

A photograph of a newspaper with a yellow graphic overlay. The newspaper is spread out on a surface, and the text is mostly illegible due to the high contrast and the graphic. The yellow graphic consists of two overlapping trapezoidal shapes and a stylized swirl or 'S' shape below them.

Connections

*Featuring
new work by*

Poets

George Evans

and

Daisy Zamora

and

an interview with

Novelist

Robert Westfield

Connections

fall 2006 literary magazine
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“Room of Shadows”

Photo by William Lowe

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The Incantation

Perry D. Miller

We slept in the desert, in blankets on the ground, under a sky
so perfectly dark and clear, with stars so brilliant and unblinking
that we should have been able to touch them;
we slipped into our dreams listening to a hundred coyotes—
or was it only five?—call out with barks of insane laughter,
wondering at the beauty of it all,
at the instinctive primal fear it tickled somewhere between our
shoulder blades;
and woke to the desert's first cool fresh breath.

We could actually feel the desert breathing:
its breath first gently tickling our skin, building gradually to
stir our hair, shifting direction, and then, just as gradually,
dying to the faintest tickle.
We lay in our blankets, watching golden, orange, and red flames
that could only have come from a desert sunrise setting the
horizon on fire, and wondered which of us would get up to cook
the bacon.

It must have been you, because I dozed and woke from yet
another dream to the smell of bacon,
the smell of coffee,
the smell of burning mesquite and *manzanita*,
and the sound of eggs being scrambled in a frying pan—
did you ever learn to cook them over easy?
You nudged me with a booted toe until I sat up to take the
steaming plate of victuals from your hand;
then you sat down, raised your tin mug to your lips, took a sip
of coffee,

held it there inhaling the steam through your nose for three
deep, slow breaths, sipped again, lowered it,
looked at the fire,
at the sky,
at me
and said, “This is how I like it,”
and with that incantation cast a spell yet to be broken.



“skynbedrock”

Photo by Derrill Thompson

Reading

Alison F. Devine

According to Mrs. Costansa, the letters on the pages before me are supposed to make words. I am supposed to be able to read these words in my head and read them aloud, too. I think Mrs. Costansa is wrong. All I see are black ants scrambling across the paper! I raise my hand and tell Mrs. Costansa that there are ants crawling all over my book. Mrs. Costansa assures me that the dots are not bugs of any sort. She tells me that they are most certainly letters. I still do not believe her.

I continue to stare at the pages. There are no pictures to help me. I raise my hand again. Mrs. Costansa walks back to my desk. She looks angry. I ask her where the pictures are. Mrs. Costansa tells me that I am too old for pictures. She tells me that high school text books do not have illustrations. I ask her what “illustrations” means.

“Think about it. What did you just ask me about?” she says to me.

“I asked you what ‘illustrations’ means,” I reply.

Mrs. Costansa sighs. I think she rolled her eyes. She looks angrier than she did a couple of seconds ago.

“Before that,” she says. “What question did you ask me before that?”

“I asked you to find the pictures for me,” I reply. I smile because I knew the answer to her question.

“So what do you think ‘illustrations’ means?”

Now I am confused. I’m not sure exactly what we’re talking about. I just want to know where the pictures are! I don’t care about illustrations. I shouldn’t have asked her what they were. Mrs. Costansa lets out another sigh. She tells me that illustrations are the same things as pictures and that I should use a dictionary next time.

“Why didn’t you just say “pictures,” then?” I ask.

“I’m trying to expand your vocabulary, Sarah,” Mrs. Costansa tells me.

I don’t know what “expand” means. I don’t ask. I don’t ask what “vocabulary” means, either. I think it might mean the same thing as “words.” Mrs. Costansa still hasn’t told me what happened to the pictures.

“Well, where are the pictures, Mrs. Costansa?”

“I told you that you were too old for pictures. Don’t you remember?”

I shake my head. I don’t think anybody can be too old for pictures. My mom reads to me from a picture book every night. She shows me the pictures in the book so that I can understand the story. I think all books should have pictures in them, even high school books.

Mrs. Costansa picks up the book in front of me. The bugs are gone now. I feel sort of sad because they must have been squished when Mrs. Costansa closed the book. She tells me I can take a break and I don’t have to read. She walks to the back of the room. She puts the book back on a shelf.

I don’t have anything to do now. I look at the boy sitting next to me. I think his name is Spencer. Spencer is a funny name. Spencer is reading. I think he knows what he’s doing because he hasn’t asked Mrs. Costansa for help. Maybe he likes to read, but that would be silly. Reading is hard. I don’t know why anybody would like it.

The bell rings. It is time for me to go to math. I like math. Numbers make sense. They aren’t confusing like letters are. Letters can become anything. Numbers always stay the same.

I pick up my backpack. It has Tigger on it. I like Tigger a lot. He is always happy. He is probably happy because he doesn’t have to read. I think Tigger is lucky. I wish I was Tigger. I walk towards the door.

“Sarah, I’d like you to stay here with me for a little while longer,” Mrs. Costansa says.

“Why?” I ask.

“I want to talk to you,” she replies.

But I don’t want to miss math! I tell her so.

“I’m sure your teacher will help you catch up with your work,” she assures me.

I don’t want to talk to Mrs. Costansa, either, but I don’t tell her this.

She sits down next to me. “Do you really think that there are ants in that book over there?” She points to the shelf.

I think for a moment. I know that there aren’t any ants in the book, but what else could those black blurs be? “No,” I tell her.

“Then why did you raise your hand and tell me that there were ants in the book?” she asks.

“Because that is all I saw. You said there were words there. I didn’t see any words,” I remind her.

She frowns. She doesn’t look angry anymore. She almost looks sad. She tells me I can go to class.

Tigger and I go bouncing down the hall. Everyone is already in their classes. I can’t wait to go to math. I am starting algebra today.

So far, I like my first day of high school.

A Father's Rite

Maria Birnkammer

At Sunday dinners
we begged
for a taste

from his amber
filled glass

and he would pass
it around, so that we, too,
could know
the sweet bitterness
that bubbled, but
only a sip

and when it returned
to him nearly empty,
the rim dripping
from too many children's lips,

he laughed, raised it up
and gulped
what was left

so sure of what he wanted,
so sure of what was his.

Frustrations of the Perpetual Student

Virginia Kreuter

“I’ll never graduate,” she sobbed,
referring to a letter from the math department
declaring her algebra background
“not strong enough”
requiring graduation to wait another six months.
We’ve six-monthed ourselves to death.
This letter another reminder of all the rejections
we are doomed to face.
“Prepare for more” I’m tempted to say (but don’t)
knowing that as artists, sculptors of words, called poets,
that there will be many more of these kinds of
letters awaiting our humbled futures.

A world consumed by a need for proof:
prove that you did or did not, provide evidence,
take a DNA test, prove your identity with plastic photo ID’s,
prove your intelligence with a ridiculous manilla
colored paper mass produced with
important looking calligraphy,
pencil in your name, add a gold sticker and
your worth is strangely validated.

My cynicism is justified so don’t tell me I’m bitter.
A world of hurts, a short lifetime of experiences,
a year of therapy, and dozens of credits but still no
closer to that elusive “American dream.”
Still no husband, no kids, no “killer” job, no house.

Still a car payment, rent and tons of other cancerous debts including student loans.

When you graduate from college do they hand you the golden key which entitles you to a time warp continuum that gives you the perfect life?

And I wonder, would people trust and respect God less if he confessed that He doesn't have a college degree?



“Jeanine and I”
Photo by Klara Muehlfeld

Coma

Alicia McNee

I can feel the earth quake beneath my feet,
Every pulse grows louder as the ground below us slowly begins
to sink,
From everywhere you can hear the screams of the sidewalk
cracking,
The buildings crumble as this life recedes.
I can't feel you anymore,
I no longer can sense your body on the earth,
The planet feels cold and lost in the midst of this great civilization,
We have poisoned our lives, our children, our livelihood, and
ourselves.
The soil would rather fall into hell than support us any longer.
Where are you, I can't hear your voice anymore?
The piercing silence is overwhelming as everyone else just goes
on with their lives.
How can they just walk by in the streets and not notice the
world falling from beneath their feet?
It's too much to take.
I stand at the edge of time and can think of nothing but you.
What will become of us, so lost in this world of greed, lust,
jealousy...
This beautiful world that will take me under with just the flick
of its wrist.
I can no longer see your face.

I'm standing at the edge of the cemetery among the dead leaves
and the echoes of the past,
I'm standing at the door of the mausoleum flirting with the idea
of pushing through,
As I look over my shoulder at the horizon I see the sun setting
in beautiful pinks and oranges and
I can't take it.
I look to the sky and can smell the first snow of the season,
Death is in the air....
I can no longer taste you on my lips.
The world is dying and I'm slipping away.
I'm waiting at the top of the mountain for you to meet me there.
I search the sky to find nothing but smog,
My hair blows in the wind and I am no longer here,
You are no longer here,
As you fall into this abyss and are lost in darkness my heart
begins to skip beats,
My breath escapes me,
The image in my head is a picture that should have been,
This world has gone cold,
And so have I.

Lost and Found

Barbara Scotland

If I have Googled her name once,
I have Googled it at least twenty times
Always ending up in Peoplefinders.com.
There I enter her first name,
Shortened to Kim from Kimberley,
Then I enter her last name.
Because I am sure she lives in Hawaii,
I enter that state, select Search, and wait.

Three names come up.
I have found her.
There is only one Kimberley listed,
Spelled with the extra “e” before “y”
in Waikoloa, Hawaii.
All I have to do to get her phone number
is select “Details Available,”
And buy a “People Finders Report” for \$9.95.

I hesitate.
What would we say to each other after 12 years
Of silence?
Maybe I should write to her instead,
but then what if she doesn’t write back?
I think often about our college friendship,
But maybe she never thinks about us.
She might not even wonder how I am.

I close Peoplefinders.com without buying a report.
My fond memories of our past friendship
Are too valuable to risk in the present.

Review of Connections Literary Program and Seminar
Under Fire: War and the Press
April 7, 2006

Sarah Grisez

On Friday, April 7, Joseph Galloway came to the Leonardtown Campus of the College of Southern Maryland for a reading from the book *Under Fire: Great Photographers and Writers in Vietnam*.

As a war correspondent for United Press International, Galloway covered the Vietnam War and Desert Storm. He has covered the current war in Iraq for Knight-Ridder.

Galloway started his career as a journalist when he was right out of high school. He helped start a weekly paper in his town.

At the reading, Galloway discussed what it was like to be in the Vietnam War, and the hardships of coming back from war. He also discussed how he came to write the book *We Were Soldiers Once... And Young* with Lt. General Harold G. Moore. The book is about the battle at Ia Drang in 1965, and it was the basis for a film starring Mel Gibson.

Veterans George Forrest of Leonardtown and CSM Professor Wayne Karlin joined Galloway in reading several essays from *Under Fire* on Friday evening.

Galloway told the audience that Forrest, a captain during the Vietnam War, had been heroic during the battle of Ia Drang. Before the battle began, Forrest was at a meeting with other leaders at the front of a column of soldiers. When the enemy opened fire on the Americans, Forrest made a 600-yard run under fire to get back to his troops and lead his men to a safer position.

Listening to the essays was a powerful emotional experience. Reading about the war obviously brought back painful memories for these men and for the other veterans in the audience.

At the end of the evening, Galloway, Forrest, and Karlin were available to sign copies of the two books. Audience members were also given the opportunity to speak one on one with each of them.

Ashley Jameson of Hughesville, a student at the La Plata Campus, attended the reading. Jameson said, "Hearing a first-hand account of Vietnam made me realize that it was not the soldiers' fault we went to war. It was the politicians' fault."

Prior to the reading, a seminar was held for a group of 20 students from classes in photography, history, and journalism. They were given the opportunity to ask Karlin, Galloway, and Forrest questions about being in Vietnam.

Part of the seminar was spent discussing how soldiers who served in Vietnam were treated after the war. Forrest said, "We need to fix the image of the American soldier who went to Vietnam." The students learned about how important it is for the soldiers to tell their stories in order to heal.

Terri Polick, a student at CSM, felt especially moved by the seminar. Polick said, "Dean Jackson, a soldier from my grandparents' hometown, was killed during the Vietnam War. I was nine when Dean was killed, and no one would talk to me about what happened. Dean was listed as a casualty in Mr. Galloway's book. Mr. Galloway's book helped fill in the gaps of my childhood."

The students at the seminar were encouraged to find alternate solutions to issues other than war or violence. As Galloway said, it is always best to play the war card last.

Kilcy Marcellus of Lexington Park attended the seminar. She was grateful that Galloway was so open in his discussions on the war since the war is not always talked about so openly. Marcellus said, “I learned a lot that I didn’t know because the Vietnam War isn’t talked about.”

The seminar and the reading gave students a chance to learn about the hardships soldiers face in a war. People came away from the encounter with Galloway, Karlin, and Forrest with a deeper respect for all veterans and a stronger sense of the human cost of any war.

*To hear the podcast of this Connections program, go to:
<http://www.itc.csmd.edu/podcasting/>*

Connections Feature

The Poetry of George Evans

(from a Connections program reading on October 6, 2006)

AT POINT LOOKOUT CIVIL WAR PRISON MONUMENT, MARYLAND

The water has risen, everything above it
as quiet as heat on the saw grass. Thousands
died here. A marsh now, the bay swept over
the camps, clawing the land back to sea. All
those men. We tell ourselves about the past,
and when we're old enough to understand,
realize we are the past. Our hearts sink
in marshland. Places that once held buildings
and dreams are swamped by our mistakes,
overtaken by the sweep of what we've done
in the name of anything, not all of it necessary.
That much we know, but only when the water
claims us, our hair is falling, and the light
that was our eyes is flooding away.

Connections Feature

The Poetry of Daisy Zamora

(from a Connections program reading on October 6, 2006)

WHEN I SEE THEM PASSING BY

When I see them passing by I ask myself sometimes: What must they feel, the ones who decided to be perfect and keep their marriages afloat against all odds no matter how their husbands turned out (party animal womanizer gambler troublemaker loud-mouthed violent headbanger lunatic weirdo slightly abnormal neurotic obsessive clearly unbearable dumbbell deadly boring brute insensitive grubby egomaniacal ambitious disloyal politicker crook traitor liar rapist of daughters torturer of sons emperor of the house tyrant everywhere) but they put up with it and God only knows what they suffered.

When I see them passing by so dignified and aged their sons and daughters gone from the house leaving them alone with a man they once loved (perhaps he's calmed down doesn't drink hardly talks spends his time with TV walks in slippers yawns falls asleep snores wakes up early is ailing harmless almost childish) I ask myself:

Do they dare imagine themselves widows dreaming some night they are free and coming at last without guilt back to life?

WHEN I SEE THEM PASSING BY
(Spanish original)

Translated by George Evans and Daisy Zamora.
This poem/translation has also appeared in
Poetry Ireland (Ireland) and *Van Gogh's Ear* (France).
Reprinted with permission of the author/translators.

CUANDO LAS VEO PASAR

Cuando las veo pasar alguna vez me digo: qué sentirán
ellas, las que decidieron ser perfectas conservar a toda costa
sus matrimonios no importa cómo les haya resultado el marido
(parrandero mujeriego jugador pendenciero
gritón violento penqueador lunático raro algo anormal
neurótico temático de plano insoportable
dundeco mortalmente aburrido bruto insensible desaseado
ególatra ambicioso desleal politiquero ladrón traidor mentiroso
violador de las hijas verdugo de los hijos emperador de la casa
tirano en todas partes) pero ellas se aguantaron
y sólo Dios que está allá arriba sabe lo que sufrieron.

Cuando las veo pasar tan dignas y envejecidas
los hijos las hijas ya se han ido en la casa sólo ellas han quedado
con ese hombre que alguna vez quisieron (tal vez ya se calmó
no bebe apenas habla se mantiene sentado frente al televisor
anda en chancletas bosteza se duerme ronca se levanta temprano
está achacoso cegato inofensivo casi niño) me pregunto:

¿Se atreverán a imaginarse viudas a soñar alguna noche que
son libres
y que vuelven por fin sin culpas a la vida?

Connections Feature
An Interview with Novelist
Robert Westfield

Mary Lohnes

As part of Robert Westfield's November 17 Connections Literary Series appearance, Westfield discussed his novel, post 9-11 New York, and memories of growing up in Southern Maryland.

CSM: In *Suspension*, your character Andy Green isolates himself from the rest of the world. Do you think Americans in general are becoming more isolationist? And if so, what political, social, and environmental influences are causing it?

Westfield: In my novel, Andy withdraws from the world before 9/11, thinking it will be safer to interact less with the outside world, but since his life is tightly intertwined with those beyond his door, he is eventually forced back into the action. This was more a reflection of the country in 2001. If you can remember the campaign promises of 2000 and the first nine months of the Bush presidency, there was a real movement towards isolationism, marked by a reluctance to sign international treaties or enter into coalitions. That was all radically altered by the events of September 11th. The foreign policy of September 10th was completely revised by the 12th.

When writing the book, though, the concept of isolation grew into an exploration of self-absorption. I'm thinking of Americans who had never heard of the Taliban before September 11th. I'm thinking of the shocking statistics about how few Americans have passports or have ever traveled out of the country, or how few

can locate Iraq on a map or name five foreign heads of state. I'm thinking of the barrage of news updates we're still enduring about Paris Hilton compared to the occasional reference to the atrocities in Darfur. There's a dearth of international news at a time when so many important things are happening.

There's a strain of self-absorption that runs through Andy, though not entirely without reason—he was violently attacked on the street outside of his apartment and is subsequently living in a state of fear. He, and others, would justify his retreat by calling it self-preservation, but closing yourself off from the events outside leads to a limited worldview. The journey of the book is Andy's journey toward empathy and the effort to see through the eyes of others. I think and hope this is the human journey as well.

CSM: Recently *Slate* magazine had novelists Walter Kirn and Gary Shteyngart discuss the role of fiction in the Internet age (<http://www.slate.com/id/2151004/entry/2151016/>). During their first exchange Mr. Shteyngart wrote,

“The questions may well be: Who has the patience and inclination to read these (often lengthy) works, when so many Americans are already involved in their own electronic, Wikipedian journeys? And in a society driven by selfishness and the need to stand out on the false bright stage of reality television or on the pulsating Nintendo or MySpace screen, who has the empathy to travel into another person's mind?”

As someone who is just entering the novel fray, what do you think of Mr. Shteyngart's statement? What do you think the place of the novel is in society, and do you see it changing in the future?

Westfield: I read that interview. One of my favorite parts was when Kirn chronicled all of his morning Internet activity and then said, “...when I go back over the morning’s dramas, I realize that most of them occurred offstage, which leads me to question whether I, or anyone, is the protagonist of his own story.” That could be jacket copy for *Suspension* since what I call “diminishing protagonism”—the shrinking role you play in your own life—is a prominent part of the story and how it is told.

But to answer the question, as someone entering the fray, I try to cast everything in a more positive light. Yes, there is an enormous amount of time consumed by our new technology. I’m amazed by how much of my week I spend maintaining my electronic equipment—hotsynching, downloading, uploading, saving, backing up and charging—and how much time I spend answering e-mails and posting comments and keeping up with certain news and blogs, but then again there have always been distractions—television, chemotherapy, hungry children, raids by the Cossacks—that have gotten in the way of sitting down with a good book.

I think I’m also a little more optimistic, because I’ve been writing for theater for so long and find publishing much healthier. It’s far more likely that someone will turn the computer off and read a few chapters of a book than leave their home and attend a play. Or if they do go to the theater, it’s a special occasion, which involves a limo ride, a new outfit, a lengthy dinner and post-show drinks before returning home and turning on the computer until their next birthday.

When I get overwhelmed by the shrinking readership in our country, or become overly concerned with sales, I try to remind myself that books are written for individuals. When I read a novel, I’m entering the world of the author; it’s a one-on-one relationship.

I don't judge the book on how it affects others, I judge the book on how it moves or changes me. I'm indebted to all the writers who have changed my individual, solitary life by showing me the minds and hearts of others and by helping me find my place in the world. When I write fiction, I imagine one person, that ideal reader, sitting down with my book and entering that world and being moved or changed by my words.

That said—I can't lie—I wish more people made it a point to carve some time out of their week to read fiction, because I don't know of any other art form that better exercises that muscle of empathy, which seems to be pretty underdeveloped these days.

CSM: Your novel deals with the emotional aftermath of 9/11 and the book you are currently writing is based on tourism in the area. What changes have you seen in post 9/11 tourism?

Westfield: The number of visitors is supposedly back to that of 2000, which was 40 million, second only to Orlando, though I don't know if it feels that way. There are many international visitors because the exchange rate is so phenomenal for them, and there are also younger kids on the school trips because the city has become so safe in terms of crime. Changes since 9/11? Obviously, Ground Zero is a mandatory stop in a way that the World Trade Center never was. And it has been fascinating to notice how people in the country respond so differently to 9/11. There also appears to be a different time table for emotional healing depending on where people are from, which makes sense. People who live in New York, and I imagine the DC area, had to process it faster in order to find stability again and continue living in regions that have multiple targets and will always be under threat.

CSM: As someone who has written both plays and a novel, what is the best way, you find, to write dialog?

Westfield: Quickly. For me, there needs to be a rhythm to the conversation, and the characters have to speak for themselves. Sometimes, I go for long walks and talk out loud, playing all the parts, which is easier in New York. I remember being stared at in the Safeway parking lot in Bryans Road one summer while I was back from college (although these days anyone can hang a wire or Bluetooth from their ear and pretend to be talking on the phone). Other times, I sit at the computer and just let myself go, knowing what I need the scene to accomplish and hoping the characters agree with me, but remaining open to the fact that what they think is more important. I know I'm onto something when I feel as though I'm just typing—laughing out loud at something a character says or being surprised when a character comes up with a word I didn't even think was in my vocabulary. I check the dictionary and, sure enough, the character was right. Those are spooky moments, but help to validate my own personal method of drafting—if I've done enough preparation, I can plunge into the story and get out of the characters' way.

CSM: You grew up in Maryland. What do you remember most about the region, and do you still have family and friends living here?

Westfield: I lived in Bryans Road from the time I was nine until I was 18, formative years and a fertile period for any writer. Many of the memories I have in my storehouse—the images I pull up whenever I need to imagine a place or character in a book, or song, or poem—come from Charles County. If there is a scene set in an indoor swimming pool, it is almost always the pool at the Charles County Community College (now CSM). If there's a reference to an elementary school, I see the hallways of J.C. Parks. A reference to archery? It's the yard next to Matthew Henson Junior High. Soccer? The field in Pomonkey on a cold fall day. It

goes on and on. Whether I'm reading a book by a British novelist about an academic community in Massachusetts or a wintertime story set in the countryside of France, Southern Maryland often permeates the experience.

Family and friends? My parents, who lived here for over 20 years, recently retired and now live on a golf course in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina but they visit Maryland frequently. My brother is in L.A. I still have many friends of the family, former church members and classmates and teachers as well. It's not a fluke that I dedicated *Suspension* to Pete Troiano, who was my Latin and English teacher at Lackey High School. He was instrumental in setting me on the path to New York and writing. I'm looking forward to my trip to Maryland in November and see it as a real homecoming. I remember setting out to be a writer in the big city, and to return as a published novelist is validation for that 18-year-old with a dream.



“Alaskan Sunrise”

Photo by Christopher Graham

Nicknames

Alysa Younger

I've always wondered what it would be like to have a really cool nickname; something unforgettable like Averon or Lady Stardust or maybe something simple like Aria or just plain Ari. Regrettably, I have never had a nickname, and I've never really sought one. No one can get my real name right; why should I give them an easy way out?

My name is Alysa. That's pronounced uh-lee-suh. That doesn't seem so hard, does it? No one pronounces Lisa incorrectly, you just add an "a" on the front, and you have it. Simple. Unfortunately, I cannot seem to convince the rest of the world of this. I will not even begin to tell you about the spelling issues, except to say that it is always funny, if discouraging, when I hand someone a paper and they decide to correct my name.

I have been called Alysia (Alisia), Alyssa (Alissa), Elise, Allison, Alexis, Alsya, but only very rarely has anyone ever said my name correctly the first time when they have seen it on paper. Invariably, I spend the first month or so of school trying to convince my teachers of the correct pronunciation. Alas, this effort is often in vain; my third-grade teacher called me Alice for an entire year. I try to comfort myself by remembering that she was from Maine. I suppose that has to count for something.

There have been many times when I've wished that someone would just pronounce my name right when it counts, such as when they are calling me down to the office over the intercom. More than once, I have not realized that the announcements were calling me for 15 or 20 minutes. As a result, my mother or the teacher who was having me called has been greatly upset by my late arrival. So I perk up and listen to the intercom whenever they call a name that starts with an "uh" sound for fear of repeating my past mistakes.

I remember an occasion when my mother went to one of my little league softball games when I was about 10. She was the scorekeeper for my brother's baseball games, so she could rarely come to mine. Mama was, of course, cheering for me and bouncing up and down yelling "Go, Alysa!" That's just what mothers do. At that point, one of the other mothers from the team walked over to her and informed her it was not nice of her to butcher the "poor child's" name, and that she should call me Alyssa. Mama gave the lady a sharp look and simply told her that Alyssa was not my name, and then continued to cheer as if uninterrupted. The woman couldn't believe that this newcomer knew more than her and told my mother so. Mama just turned around and said, "No, her name's Alysa. I should know. I named her." That poor woman just turned and walked away, and Mama has been telling that story ever since.

In ninth grade, which was the first time I had ever attended a school of more than 500 students, I couldn't figure out why none of my teachers could ever come close to pronouncing my name right. At the time, I was incredibly timid and I couldn't come up with the courage to raise my hand just a little bit and say "Ma'am, my name is Alysa." It wasn't until the emergency forms were handed out and we were asked to correct them that I realized my name was spelled wrong in the school database. No wonder they could not say it right. To this day, I am not quite sure who was the first teacher to pronounce "Alysa" correctly, but I appreciate their effort. It's not every day one encounters a name that seems hard to pronounce in the first place, only to realize a week later it had been spelled incorrectly the entire time and a new name must be learned.

I have friends who are not sure exactly how to pronounce my name. Being my friends, they are always wary of saying it incorrectly, but they usually ask. I tend to become a little

annoyed with teachers who do not say my name right, so friends probably feel that it is taboo to mispronounce it. One time in particular I remember secretly laughing at the various ways my friend, Mike, found to address me without saying my name until he was sure, from other sources, how to say it properly. On the other hand, I also have friends who mispronounce my name just to annoy me. I have known my friend Catherine (aka Cat) since I was five, and at least once weekly she calls me Alyssa or Alysia just to remind me of the far-too-common mistake.

Recently, I read an essay at a meeting of the Sons of the American Revolution. This would be completely unrelated had the gentleman who introduced me not asked how to pronounce my name, then proceeded to introduce me as Ms. Alyssa Younger for the rest of the afternoon. That includes when I was announced as the winner of their contest and asked to read my entry to the assembly. Had it not been so amusing to watch my grandparents cringe at the butchering of my name, I might have corrected him. His parting words were “I hope you enter again this year, Alyssa.”

There are perks, of course, to having a name no one can seem to say properly. I have many teachers who never try to say my first name and who call me Ms. Younger or just Younger to this day. Whenever I have a new teacher, I can almost guarantee my name will not be pronounced correctly right away. Most of the time, I don't bother to correct the teacher after the first two or three times, as that's usually a sign that the issue will not go away. When this happens, it is great fun to sit back and watch my friends correct the teacher's pronunciation.

Sometimes I wish I had a more common name, one that everyone knows how to say. It would be simpler in some ways. Then I realize that there would be duplicates of my name on the roster for my classes or sports teams. I would have to worry about hearing someone say my name when referring to another person. I would have to find a unique nickname no one else has

in order for people to know exactly who I am, and not have to say “Which one? Rogers, Baker, or Smith?”

I can see the future. I will be at my wedding, and the priest will say “Do you, Alyssa....” and instead of saying “I do” I’ll be saying “Alysa! My name’s Alysa!” Still, I reassure myself with the thought that one day I’ll be famous and everyone will know how to say my name correctly. On the other hand, it might just end up being... “Ladies and Gentlemen, let me introduce the Poet Laureate of the United State, Ms. Alysia Younger.”

I don’t have a nickname. I’ve never sought one, and I never will. I don’t need a nickname to say something about me or to be unique. I have a distinctive name, in and of itself, which I have never seen anywhere else. Why should I change that?

Hip-hop, Bee-bop, Beat Box Beautiful Poetry Jam

Karla McKay

I wish I could spew words like that,
without a thought.
Whenever I try they just get caught
up on my lips.
I get nervous to my fingertips,
knees shake
feels like an earthquake.
Can't spin my take
on the world,
what it's like to be a girl.
Images blur my brain,
but words come out inane,
insane.
Pictures painted,
letters tainted
by My tongue.
And You stand in judgment
trying to tell me what I meant
trying to tell me I can't
hoping I won't get it right,
watching me fight with the images in my head.
You stand there staring, glaring
listening to me sharing the pain
sharing the smiles, sharing my life
watching my strife
of how to say this and
express that with out
falling flat on my face.
Breath. Breath in, now out.

Advice:

Relax let it be fun,
tense up and you're done.

Poets soul?

I illustrate with my lips
the images that swirl in my head,
but the pictures make no sense when said.
With every syllable I release another demon
from inside my mind.
bear the soul I wish I had,
reveal the good and the bad.
I break the seal of silence,
Fight the quiet.
Constantly searching deeper,
always growing darker.
My knees shake
and it feels like an earthquake.
Palms sweat, palms sweat. Breathe.
Let the words pour,
let the tension relieve.
The pressure builds,
I'm going in for the kill.
Release. Release these words into the air.
Push through the fear.
I've got emotions to share.
Going to let it flow,
let feelings show.
Knees shake
legs bow.
I can barely stand.

Stand up,
stand the pressure
of row
after row of people
peering, leering, sneering
as I sway and struggle.
Oh God it
Feels like an earthquake.
I try to spin my take
On life, on love,
on laughing, on pain.
The pressure gains
I might crack
I have to move back.
Knees shake,
feels like an earthquake.
Release, release, and let it be done.
I'm done.

Fossils

Elizabeth Ayres

Arriving, I am greeted by their arrival, as they, in turn, are greeted by the shore. Kiss, kiss, kiss, say the waves, falling onto outstretched arms of sand. Home at last and welcome, after such a journey.

I know how they feel. It was just a two-mile hike to get here, and yet I passed through epochs, startling thrush in the forest, herons in the marsh, and now, gulls spiral up and away as I look across the Chesapeake Bay from this beach at Calvert Cliffs.

I am a pilgrim. Sent by I don't know whom, to find I don't know what, but already kind strangers have equipped me for the task. That first woman along the way. She was trudging back to the parking lot with two tired children. I was aiming for the beach, wondering what a shark's tooth looks like, how on earth one hunts for fossils, and fossils of what, by the way. Because dawn tugged me from sleep this morning. Whispered a word in my ear. I'd heard about this place and so – obedient, expectant, trusting – I came. At a fallen tree I met her, each of us scrambling over in our opposite directions. A smile, a greeting, a conversation on the path. She described shark teeth. Gave me her daughter's sieve so I could sift for them among the pebbles.

Then that young man. He and I, both first timers, both holding our shoes, both puzzling over where to leave them. He had prepared for his visit with research, and gave me a crash course in regional paleontology. I shared with him my chutzpah, boldly suggesting we put our shoes together under the closest tree. Barefoot, we parted. He has disappeared around the bend already while I stand here, mesmerized.

My new friend told me that some 20 million years ago, southern Maryland was covered by a warm, shallow sea. These cliffs that tower some 60 feet above me are the sand, silt and clay that settled on that ancient ocean floor, burying and preserving an amazing variety of Miocene era fauna. Marine animals, mostly – sharks, rays, whales, seals, crocodiles – but bone fragments from mastodons, woolly rhinos, and even camels have been discovered. Shells and shark teeth predominate, because they're hard already, more easily fossilized, and because they're abundant. A single shark will shed some ten thousand teeth in its lifetime, and molluscs are the sparrow of the undersea world: over 400 species of clam, oyster, scallop, and snail have been identified here.

What makes a fossil, anyway, I asked him, and he happily obliged with an explanation. Scientists call it “permineralization.” Water infused with minerals passes through the decaying object, substituting calcite, iron, or silica for the original chemicals. Over millions of years the artifact is completely replaced. What remains is a rock-like copy. And here comes Elizabeth, soft flesh stretched over hard bone, a fossil hominid in the making, one day to be discovered along with her borrowed tool. Or not. Most life disappears without a trace, too fragile to endure into such a memorial. Like those soldiers whose faces I see daily in the paper. Killed when a makeshift bomb exploded. Shot by snipers. Struck by shrapnel. Beheaded.

After a few tries at the water's edge, I abandon my sieve. Poking through 10,000 round pebbles to find one triangular shark's tooth is a task far exceeding my need to find such a prize, and I'm distracted by the lure of other treasures. Color, for one. Right at my feet, in countless shells and rocks. Gray like iron, like steel, like storm clouds. Black like tar, like smoke, like twilight. The browns of chocolate, toast, a fawn's dappled back, blended in with cameo pinks, pumpkin oranges. Three steps down the beach, and now the rocks are ebony smears and

henna washes; the shells lucent copper, nacreous tea rose. Old already when the Palagornis flew, that extinct pelican with its 18-foot wingspan. Old already when the Megatooth shark swam, 50 feet long, weighing in at 50 tons.

I bend down and snatch from this 21st-century beach an artifact washed up from 20 million years ago. By shape, by size, by mother-of-pearl glints, an oyster shell. Yet pitted with holes like stone, gnarled like arthritic bone, its colors faded to cotton white: this thing is on its way to becoming something else. As is this tree stump, turned on water's lathe into the very shape of sea spume. And these hulking rocks, printed all over with shell shapes, primordial molluscs stamped into earth's sealing wax. From the cliffs above me the boulders have tumbled, sediment from a Miocene ocean floor, changed into stone, returning to a Chesapeake beach to be chiseled by today's waves into tomorrow's sandy shore. Faithful Penelope. Day by day and year by year the bay's fingers of swash and backwash pluck at this palisade, unraveling an adamantine cloth woven by time.

Squatting at the base of the embankment, looking up, I count at least 10 distinct seams of shell deposits, each in its uniquely colored strata of clay or sandstone. The cliff face is a multi-layered cake, topped with a green woodsy frosting, but it's crumbling away even as I sit here, pelting me with bits of prehistoric earth. I've heard it said that one day, all secrets will be shouted from the housetops, and peering closely at a fallen chunk of sediment from the bottom of some primal sea, I think this must be true. I run my fingers along the blurred edges of shells, buried aeons ago, now straining to escape their tomb. They thrust up, eagerly waiting for the one wave that will at last set them free.

As do we all, on our way to becoming something else.

The earth is 4.5 billion years old. Without making any far-fetched claim for algae, it seems pretty obvious that

consciousness and matter have made some profuse and colorful blendings along the way. Single celled, multi-celled, with nervous systems simple or complex, organisms keep evolving. Reptiles, fish, birds, mammals, and now, beings through whom the universe can think about itself. Over millennia, minerals replace chemicals, hard bone turns to fossil rock. Spirit infuses matter, we share experience, pass it on, ask questions, draw conclusions, make decisions. Awareness grows. We change. If some dead soldier should turn up a million years hence clutching a weapon, might it be to the kind of fanfare with which we greeted the discovery of *Australopithecus afarensis*? Kiss, kiss, kiss for a forerunner of modern human?

I am for home now, pilgrimage complete for this one day at least. The wind that brings these waves to brush against my feet could have brushed against the face of some stranger on a far distant shore. A smile, a greeting, a conversation on the path, we don't know what awaits us. As I stoop to retrieve my shoes, an acorn falls from a high above branch, its sharp fresh green a surprise on the pale brown sand. I'm tempted to pocket it as a souvenir, but no, this seed bears within itself the gift of its own future. I guess I owe it one small chance.

Vote

Randolph Bridgeman

In the school cafeteria where I
voted the floors were waxed and polished
our children's scuff marks buffed
from existence

I stared into the computer screen
there are no paper ballots
no hanging Chad to count
no paper trail to follow

but I made my selection anyway and sent
my vote into cyberspace with the same
faith in things that I had when I was
a child sitting in a classroom
in those oak desks from where we stood
to make our pledge of allegiances
from those desks where we learned
segregation
escalation
assassination
under those desks where we hid from
the "A" bomb



“Arching into Abyss”
Photo by Anna M. Lowell

Tea by the Water with Mao

William Lowe

Kruschev did not relish water
nor the clarity of chlorine,
the red sting in his eyes,
hadn't learned how to swim
though he was surely buoyant,

would have bobbed on a wave
like a peeled white potato
had he yielded to the heat
and thrown off his dark suit
and leaped nude into blue.

Instead, he parked himself
on the hot stone and watched
Mao swim the backstroke,
his hairless girth floating up,
the pool in his navel quaking,

wearing only little red briefs
and the fat mole on his face,
his lips bent into a cruel smile
as the stolid old butler brought
cup after cup of bitter black tea

and let the steam singe his face
and wed with the sun like poison
that melts a Russian's resolve
and within but an hour or two
makes him concede everything.

A Guy Named Red Doesn't Like Me

Juliet Johnson

“My husband left me,” she spoke breathlessly. “I’m free to be with you now.”

Sally looked at him with blond ambition.

Red paused, hovering over the '69 Pinto engine he was fixing as ardently as a succulent picnic. Red twisted a greasy fingernail.

“...I wasn't waiting for you.”

Sally Swift stared at him. She was pretty, and safe, and almost fifty. Red's shop continued on in the background like it had since he started there in the fourth grade.

She didn't feel too Swift. She was stripped. Standing there next to the car like a giant question mark. There were no words. The words about her had fled and she was a hanging sentence of abandoned punctuation.

A guy they called Monkey was getting a huge tool off the rack in the background, and paused to pull the jumpsuit out of the crack in his ass.

The noise of the shop engulfed her.

“Christ, Sally,” Red looked at her, frazzled. He had a freckled face and freckled eyes. His mom said he got them in his eyes from staring in the sun too long. His brother Philip said the spots indicated the rot in Red's brain seeping through. Philip was a doctor.

Sally stammered. “Well. What did you think I'd be doing in Elkton? Nobody comes to Elkton. Why else did you think I'd be here?”

Red looked hopefully strained. He shrugged.

“That's it?” Her voice rose.

“I thought maybe you got sick of Miami. Came home.”

“Miami is home. Fourteen years does that to a person.”

“You lived here more ‘n fourteen years.” He adjusted a nut.

“Not fourteen adult years.”

“Where’d you buy those,” he muttered.

She was experiencing feeling returning to her face, and it was all angry.

“What happened to Whitney,” he looked at her steadily, holding a dripping oil funnel.

The image of Whitney flashed in both their heads. A dyed-blond five foot Cuban who owned several successful car washes. Sally had married him for the drugs. He was Cuban. It was Miami. It was the ‘70’s.

“He goes by the name Swifty now,” she said. He had changed his name from Jerry Whitney to Whitney Swift when he married her. He said it was a Cuban tradition. Turned out it was a Jerry Whitney tradition. God knows how many wives he’d had before her that he ended up with the name Jerry Whitney by the time they hooked up.

“He changed his name to Whitney Swift for tax reasons,” Sally said to the carburetor. Red looked at her sorrowfully. It didn’t matter that he had recently gone by Swift, she thought. What mattered was that he had recently gone.

“Why’d he leave?” Red was wiping his hands on the filthy front of his bib apron. Underneath the grime was “Kiss the Cook” but only the “ook” was visible.

For tax reasons, she felt like saying.

Sally wandered downtown Elkton. The streets were small and cramped, like Napoleon’s corpse. Nothing looked familiar.

A Korean man sprayed off the sidewalk in front of his over-priced fruit stand and deli.

She looked at the sun and thought of Red. She never considered Red wouldn’t want her. How could he not be waiting for her? Everyone was waiting for her. Herself included. Hanging in the balance until she decided to pick them up again.

She bought a loaf of bread and a small container of real orange juice. The Korean complained about breaking a fifty at nine o'clock in the morning. She focused on his five hundred-dollar shoes.

She sat on the bus bench and ate the heel of the bread. It's all I'm worth, she thought.

The Korean resumed hosing and the fallout from the water was misting around her head.

Her mother would say this was an opportunity, not a crisis. Whenever you don't know what you're doing, something miraculous is about to happen, she'd said.

Her mother's miracle turned out to be renal failure, and she had died like a lawn dart falling to Earth.

Sally dug to the bottom of the bread and got the other heel. She ate it without the aid of the orange juice. It was stale and mealy. Now I only have the good part left, she thought, drunk on starch.

She washed down the last of it. The orange juice tasted baptismal. As she sat looking at traffic, this feeling passed. She was surrounded by exhaust and the sound of skinny city trees trying to grow fenced in in cement. Real life background music.

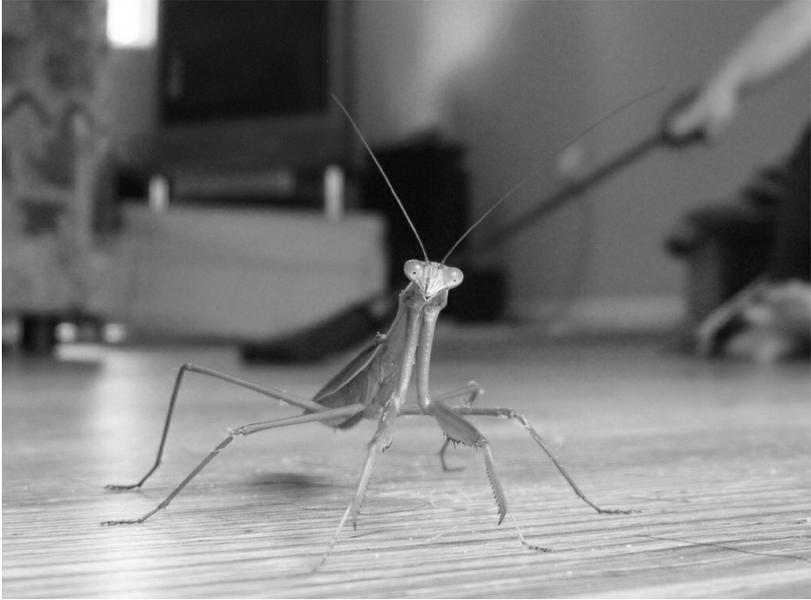
There's nothing here for me, she thought. My life is bleak.

She thought about Red and what a stupid name that was. No wonder he worked in a garage. What other job could he get. When Philip was six and Red was three, Philip's teeth were so bucked he couldn't say "Fred" so he called his brother "Red" and it stayed that way. Now Philip was a doctor in the East Indies and Red fixed cars two miles from where he had first jerked off. Names could entrap people. This is what my life has come to – a guy named Red doesn't like me? I've gotta be destined for more, she thought.

Sally tossed the empty o.j. container in the wire trash basket. At the moment, her trash was on top.

Lots of people had sat on this bus bench, she thought. Unhappy with where they were, or they wouldn't be waiting to pay someone to drive them someplace else. Being desperate is how it felt right now. Being driven is how it would seem from the future, looking back.

She sat on the bus bench with her whole loaf of good bread and waited for a miracle.



“Praying Mantis”

Photo by Faith H. Tydings

After All

Courtney Birst-Wyrick

I spent the morning of an
unseasonably warm October day
making magic with my hands.
Scooping and digging and plowing
the rich black soil
with my soft hands,
planting tulips and daffodils,
spreading grass seed and wetting it
in hopes that come spring
my efforts will show themselves.

My father was a farmer,
my mother a gardener,
and between them they fed
four hungry children for years.

I did not want to weed the
ever expansive garden,
nor pick sweet corn
in the heat of the summer.
I craved rainbow-colored cereal,
and partially hydrogenated Twinkies.

As I scoop the silky grass seed
I wonder if my father,
in his suburban duplex,
misses the feel of wheat between his fingers.
If my mother yearns for
fresh sweet peas,
straight from the vine.
I stand back,
the image of my future yard cultivating in my mind,
and think, I am my parents' daughter after all.

Charlie

Joany Nazdin

Charlie, the man that used to go boldly where no man had gone before, was having trouble tying his shoes. Today was the day that his children were moving him to a nursing home. All his things had been put in storage except for a few pictures, his moon rock paperweight, and his favorite chair. Charlie himself was the last loose end. When the kids had come over this weekend to pack up and clean, they took everything out of the fridge except for a few frozen dinners. He was determined that his last meal as a free man was not going to be a frozen lasagna.

Charlie was going to head out to the local deli and get a forbidden roast beef sandwich. He wanted cholesterol, calories, and caffeine. He knew the cardiac diet police would never let him see red meat or real coffee again.

He had one shoe on, one to go. Charlie remembered when tying his shoes was just a reflex, like breathing. Whenever he wanted to go somewhere, he just set his feet (shoes already on) on the ground and went. Now he was going to go to a place where they encouraged Velcro sneakers so the nurses didn't have to help with dressing. His clothes would no longer be his choice. Hospital gowns were encouraged for easy access to body parts that would need frequent wiping and washing. If you dribbled after every meal you didn't have to wear the stains all day, just slip on another identical gown. The gown was also like a prison uniform, because if you did happen to wander into the forbidden outside world, you could be easily spotted and returned.

Charlie started to wonder if maybe jail was a better alternative. The kids wouldn't wonder if he was being taken care of, because he would have the same 24-hour supervision. He imagined it was the same kind of routine. One thing in its favor, jail would

probably have livelier company and better card games. In both places you have to get up at the same time. In both places meals are served at the same hour with no choices, just whatever was prepared that day that fit into the \$3 budget. He could see endless days of bean soup and peanut butter jelly sandwiches. The only problem was that in jail they eventually let you out, and he didn't want to become a career criminal just to keep a warm place to sleep.

He could imagine the headlines now, "Astronaut that First Walked on the Moon Robs Deli of Sandwich." Actually it might be kind of fun. It had been decades since his name had been in the paper except for the occasional human-interest story. When he first came back, he was the front-page news for weeks. After the front-page news had died down, his social activities had become of interest to the gossip columnists and the tabloids. He was invited to dine and party with presidents, actors, and famous book authors. Television talk show hosts would invite him to their shows. For a full year, the only choices he had to make were which invitations to accept. He remembered some of the dinners now as he was heading out for his roast beef sandwich. He ate lobsters and steak, and desserts so delicious that they would cause him to have raptures years after he had consumed them.

One day he and his wife got the mail and there were no requests for their presence. The phone didn't ring all day. When dinnertime came, he and his wife just looked at each other. Just like now, there was no food in the house. They went out for a burger. It was good. No one asked him what it was like "out there in space." He and his wife talked about the garden that she wanted to put in. They talked about stuff they wanted to talk about. She asked him if he wanted to rent a beach cottage for the summer. That was the day he came back down to earth.

Pretty much since then he kept his head out of the clouds and his feet on the ground. It was just his pesky soul that wanted to slip out now and then and remember the feelings that he experienced in the cosmos.

Charlie had a theory. Just like gravity keeps your body earth bound, it also keeps your soul trapped in your physical self. He remembered gamboling around on the moon. The fact that he could look up and imagine all of mankind trapped by gravity except for him caused him to have great feelings of expansiveness. He couldn't imagine many other humans could have felt the same. Maybe when Columbus discovered the New World or Hillary climbed Everest they might have come close to this feeling, but he doubted it.

Coming back to earth, he felt gravity push his spirit a little deeper inside him. Every once in awhile he felt a surge of the old feeling, but it was so rare now. He now settled for the surge of happiness a deli roast beef sandwich would bring.

Charlie now had both shoes on. He sat for a minute to gather his strength before heading out. He could swear that lately when he sat he could feel his bones starting to crumble to dust. All this musing wasn't getting his belly full. Charlie opened the door. His body felt heavier then when he had to wear his space suit on earth while doing practice simulations. He looked down the street. Charlie closed the door and went to the kitchen and fired up the microwave.

His children came that night after work to settle him into his new home. It was dark outside when they got there, but the parking lot was light up brilliantly. He looked to the heavens. Just like on the moon, he couldn't see the stars.

Frost on the Window

Mark Mellott

God put a creak in my little sister's casket.
We cringed at its closure as if to finally recognize,
Her early departure, her sullen kiss farewell.
It was soft and subtle in February air,
A hand in the rear-view as you learn to let it go--
The feeling in your neck that seeps through your bones.
I'm sure we'll be back to good in a couple months.

These days are quiet and far too long,
There's a film over everything I see.
I know that things are beautiful
Because my friends tell me so.
Light a match; watch it burst with life,
Dance until it fades.
That scent is all I know anymore.

I've been soaking in this bathtub
For three and a half hours.
Wearing a pair of jeans and
Singing away the pain.
I wonder how long I can hold my breath.
This is where I taught her to swim.

Alone in the attic. Seashell to my ear.
I can hear the ocean break against the rocks,
Sirens on the cliff leading me home.
Like everything else in this town,
The lighthouse died without one eye to notice.
I capsize between an old family portrait
And a music box.

I just want to see beauty on my own again.



“Pier 1”

Photo by Robin Karis

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

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GEORGE EVANS has published three books of poetry in England, and a recent collection, *Sudden Dreams*, in the United States. A recipient of fellowships from the Lannan Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, he is the editor of *The Complete Correspondence of Charles Olsen* and of *Streetfare Journal*, a national program that displays poetry and art on posters in buses. He has translated extensively from the poetry of Huu Think and Daisy Zamora. His work is widely anthologized.

CHRISTOPHER GRAHAM is a first-year CSM student with plans to transfer to University of Maryland to study business. Since working on his high school yearbook, he continues taking pictures when the opportunity presents itself. His nature photography captures nature's passing beauty.

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JULIET JOHNSON has been published in *The Imperfect Parent*, *Scribble Magazine*, and the recent anthology *Cup of Comfort for Mothers to Be*, among others. In her spare time she raises two kids and drives a horse-drawn carriage.

ROBIN KARIS lives in Indian Head, Maryland with her husband of 15 years and pursues photography, quilting, writing, and she would like to answer more *Jeopardy* questions correctly.

VIRGINIA KREUTER is a woman, young beyond her years, residing in Mechanicsville, Maryland after relocating from Fredericksburg, Virginia approximately one year ago. She has been writing for as long as she can recall but has only recently summoned the courage to share her work with others. She credits her best friend and fellow poetess Courtney Birst-Wyrick with helping her to trust her own words and pursue venues better than the numerous bound journals tucked safely on a bookshelf. Safety is sometimes too predictable and just as fun as watching grass grow. Her poems are debutantes that just want to dance.

MARY LOHNES is a media relations specialist and an occasional English instructor for the College of Southern Maryland. She is currently working on a collection of short stories about people who are not writers and hopes to someday successfully imitate Sherwood Anderson's "The Egg." Lohnes is three months behind on her magazine reading but still laments that most magazine articles, including those in *Smithsonian* magazine, are becoming fragmented blurbs.

WILLIAM LOWE teaches creative writing and literature at Howard Community College in Columbia, Maryland, and has previously published poems in several journals, including *Connections*.

ANNA M. LOWELL is currently a full-time student at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia. She is majoring in biology and sociology while also pursuing pre-medical training. She devotes most of her time to writing, creating art, dancing, and volunteering. In the future, Anna aspires to become a traveling doctor or a medical journalist with a focus on developing countries, epidemics, and natural disasters.

KARLA MCKAY was raised in St. Mary's County. "I am the pickle in the middle no matter how you count (steps, halves, blood and water.) I love Edgar Allen Poe and I have a fear of being buried alive, but I can not tell you which came first. I believe in following your heart and Pegasus's. I also consider innocence to be the best quality in a person."

ALICIA MCNEE has been writing since she was about eight years old. She is a mass communications major with a double minor in English and journalism and hopes to be an editor for a publishing company while writing on the side.

MARK MELLOTT is 20 years old, writes poetry daily, and works for Facchina Construction.

PERRY D. MILLER is an aquatics assistant at the College of Southern Maryland.

KLARA MUEHLFELD is a sophomore at LaPlata High School. Her mom is her best friend.

JOANY NAZDIN is a nurse who lives in St. Mary's County.

BARBARA SCOTLAND is an associate professor of English at the College of Southern Maryland.

DERRILL THOMPSON took “skynbedrock” in Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia.

FAITH H. TYDINGS is a 27-year-old married stay-at-home mom, with three kids. In her spare time, she enjoys photography. She also dabbles in children's writing.

ROBERT WESTFIELD received his degree in theater and English from Columbia University. As a playwright, he was the writer-in-residence for the Working Group. He lives in New York.

ALYSA YOUNGER is a student at Henry E. Lackey High School. She is in Grade 12.

DAISY ZAMORA was born in Managua, Nicaragua. During the revolution, she was a combatant in the National Sandinista Liberation Front and director of Radio Sandino's clandestine programs. After the triumph, she served as the vice-minister of Culture and the executive director of the Institute of Economic and Social Research of Nicaragua. She has published three books of poetry, *En limpio se escribe la vida*, *La violenta espuma*, and *A cada quien la vida*, as well as the anthology, *The Nicaraguan Woman in Poetry* (La mujer Nicaragüense en la poesía). In addition to her achievements in poetry, Daisy Zamora is well-known as a painter and psychologist. All three of her books of poems have been translated and published in English: *Clean Slate* (Curbstone), *Riverbed of Memory* (City Lights, 1992), and *The Violent Foam* (Curbstone, 2002). She is presented in the Bill Moyers Language of Life series that first aired on PBS in 1995. Her poems have been widely anthologized.