get it; he walked right by. You tried another. This man heard. He looked down at you with surprise on his face. He looked at your legs. Call me in eight years, he said.

When you were ten and three months, your parents had a party. Your dad strung the back yard with Japanese lanterns and your mother made you wear a baby dress with Winnie the Pooh over one breast. There were lots of women with white and yellow hair. They called you "honey" and said you looked like your mom. Some of them pressed you up against their massive bosoms where you felt packed, corseted flesh and had to hold your breath against the Chanel No. 5. There were old men who shook your hand gently in their cramped veiny ones. There were young men who drank steadily and smiled right into your eyes when you held out the tray of hors d'oeuvres. One of them took a cracker off the tray and grinned at Pooh. You blushed and offered the tray to someone else. When you turned around again, the man was looking at your bottom.

When you were ten and three months and eight hours, the guests were standing in little clutches. From the lawn you could hear shouted laughter and once the crash of broken glass. The tray was empty so you put it in the kitchen where a man and woman were whispering together. You poured yourself a quarter inch of wine you didn't like and went outside.

You walked along the edge of the lawn in the shadows. You saw people standing like cardboard cutouts in the fuzzy lantern light; you heard their voices but not the words. Halfway down the yard, you took off your shoes and set them in the grass next to your empty wine glass. You kept walking. The ground became squishy as you approached the creek. You could hear the water running over the rocks. It was very dark.

When you were ten and three months and eight hours and some minutes, there was someone behind you, cursing softly. Damn! It's all wet down here!
Take off your shoes.

He didn’t look at you. What’s on the other side of the creek?

A baseball field.

The man groped for you, caught your arm, pulled you into the cold water. You stumbled behind him over the rocks and up the short embankment on the other side. His hand pinched your arm. He walked steadily to the center of the field. Lighted houses made a ring around the field in the distance.

What are we doing here?

You know.

I’m ten.

I’m forty-three. Nice to meet you.

The man put his hand to your neck.

Let me go or I’ll scream.

You won’t scream. His hand moved over the back of your dress. He found the zipper and tugged it down.

Daddy.

The man pulled your dress down on one side, holding you pinned to his chest, then switched arms and you were naked, in your underpants, shivering. Your arms were wedged, elbows bent, between your chest and his. His free hand stroked your back, caught in your panties. Then you were lying in the prickly grass and he was holding you down with one hand, touching you with the other. He fumbled with himself for a moment, forced your legs apart, and climbed on top of you. His skin was hot. You were cold, chilled down to the middle of all your bones. You stared at the millions of stars, at the black silence, and you didn’t cry.

When you were ten and three months and nine hours, you found your shoes on the lawn and went in through the back of the house. You went into the powder room and locked the door. The light hurt. You stood in front of the mirror. Your eyes were dark and glittering, prominent in your face. You brushed pieces of grass out of your hair. You washed. You peed, and it burned.

Upstairs, your father was saying goodbye to some guests. You went to him and stood close, hoping he would put his arm around you. He did.

You look tired, honey.

A woman with blue-white hair and diamond earrings smiled at you. Was this your first grown-up party?

Daddy, you said, but even though you were screaming, he didn’t seem to hear.
A semi-autobiographical story about a boy
After the painting Peeling Onions by Lilly Martin Spencer

A mother stands in a kitchen
A family kitchen
The smell of home-cooked goodness lingers everywhere
A familiar scene almost

The chopping of a knife barely covers the sound of her sniffling.
Hands repeatedly wiping away the monsoon of tears.
Eyes red, tired from overuse
She’s cutting onions.

A mother stands in a kitchen
She has just talked to her son.
He’s not coming home ever
Doesn’t need her doesn’t want her he’s moved on

The knife continues its chopping, the sniffling no longer covered
Tears fall freely now, hands long since given up.
Eyes which once were an unreadable icy blue
Now in the evening light, reflect a depressed gray.

A mother stands in a kitchen
Still chopping sniffling tearing
Far away a son begins forgetting.
The onions are only a cover.
JONATHAN CHAROD KING

PARK AVENUE

She patiently waits.

(Petrified with fear)

Today she decided to wear her hair up
It makes her feel pretty.

Leaves of green and orange
Whirl about her feet
Wind blows. Just enough,
Scent of kiwi-mango body splash
Fills the air . . .

Sky is gray with anger
Stains on her dress remind her.

Lethargic with guilt—
Immersed in pain — she holds herself,
Eyes fill with tears
Sound of screaming children scar her conscience.
EMILY RYAN

THE SCAR

See it all went down like this . . .

my brother and I were in a motorcycle race on a beautiful sunny day; I remember the asphalt seemed to ripple with heat, the sky never so blue, the wind so exhilarating against our skin and hair – and that’s when it all just goes blank. I must have hit the pavement going at least 100 miles per hour; all the doctors said that I was lucky to have lived . . .

It always happens when I’m just not ready for it. “Wow, where did that scar on your back come from?” A numbing question that sends my mind wondering—All the perilous journeys and harrowing adventures I had fabricated in my mind so many times before. Suddenly I’m on the spot, and I just can’t find the words to make my story live up to the bustle my little scar has caused; a spot on my back that I haven’t had the pleasure of seeing, which seems to lend itself to stories that even the best liar (or perhaps fabricator) cannot forge. I panic for a couple minutes, muttering a few “uhhh’s” and “ohhh’s” here and there all the while staring into the hungry eyes and searching for a story that will appease their ever-growing appetites. “What this little thing?” I modestly but heroically ask, buying myself more time, and building some suspense.

on one of our midnight trips to get emergency Easy Mac at Ghetto Wegmans, a man in a bright orange hoody with shifty eyes walked in; I knew right away that he was up to no good, so I made sure to keep a close eye on him. He made his way slowly around the store, and then finally arrived at the register where he pulled out a rusty knife that must have been 10 inches long. Needless to say I was there in a flash, and this wound here is just a little reminder . . . that and my medal of honor . . .

Too many times have I looked into those wanting eyes, seen in them the ability to create my own superhero, and watched it all slip away, because when it comes right down to it, I just can’t do it. For whatever reason, whether it be my inability to work under pressure, or my impossible desire to weave myself into the perfect hero, I cannot find the stories I so long to tell about this damned little scar. It always happens the same way. After several minutes I sigh, a new look of disappointment overcoming the once valiant look I donned just seconds before, and tell my mislead spectators the true story, in its pathetic and anti-climatic entirety. Once I am finished, they often sigh, a long dissapointed sigh, grunt a depleted “oh,” and simply walk away.

it was the championship soccer game senior year and I can’t remember a more exciting time. The score was all tied up and there were only 30 seconds to go, we had possession of the ball and with the shrill cry of the whistle, the ball was off and headed my way. One bicycle kick, the winning goal, and some surgery later, we are the champions, and I have this scar...

For a while after this fairly damaging ordeal, I find myself reproaching the scar. After all, what is the point in having such a scar if you cannot tell some amazing story about how it became a part of you? But just as surely as I am asked, “How’d you get that scar?” my daydreaming continues. Maybe, just maybe, I will get the story right.
Spinning,
I feel my grip on reality
   Slowly loosening
It's never been like this before.

I can see your face
But I still wonder where you've gone
   You whisper in my ear
While your vacant pillow laughs

Frustrated,
With promises of happy mornings
Mornings gone black
   The sun is gone
   It has gone with you

I ride this tilt-a-whirl
Waiting for your return
Sometimes I see you
   But you have joined ranks with the cotton candy girls

And I need to get off this ride
   Out of this trip
      Away from this freak show

Before I hurl.
When I was in Vietnam, my family did not live free. On our farm, we let the animals run free.

We always paid with an arm and a leg, but one time, we rode for free.

The men enjoy watching young females with black hair and the Vietnamese traditional long dress (ao dai) was free.

Financial burdens made it hard to leave our country, but the sponsors help us leave for free.

As I look out the window at such a high altitude, I seek to be free.

Walking through the tunnel we were greeted with kindness and my family felt free.

The opportunity for an education here allows me to learn for free.

The struggles in the past made me realize that this world had set me free.
LINDA WERT

BETWEEN LINES

I used to feel
His heel brushing my calf
The intertwining of his legs around my waist
The strength of his chest pressing against mine
His body wrapped
Around me,
And my breath
Crushed by his weight.

Now,
The phone calls,
messages, emails
Short conversations
With no meaning
No emotion in his voice

Reading *between lines*
That were never there
Sensing the frustration
That he wasn’t experiencing
The backhanded comments
That weren’t about me
But not knowing
Not wanting to know in case,
In case they were

So can I ask,
Do I pester?
Am I clinging?
Should I hold back?
Or say, fuck this?
ART GALLERY

PHOTOGRAPH

FROZEN SUMAC

PETER TONERY
ART GALLERY

Photograph: WINTER GREEN

LINDA WERT
ART GALLERY

Drawing

Girl

Mark Jacobs
ART GALLERY

PHOTOGRAPH

PINK BEAUTY

NANCY FARRELL
Evan Abbey

Princess (in Every Sense of the Word)

Under a tree I sit
Here with my Irish Princess.
Adorned with shamrocks, green accents the paleness
Of her skin.

The rustling of leaves signals
An upcoming breeze.
Her perfume
Hairspray
Smells that remind me I’m surrounded by something wonderful,
Drift lazily by.

A phone begins vibrating,
A bee investigates.
My princess jumps up in a flurry of pages,
Birthday list forgotten as she takes a swipe at the bee.
The bee leaves, she settles
Resuming the thump, thump, thump
Of birthday cake stamps on each day with one.

I sit in awe
Awe of everything she embodies.

Time seems to stand still, afraid to break the contentment

A sneeze brings a jolt of reality
The humming of cars
Slowly fills my ears.
The banging of tools adds further excitement
To the air.

Through the clouds
Through the leaves
The sun fights for its place.
It lights up her face as she stands
To leave me.

A meeting at three
She says
See you for dinner.

She’s gone
Traces of perfume linger
Around me, everything stops
The breeze
The cars
The banging.

All I’m left with is
The memory
The thought
The happiness
From my brief encounter with
A princess, in every sense of the word,
Who just so happens to be Irish.
RACHEL KOOY

TRAGIC SEPARATION

Your arms so tightly hold and caress me
Warm breath at the nape of my neck
Your bare chest pressed firmly against my back
Fitting as one, fingers intertwined.
I dream of serenity
Where all is right with the world,
The heat of passion in your eyes
Delicate reminiscence of the flesh of your body,
Nostalgic wanting of your sweet embrace
Lips as tender as one’s heart could be.
Your seemingly devilish sandy eyes
Tell wonderful stories everyday—
The way your lips curl slightly at the edges
Whenever your eyes fall upon me.
Shaggy, wind whipped, sun bleached hair
Waving in the breeze
Shadows of us dancing ever so graceful
Against the sun setting sky.
I stir, a chill creeping down my spine
Like a spider on the prowl,
Buried memories brought back to life
In an instant with cold terror.
Awful and brutal that night was
Watching the blood seeping into your white shirt,
The frightening look in your eyes
As you slowly drift out of consciousness.
The bright, white lights of that night brought back to life here.
For days, I sat at your bedside
Among the flowers and cards and family
Waiting for you, waiting for you to open
Your vivacious eyes.
I never left your side, never stopped praying,
Thinking of your last real night down here,
instead of mine.
Now I lie here in bed, by myself
Missing everything about you—
Your warm embrace, smiling eyes, dancing heart.
As I look out into the horizon,
The sun setting so slowly,
I know you will be there when it is my turn
To dance me into the heavenly skies.
ROBIN BUDA

A PERFECT FIT

The feeling engulfs my body,
my soul. I'm filled
with the wonder of you.
Pieces of you become
pieces of me.
My life and yours,
intertwined,
like our legs
in the comfort of the sheets.
Laying next to you, your breath
becomes mine
as your sweet aroma
awakens my heart.
Two lost puzzle pieces
that have found their match.
We fit together
perfectly.

MARGARET MAY

WHERE IS THE MOONLIGHT?

As the crisp autumn air consumes my every being,
I gaze up into the heavens.
The stars—they seem to taunt me.
As do my dreams: dancing in the joys of my sorrows,
Glowing in my defeats.
As the night dew develops, it questions my existence.
Do you not have an intuition of the sunrise?
Shall you dismiss your feelings and carry your tree
Or shall you lie in the painfully sweet smelling pasture?
Do you not subside to the tormenting hollows of the wind?
Dare you be mesmerized by the flaming sparks of light
And be held to watch the heavens swell up?
The master of the skies forbids such!
Do not subside!
Let the moonlight be your compass.
Oh Divine Master, where are your illuminating beams?
Why have you permitted the blackness of the clouds to enter the skies?
Is there now no compass the sky will offer?
CATHEDRAL

I see the face of Mary
in this place,
and Jesus on the cross,
mahogany pews and stained glass—
a filled-up quiet—
fat snowflakes falling on emerald grass,
and worship while it rains.
The way my father washed my hands
when I was little,
my wedding day, all shaking nerves
and rattling bouquet,
three newborn babies’ faces, fingers, toes,
the rocking chair at 3 a.m.,
our late-night, muffled laughter,
soft music playing while the girls
read or drive their little cars around
the family-room rug,
and candle-lit dinners, we two alone at the kitchen table.
Here, too, are Thanksgivings in my steamy kitchen,
my brothers stealing pieces from the turkey,
sixteen of us (all here) around the lengthened table,
and building snow forts in the dark.
Wood smoke on an autumn day,
the words of God printed on a page,
and coming home.
Coming home
from a kick-of-leaves in the woods
damp, pink-cheeked, and cheery,
to hot baths and the smell of roasted chicken.
In this place are the every night dinners;
we listen to which crayon colors
were used in school, and who said what to whom,
as leftovers cool and harden on the plates,
and the little one grows wiggly, no one minds.
Reading quietly into my daughter’s wispy hair.
All the concerts, catching eyes,
the little wave, the grin, the look away,
all the card games, board games, dumb games,
fits of giggles, laughter, tears.
In this place is our lost baby,
and September 11th, which still makes me cry,
the sorrows, losses, diagnoses,
bare root tragedies,
all problems of the world
we cannot fix.
But
there is a balm in Gilead,
in this church, this holy place, this cathedral
where God waits to somehow bless,
where awe lives, where I am eight
where I have walked in, fresh from nothing,
where I have seen Him
for the very first time.
JODI ROWLAND

LITTLE FALLS
GENESEE RIVER, ROCHESTER, NY

On a path—south to north—
I flow in and out of slow and speedy currents.
I dip above the water’s surface.
I sink below the undertow,
and drink tea with the rocks
that form the riverbed.
I stand on a slate rock
overlooking the small drop
and dive into the murky water—
cleansed in midair.
The rumbling sound of water
meeting the small pool
drowns out the world,
and I’m thinking about
the people, the moments, the places
I’ve left behind
in the curves, bends,
and flow of this river.
I’m looking ahead to the new
rhythm of flow, the new
river of life, while I sit on the seat of forgetting
and remembering.

NANCY FARRELL
STACY COLOMBO

LOCKS OF LOVE

Every morning I resort to brushing my hair with the same brush. The pale yellow handled brush that belonged to my grandmother up until a few years ago when she died. The brush, older than me at the age of twenty-one, still knows how to give my hair the massage it has loved for years with its powerful, yet smooth bristles, each one still in tact.

As the smooth edges of the brush’s fingers run their course through the layers of damp, wavy hair each morning, I try to picture how my grandmother would have done it. Surely she would have pulled it up tight in rubber bands without a single hair dangling down, for she always thought that little girls should always look neat and clean. Each time I clench my grandmother’s brush with my palm’s firm grip and watch the long locks separate from one another and fall into their own separate place, my memory traces back to my childhood as a six-year old spending each summer day with my grandmother.

I can still see the sunlight peering though the windows of the kitchen while my sister and I line-up in front of the sink for grandma to come and do our hair. A tall glass full of water would be sitting on the counter next to the porcelain basin waiting to be used. She would sneak in through the back door to catch us by surprise. She had just finished hanging the newly washed clothes on the line to dry amid the warm July air. On her way to the bathroom to pick-up our favorite brush, she would ask, “Who’s first?” My sister and I would both raise our hands with excitement because we both wanted our hair done first.

I would be the first to go all the time because I was always the one closest to the basin of the sink. Of course my sister was never pleased with this decision. Ignoring her pouting face, grandma would rotate me around so my back was to her. She felt that the back of the head was a better angle in which to work from. With a firm grip around the yellow plastic handle, she dipped the head of the brush deeply into the tall glass of water twice before dabbing away the excess water, that lingered on the brush, against the side panel of the basin. The wet brush caressed my hair until it lay sopping wet on my shoulders with the glare of the sun reflecting itself upon it. She divided an even part right down the center of my scalp and scooped up the dangling wet hair, first one side and then the other. Wrapping each side in rubber bands that she took from grandpa’s work desk and created two pigtails. Her final little touch would always be to curl her pointer finger around the freshly tied hair creating one, long, perfect ringlet curl. She would always say to me, “Ahhh isn’t that nice. . .This is how I used to
do Mommy’s hair when she was your age.”

I felt honored when I eventually got to return the favor to my grandmother for all the times she had pampered me. It was when she laid comatose in her hospital bed at Parkridge Hospital. Her body, swollen twice her usual size, was being kept alive by the fluids that were also killing her. I sit on the edge of her bed with the weight of my body resting on my left shoulder. I stroked her coarse hair with the tips of my frightened fingers, just as I remember her doing when I was a child. Except now she is the child, lying helplessly amid a sea of tubes and machines, and I am the adult that she used to be.

With not enough time to say goodbye, she slipped away right from under my fingers. The only thing I have left as a constant reminder of her is that brush. The brush that was once hers which is now mine. The only thing that is a constant reminder of what I had. The only thing that I wish I still had and never took advantage of because I always believed it would be there. The only thing that knows what I like and knows exactly how I like it. The only thing that produces a vivid memory of love and tranquility. The only thing that I have left, for bright summer days are no longer the same.

Megan Lindley

Foresight

I hide behind my smile
behind the charcoal lined eyes
behind my midnight black locks

tears of purple mercury stream down my face
it oozes out from the corners of my mouth
and from my open nostrils

I hide behind the covers of yesterday
make the bed—
no telling of where I’ve been the day before—
I start the new day fresh . . .

the scent of orange juice and roses
keep me going

my eyes are going to be the death of me
EMILY RYAN

BEACH DAYS

Silky white fingers reach for sandy brown toes
The land swells with the hiss of the seductive water

The world pulses with the flirty waves
Who tease the beach with ever steady breaths

Shovels forge fairytales and
Children become rich with the salty breeze

The clouds dance with the sun
The playful birds keeping time

And as the day is replaced by
The night’s calming silence

Remnants of the day’s glories and games
Remain stamped in the sand

The waves left to flaunt in the lone moon’s embrace

NANCY FARRELL
Menrn
Hnnpncpn
RarN
All
around is bitter silence eerie—
Sweetly sounds of birds are gone away now.
Darkness fills the emptiness and clearly
Winds will take the trees, and branch on low bough
Bend with failing strength against the rain hard.
Clouds will open up with fury steady
Down they run like many spears, the land marred.
Rain heaves down and forms a lake, an eddy
Swirls about and takes me where the rain flows.
Standing in the water I am finding
Power falling high from heaven and grows
Greatly into conscious warping, binding—
I am one with rain, absorbing delight.

ROBIN BUDA

HAIKU OFF OF A BLESSING
USING PHRASES FROM JAMES WRIGHT’S POEM A BLESSING

loneliness like theirs
the light breeze moves me to her
break into blossom
PRAISE FOR THE AUTHORS

Evan Abbey brings images to life from the painting Peeling Onions.
—John Karbowski, Submission Review Committee

“Between Lines” is an anthem for any person in a relationship looking to answer the unknown.
—Stacy Colombo, Editor

“Messages” by Catherine Agar is a strong, well-paced, evocative story.
—M.J. Iuppa, Creative Advisor

Kaylene Tran’s “Free” is a different perspective about our obsession with American “Freedom.”
—Marie Heberger, Submission Review Committee

Emily Ryan takes us back to the innocence of childhood in “Beach Days.”
—Jason Cotugno, Submission Review Committee

In “Park Avenue,” Jonathan Charod King shows the mask one woman struggles to hide behind.
—Jodi Rowland, Editor