

Studio One

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Complete Edition, Studio One 2023

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Studio One
Volume 47

From the Editors

Studio One is a literary and visual arts journal published each spring by the College of Saint Benedict/St. John's University students. Our mission is to give new and/or established writers a forum in which they can present their works. The magazine focuses on poetry, short fiction, essays, and other reproducible visual artworks. Submissions are open to all students attending CSB/SJU and to the general public regardless of regional, national, or international location.

In 1976, a student named Clare Rossini had the foresight to create a new magazine for publishing the artistic works of authors and artists living in the surrounding area. As Rossini wrote, "Art is the life current of the community. It is a source of pleasure and pride for us; it unites us with our human predecessors and successors. Art is no luxury; it is a vital human activity. By publishing Studio One, we wish to support the members of our Minnesota community dedicated to that activity and to make their art available to those for whom it was made." While Studio One's reach has extended greatly since our beginning in 1976, the current Editors-in-Chief have striven to publish a selection that still supports the mission written by Clare 46 years ago. Without Clare's efforts, we would not be presenting the 2023 edition of Studio One.

Studio One would also like to thank our staff advisors, Matt Callahan and Rachel Marston, along with all the faculty of the CSB/SJU English Department, Catherine Rupp of the Literary Arts Institute, Patty Tholen, and all our contributors, as well as all those who submitted their work.

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Poetry

Praxilla's Folly

Sicya — a fruit like the cucumber
Or the gourd
Eaten ripe.

In Cucumber Town
In Sicyon near Corinth
Praxilla mourned Adonis in the spring.

Her Adonis, sprouting in the garden,
Spoke of what he missed,
Being dead:

Sunlight
Starlight
Moonlight

Ripe cucumbers
Apples
Pears.

“Silly as Praxilla's Adonis!”
Men in other
Cities hooted

Shocked that an idiot woman dared
Put cucumbers on a par
With the celestial glories.

In Cucumber Town
Praxilla
Ate fresh salad

Her bite of immortality
Succulent
With earth-born flavors.

In the land of death, Adonis
Waiting for the spring
Remembers sunlight on the garden.

Ruth Berman

THAT MUSIC REMINDS ME

Cat balances on a fence
in a back alley at night
bowing a fiddle that fits him,
its sound echoing
in the gray dampish air
like an Irish ditty,
which it might be, this cat
perhaps an emigrant
from Cork where so many
in loneliness and
in sorrow have come,
he's a smart tough cat who has
weathered much and if he
seems to you unfeline,
like mongrels with their bones
he has learned how and where
to stash this one precious thing
that croons the past for him.

Ray Greenblatt

WHITEFACE MOUNTAIN

Whiteface Mountain beckons again, its snow-covered trails not yet caught in the rising sun. I'm here in retreat from a world more clearly cruel to recall how much I loved skiing until, with my son on a mogul field, I caught a tip, tumbled down the slope and came to rest in a heap. My right calf stabbing, I finished the run on only one ski. And haven't skied since, but imagine myself on unbroken snow, carving narrow S-turns down the fall line in the cold.

I remember a day here with my father long ago when we could not bundle ourselves enough to stay warm, the ponchos they handed us for the long ride in the chairlift doing little good against the wind. It took the fire in the summit lodge to thaw us out before we could head back down, only to turn around, ride up again, and sit by the fire, as I do now at the base lodge. My son, waiting for the lifts to open, hands me the morning paper with all the news.

James Tilley

Frogs

“Grow grass,
stone frogs,”
written on bathroom walls.
Hippie beads, oodles
colorful acid pills
in dresser drawers
no clothes,
kaleidoscope condoms,
ostentatious sex.
No Bibles or Sundays
that anyone remembers.
Rochdale College,
Toronto, Ontario 1972,
freedom school, free education.
Makes no sense,
when you’re high on a song
“American Women” blasting
eardrums and police sirens come on.

Micheal Lee Johnson

Passing By

My friends come by to remind me
we're getting old, that as decrepit as former lovers look to me
this is how bad I look to them. I have to remember this
when I go to the flower shop and old men hit on me
that I'm probably close to their age, and therefore
an appropriate pick-up. I have to remember this
when young waitresses stumble between calling me
"miss" or "ma'am," that they, too, wonder which term
is more appropriate. I have to remember this
when I pick up my 17-year-old son from school
and his teachers automatically assume I'm his mother
and not another teenager, despite how young I feel
despite my adamant clinging to the notion
that I *am* still young.

Holly Day

A Peace of Sorts

My granddaughter, bless her, is
as I once was: confident, innocent
in a world defined by being loved.

You could smell flowers all day
and not get stung.

But not everything is good,
and you can't explore without
bumping your head somewhere.

You find musty curtained
places where your innocence
and confidence are unwelcome.

I anticipate her discovering
a stuffed puppy can't protect her
forever. She hugs it tight.

Still, there is a greater beauty
beyond such stabs of loss,
and unseen hands stretching her
into a new, unfamiliar body.

A hard freedom, once you lose
many things, perhaps Puppy.
A peace of sorts, after you bury
most of those who loved you.
Then you watch the stars alone,
saying in your chastened heart,
Well, it had to be.

Russel Rowland

Ribs and Skulls

I was walking today
where an old broken-down stone wall
descended from higher up—
couldn't help but think
what a hapless, thankless way to live:
farming begrudging hills,

trees to fell, walls to build
and rebuild each spring, dead offspring
to line up in little plots.

No wonder they left
walls and cellar holes behind them
for the promise of better.

I have walked before
where such stone walls run as parallel
as a skeleton's ribs,

and cellar holes lie about like
empty skulls. Yet I heard cows, ewes.
Children still alive, playing.

It was when the setting sun
slanted through translucent foliage
the old way, that I heard them.

Russel Rowland

FLY DISTURBANCE

Fly flies
around living room
hitting a multitude of eyes
against kitchen window
only to buzz in another direction
around, around, silent
at last climbing up glass pane
searching for a crack outside
as it disrupts my quiet time
when sleeping cat
only twitches once
as it lands on her fur
like turning the page
to a different dream
while mine swats and flails
at the nightmare of my disturbance.

Diane Webster

TSUNAMI VINE

Seedling vine creeps
along ground until
it timidly touches trellis
old lady hammered into place
in front of her door hoping
for shade and privacy as vine
grows, thickens, lengthens form;
it looms onto roof in tsunami crest
cascading over shingles
in slow motion calamity
of every-grasping tendrils
upward, over, spreading white blossoms
in hypnotic scent and shade
soon to give old lady
cocoon of privacy as long as
frost holds back one more week,
one more week
she'll be safe inside.

Diane Webster

Clear

I practice giving this speech.

In your mind, sense your toes
as you fall asleep.
This will help you wake
into the dream.

Shout “this is a dream”
in your dream
and you will know it,
the vision will sparkle into live color.

Change things, yes you can.
The world is your canvas—put
your house there, and in the window
your friend, and on
the bridge, you.

Grow poppies
from the dull walls.

I’m not talking
about a new party drug,
I’m talking about ourselves.

Symbols in dreams,
what we really mean. See your dreams—now
afterward the world, too,
looks so beautiful and rested.

Still for another minute
let’s let contraband dreams
fall out of our mouths.

PROPAGANDA 41

We've unsprung.
No verve for indignation.
Erstwhile niceties dwindle.
Prying reproach
Qualifies hurried orders.

*

We've
indignation
Erstwhile
reproach
hurried

*

We've off-the-cuff about-turned.
Bumptious indignation.
Erstwhile dictums sharpen.
Misgivings lug reproach.
Hurried policy aims.

Christopher Barnes

Her Palette

She struggles,
as always,
to mix her best

tones, discarding,
if she can,
that which she doesn't

need most.
When younger
she believed

that a palette
once formed
should never

waiver, should
last a lifetime.
But being alone

does something
to a person:
it washes out

hues, burns away
color like sun
on morning fog.

It happened
exactly
like this

when she awoke
that day and found
he was gone.

Her life grew
washed out
like the way

full sun bleaches
a desert. But when
she moved back

to the Plains
where she was born,
slowly, so slowly

as cottonwoods
grow along
semi-dry creeks,

she learned again
how this land
so full, so flat,

so filled
with winter
wheat can teach

one to rub
and scrape
away all

unneeded borders
of one's life
until all you are

is contained within
the remaining
negative space.

Richard Luftig

Law's Been Good

We have Joe Manchin,
we met his price
The Act will pass now,
they tell us it's nice

They say we're greedy but we have a good time
We don't leave any clues at the scene of the crime
Law's been good to us so far

His Maserati's all over the state
Our campaign 'donations' must never be late
We have out limos, ride in the back,
and lock the doors in case we're attacked

We can't complain but oftentimes we still do
Law's been good to us so far

Both of the Parties they know the score;
they learn early what is safe to deplore
Law's been good to us so far

Law's been good to us so far

Micheal Ceraolo

One Author's Promises

When authors meet and fall, each with a book—
of loss and longing, my last one; yours, of
the anguish, letting go of a lost love
that lingers still—the prospects may not look
too bright. While neither of us wants to be
the topic of a dark time's fertile spurt,
each runs the risk of accidentally
hurting the other, and of being hurt.
I promise not that I won't break your heart,
but that I won't want to; and should I write
of us, that it will only be the light
and love I'll dote on, not the darker part.
From you, I need no promise ere we start,
though; this heart's here to break or make tonight.

James B Nichola

Epiphany II: The Golden Rule About to Snap

How can I love the neighbor
as my self
who voted for a guy
who summoned a lynch mob?
Should I even try?
Perhaps they didn't know
when they voted. So
now that they do,
what do they do:
send money to support the guy
who lied and lied and lied and lied?
deny the noose? deny
the five who died?
And yet I've come to understand
the clarity
the enormity
of the task at hand.
The Kingdom may not ever come
to those like me, too mute, too dumb,
too tired, too scared to figure out
the time has come to shout.
How can we love our neighbors—
how did we decades ago?—
who lynch their kneeling neighbors?
I confess, I do not know.

James B Nichola

There Used to Be

There used to be so many Western and police dramas on television.
In the 1950s there was a pronounced fear of Communism in the United States.
Remember to shut the windows this time!
I made very strong coffee and often used honey.
You'd be surprised how many wardrobe changes happen during a play.
Whatever happened to the Campfire Girls?
At one time there was a ludicrous rumor that Marlene Dietrich was a man in drag.
Ancient religious chants are very mesmerizing.
Sometimes the nighttime cries of cats are haunting and childlike.

Peter Dellolio

Short Stories

The Steppingstone

Everything has a start and story. Moving cars, couches, curtains, paperclips, chalk. Everything.

And once upon a time, there was a steppingstone. It was almost like all those other single slabs sitting in millions of yards.

But picture this one. Think about it hard.

Close your eyes. Breathe, think, see it for what it once was. Maybe it was a rock? Or because men want to recreate things found in nature to put in their natural guardians, maybe it was a piece of manufactured material.

Then shut your eyes harder. See it - the steppingstone. That steppingstone was born in a factory, made in a day. It was made for us, hence the name, steppingstone.

It could have been made by a human or machine. Some guy who worked at the factory to support his family.

Or, maybe it was first touched by a teenage girl at the steppingstone factory where she got her first summer job. She looked at the steppingstone, the first she ever inspected, and she put it back, on a stack of other stones that were almost the same. Pass! It was good, she thought. She smiled because she got it right. Then she looked at the steppingstone and saw its patterns, the greys and slate blue, with tiny slashes of black. And for the first time in her life, she realized what her parents were doing every day at their jobs.

And then the steppingstone was sent to a store, unloaded by the delivery guy, handled by the clerk. And it was the delivery guy's last day on the job. He took care to thank everyone on his route. As usual, he took great care to unload the stones, because for thirty-seven years that's what he did. Not one broken.

And he placed our steppingstone on the very top.

The delivery guy noticed how nice the colors looked. The greys and slate-blue, with tiny slashes of black. But he needed to go to the little party his wife arranged, so he just lightly brushed his fingers across the top. He smiled and turned to head home from work for the last time.

And the store is a garden store in Southern California, where the steppingstone sits, waiting to be bought.

Then, a company vice president from Escondido buys the stone for the garden project he is going to start. The vp is wound tight and works so hard that the steppingstone spends months in the dark. Months in a dusty, metal shed, sitting alone on a plywood floor.

But one day, the vp's wife has had enough. He's dejected and tired and is having a hard time seeing the point.

His wife loves him more than herself, so she sends him out into the yard to build the little path he planned long ago. A three-meter stretch from the pergola patio to the backyard barbeque set up.

And the vp hits the project just like all his business dealings - with vigor. Every Sunday, he digs and rakes, plants and pounds until the beautiful path is done. The steppingstone is put in its place. It's the first stone off the patio, the first step on the way.

The vp's children play the lava game. "Step off the stone, you're burning in lava," they scream. And they always make it to our steppingstone because it's the first step.

The two children are a boy and a girl. Two years apart. Many times, they fall apart because the little girl is sort of bossy, and she tells the little boy what to do. But the rifts only last a few moments, and they come back to sit on the steppingstone and the next stone over, and the little girl tells the little boy about everything she learns in school. The little boy knows the little girl is very smart.

But one thing steppingstones do not know is that human nature is shifting and moving, unlike a stone.

One day, the vp and his wife come outside, and the vp stands next to the steppingstone, nervously kicking into the stone's stony side. It has rained a lot this day, so the steppingstone is wet and slippery. The vp keeps rubbing the sole of his shoe on the steppingstone, and soon, all the edges of the stone are caked with grassy mud.

The vp goes inside, but his wife stays. She bows her head and stares down, right into the steppingstone's face. She studies the greys and slate blue, with tiny slashes of black. A heavy rain starts and beats the woman's back. She squats all the way down to the steppingstone and picks the grassy mud from its face. Her dress falls lightly on the stone. There is the smell of sweetness and sour. The woman stays there for a long time, even after the grassy mud is gone.

A few days later, the little boy and little girl come outside.

But this time, the little girl doesn't tell the little boy what to do.

This time, the little girl gives the little boy a snack because he is hungry, and they put their little paper plates on the steppingstone.

This time, the little girl wipes the little boy's face because it got dirty.

This time, the little girl holds his hand.

By summer they are gone, and the stone is soon buried under unkempt grass, because that's what happens to steppingstones when it all falls apart.

Erik Priedkalns

The Wagner-Berger Prize for Excellence in Creative Writing

In 1978, Patricia and Leonard Percello endowed this prize to honor Patricia's parents, Louis and Mary Wagner-Berger, and to support college women who are interested in writing short stories and novels. It is designed to encourage and reward excellence in creative writing at the College of Saint Benedict.

The Wagner-Berger Prize for fiction is the first scholarship of its kind at the College of Saint Benedict. It is a scholarship awarded annually to the CSB student who submits the most original, previously unpublished short story. All submissions are judged by a committee of English Department members, and the winner receives an award of \$1,000. Studio One is honored to publish this year's CSB winner Jules Miyazaki.

Is it Nothing?

Maybe it is nothing. Maybe it is all in my head. Maybe, though, it is something. Moments are connected by a thread that is seemingly invisible, but that doesn't mean that they are not there. Not real. I never knowingly placed myself in any situation that resulted in me being the center of attention. I don't like attention. Attention means that someone is focusing on you. Looking at you. Fixating on you. It has always been safer to be in the background, where if needed, I could fade away to save myself from unwanted attention. Despite these actions, I somehow made a mistake. I know this because I shouldn't feel the hair on the back of my neck stand up every time I walk out of my apartment.

Every day, I follow a strict routine. This routine is essential to the productivity level of my day. Step 1: wake up at 5:45. Step 2: make bed. Step 3: start making coffee. Step 4: measure a cup of oats for oatmeal. These steps continue until I get to my 32 step, which is to close my apartment door behind me and lock it. Step 33 is to make sure that the door is locked. Then finally step 34: double-check to make sure it is locked. 34 steps in 45 minutes. Not following them would have detrimental effects on the rest of my day.

There I am walking to work. It takes me approximately 24 minutes to walk to work, and, as I look at my watch, I am perfectly on schedule. I deeply exhale and the tension in my shoulders fades away as I relax. Every time I pass a window or a building, I gradually slow down so that I can see my reflection in the window. The reason behind this is not narcissistic, I simply need to check that my hair is in order and my clothes have no wrinkles. I don't like attention, and if I had hair sticking up in the back of my head, the consequence would be something that I would not enjoy. As for my outfit, every time I nonchalantly look at myself in the window, I straighten out my blouse, just to make sure that it falls correctly on my body.

The walk to work is something that I enjoy every day. It gives me the time to gather my thoughts. It allows me to completely go through my schedule at least two times before I reach my destination. This allows for maximum productivity for the day, which brings me a moment of relief. The walk is predictable. I never have to worry about whether there will be traffic or the hassle of finding a taxi. I simply walk to work. Additionally, I find a peculiar enjoyment in this walk because I blend into the crowd of people around me. I am no one special; I am simply another person who needs to get to work. I get to my office in exactly 24 minutes. Good, I thought to myself. Now I can go on with the rest of my day.

From an early age, I was no one special. My acute sense of organization can be attributed to the loving guidance of my parents. As an only child, I excel in everything I do, even if it is outside my boundaries. Organization helps me do those things. I need to account for every minute of the day, or failure will surely be the ramification of one of my senseless blunders. My mother was always by my side giving me encouraging words, such as “Always do your best, Anne, and if that is not possible then don’t try at all.” Messing up is not an option, for if I do mess up at all, surely attention will be brought to me. And I don’t like attention. My mother helped me in many ways to make sure that I did not draw any negative attention to her and my father. For example, she would count my daily calorie intake, to keep me at a desirable weight. My mother always said that if I gain even a pound, I will surely draw unwanted attention to myself. She told me that I didn’t want that kind of attention, and I believed her.

So, even though my mom’s harsh words would cause me the occasional anxiety attack, I appreciated them, for I know that she truly wanted me to succeed. And people who succeed aren’t as noticeable as failures. And failures are the equivalent of nothing.

I walk steadily down the street as always, and, as I look at my watch, I can see that I am perfectly on schedule. As I pass the windows of the buildings, I routinely check my hair and straighten my blouse. I do so four or more times as I walk down the streets of Chicago. After I cross a walkway, I begin to get anxious, for it has been three minutes since the last time that I checked my hair and straightened my blouse. Luckily, there is a tall window of a building that I am steadily approaching. Finally, as I casually glance at myself in the window, I see a man looking at me from behind my reflection. That is strange, I thought as I quickly turned around to check, but he was not there. I did not think much of it, though, for it surely is a mistake, for why would he notice me? Well, at least I hope he wasn’t looking at me; I don’t like attention. Though I swept this moment to the back of my mind, I could sense that something was wrong. I feel a growing knot in my stomach and tension in my shoulders that were not there before. Every morning, I follow my routine, and every morning I could sense him lurking behind me in the shadows. I am beginning to become accustomed to it, yet there is still a moment in my day when my heart rate would suddenly increase, and my palms begin to sweat. In those moments, my hands would shake, and I would grasp them so tightly to relinquish my fears. I know I am being watched. I know that someone is paying attention to me, yet there is nothing I can do. Nothing. Is it something or nothing? I simply had to continue with my daily schedule, for if I did not, failure would surely be inevitable.

Comfort. I want comfort. I wake up in the middle of the night because I see a shadow in my doorway, yet when I turn on the lights, nothing is there. I see him every day on my walk to work. I can feel his presence behind as well as across the street; sadly, everywhere. I know he is around me, and I know that if I look into the window of a building, he will be there; he will be watching me. Every single time I pass a window, my lips begin to tremble. I yell and scream at myself, internally, not to turn my head. Yet every single time, I must, for I need to make sure that my hair is not messed up, and so I can adjust my blouse. Every single time, I slightly turn my head, and as I look at my reflection the first thing that I always see is my eyes. These big, brown, innocent eyes look back at me, pleading for me to look away, but I am unable. I must look back at those pleading eyes, for I am a prisoner of my own body. The next thing I see is a man behind me, in the distance, looking at me; fixating on me. In those few seconds, I am trapped as his captive. But those moments of terror are temporary, lasting only as long as it takes me to make sure my hair is in order and to straighten my blouse.

I yearn to change something in my daily routine, but no matter what effort I put forth, I cannot help leaving my apartment at the exact time every day and walking down the same streets. I have to. There is a voice in my head that narrates everything that I do, and if I stray even the slightest bit from my normal routine, its haunting voice fills my mind with words that should never be said to a human being. I cannot change who I am; or what I am. I don't know what to do anymore. All I know now is that I can't be a failure, I need to succeed. I can't have attention drawn toward me. I don't like attention.

I can't focus on anything. At work, my trail of thoughts is interrupted by a cool breeze of air that brushes across the back of my neck.

That means, he is here. He is with me. I clench my throat and continue typing, but the knot in my stomach grows and my hands begin to shake. The shaking increases, until I am unable to type, and I grasp my hands tightly together and hold them close to my chest. As I try to comfort myself, my fist hits my chest repeatedly. The pounding is as irregular as my current heartbeat. The pain of those subtle blows brings my mind back to me, giving me the ability to take hold of what is mine. Eventually, the hard blows to my body steadily decrease, until at last, I can move my hands away from my chest. I deliberately run my finger over my palms, massaging out the stress and tension until the only thing that remains is my hands. The set of hands that I used to be able to control, is now only used as tools that enable my fear and anxiety.

The knot in my stomach grew until at last, it surpassed the space that is meant for food. The anxiety his presence gave me slowly ate away at my body. I could see the pounds being gnawed off my bones by the unwanted evil that lived in my shadows, but I did nothing. I am no longer hungry. Food used to be a source of entertainment and enjoyment in my life. Now it is a chain wrapped around my ankle, dragging me back down to earth. I am a logical person; you must eat to live. But in my mind, the life I had is not worth living. So, I gave in to the voices in my head. The voice that used to screech hurtful words into my ear transformed into a tender murmur that would whisper words of understatement and reassurance. When I feel anxious, or see the man's image behind my reflection, that voice is there to comfort me. Every day on my walk to work, I begin to see less and less of myself in my reflection. When my hallowed brown eyes stare back at my lifeless figure, the man is always just a few steps behind me.

Tiredness. Oh, how I would give anything to sleep soundly through the night without waking myself from my blood-curdling screams. Instances such as that left me on the hard, wooden floor of my bedroom, grasping my hands close to my chest and my head resting on my knees. I look up at the mirror directly in front of me. My sunken eyes enclose the hallowed cries of help, yet I know that there is no one here to listen. My fingers, once delicate and youthful, now are cold, withered, and dead. I place my head on my boney knees and begin to cry. I closed my eyes to keep tears from falling, but to no avail, my efforts failed. My hands rest close to my heart, and I can feel myself fading away. My hands could feel the heartbeat through my bones and skin. Gradually the pound became farther apart. I try my best to hold myself tightly to comfort myself, but I am tired, and I merely drop my lifeless hands to the sides of my body.

My alarm begins to ring. It takes all the energy I have to look up at my alarm clock. Step 1: wake up at 5:45. I must complete step one if I want to succeed today. I must succeed. Failure is not an option. I place my hands on the floor and try to push myself up, but I cannot. Go back to bed, Anne, the voice whispers in my ear. I feel a warm embrace; an embrace that I am no longer able to give myself. I smile slightly. Now you will never fail, I say to myself. I can hear sirens from below my apartment. I block out the noise, deciding that whoever needs that ambulance surely wants attention; the attention that I do not want to have. As I look at myself in the mirror, I hear footsteps in the hallway leading to my room. Just as I am about to close my eyes, I see him in my reflection, running towards me. Well, maybe it is him, or maybe it is nothing.

Submission Guidelines

Submission Address

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Submissions by email are **strongly** preferred.

Deadline: January 31st for spring publication. Reading and judging period is between late September and February. Results will be sent by May.

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