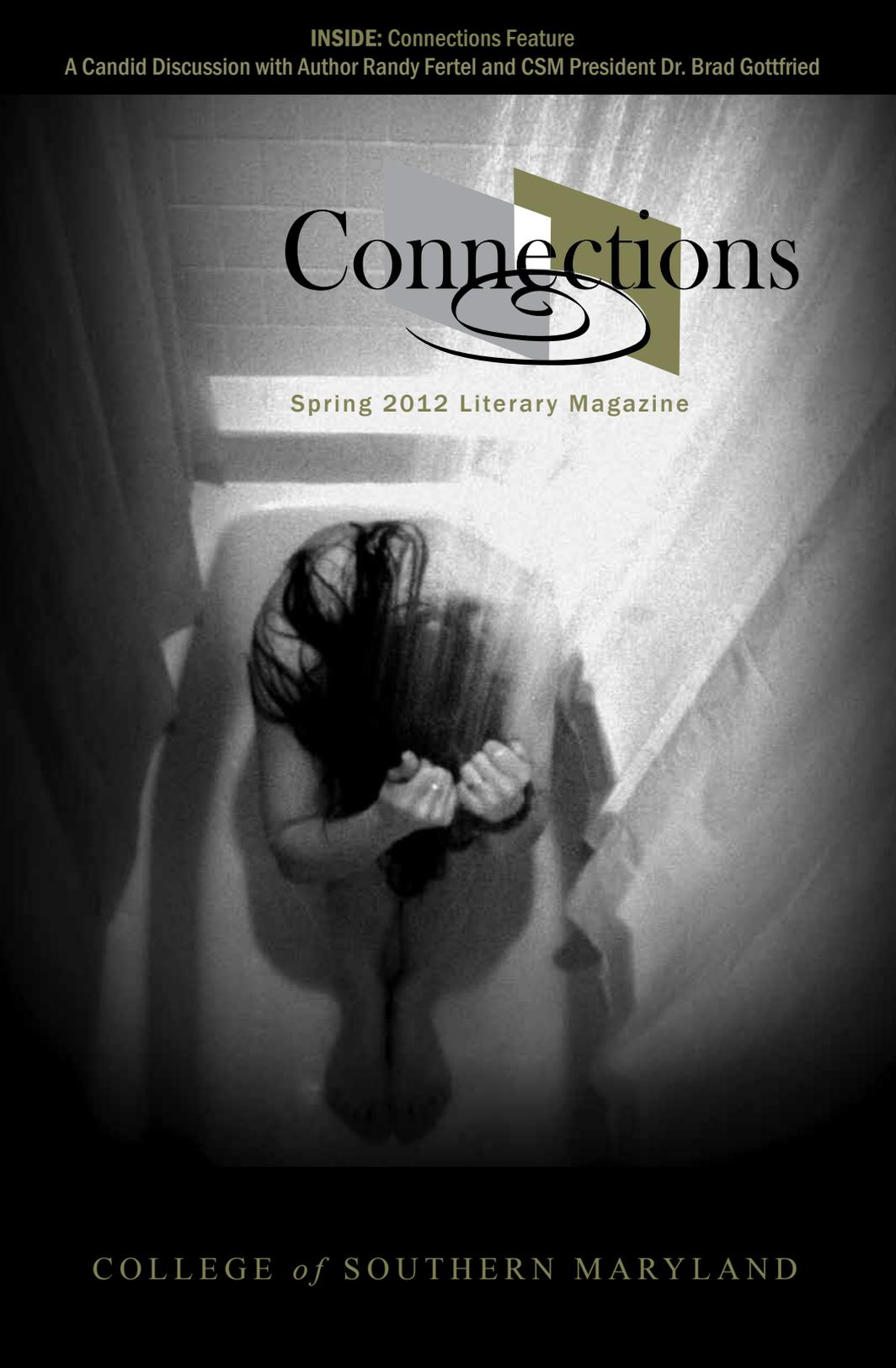


INSIDE: Connections Feature
A Candid Discussion with Author Randy Fertel and CSM President Dr. Brad Gottfried



Connections

Spring 2012 Literary Magazine

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND

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Sifting cover photo by Judi Poe

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Forever

Joanne Van Wie

A verbal agreement isn't worth the paper it's written on.—

You and I stand stiffened
perpendicular to something
below us
until the exhaust from our idling cars
is our own

and then we shift our
weight
blending falsehoods into
excuses
sticks in a fire
feeding the blue sky
into gray
into why.

Not Today

Ginny Phalen

I've learned to smile,
Though my heart is aching.
I've learned to laugh,
Even when it's breaking.
I've learned to be,
What they want me to be.
I've learned to see,
What they want me to see.
I've learned to say,
All their pretty little words.
I can imitate them,
Like a pretty little bird.
I've learned to love,
But never to hold.
I've learned to be tough,
But never be bold.
I've learned to be happy,
When I feel so alone.
When I feel miniscule,
I pretend that I've grown.
But despite all my sadness,
And despite all my glee,
I've learned that it's okay,
For me to be me.

I've found the light,
In the deepest dark.
I've seen the brightness,
In the smallest spark.
I have seen beauty,
In tragic places.
I've seen it illuminate,
The saddest of faces.
I've travelled the world,
I've spent days in my room.
I've watched innocent people
Meeting their doom.
I've seen what I was,
And I know what I'll be.
I've seen happy endings
Meet catastrophe.
I've looked death in the face,
And I've said, "Not today.
There's still more to do,
And debts to repay."
But despite all I've seen,
And despite what I do,
It's hard to decide,
Which path I should choose.

Impossibilities

Mandy Lamoureux

I have never been a fan of the daytime,
Because I only accomplish great things when the sun is down...
I get attacked by a shark and live to tell the tale.
I speed away from an erupting volcano as my heart is beating
out of my chest.
I help my dear friend escape the path of death and foil an
evil kidnapping plot.
I am abducted by the devil and fight him off using only my feet.
I singlehandedly discover the cure for cancer and win the
Nobel Prize.
I become a two-time Olympic gymnast, though I can't even
do a cartwheel.
I make a feast for a hundred orphans in Guatemala, though I
don't know how to cook.
And after a long night's work, I find Prince Charming and
ride off in a horse and carriage.
Then I wake, as the sun rises on a brand new day.
I am young, with only goals and aspirations and nothing
to show for them.
In my dreams, I can do anything and be anyone.
Impossibilities during the day become realities at night.
And so I live my days only waiting for the night to come again,
Not sure I am quite ready for what the real world has in store.

Dust and Treasure

By Larry O'Brien

Hurry's Store and Tavern stands at the intersection at Clements like a ghost-mother, eyeing the passing world with distrust. Idle souls of old farmers and day laborers from a previous century, covered in the dust of slow progress, sit tilted back on crates on her porch, lean on her railings and porch posts, and perch on her dangerously crooked porch step. Like drying laundry draped over any prop they hang stiff and still, their contemplation stirred only slightly by the periodic breeze of traffic through the intersection or some other barely noticeable event within their view. Occasionally stirred to sudden gusts of laughter that just as suddenly drop to silence, they mark the day's events beneath lowered brims and the black shade of the midday sun. The sounds of heat in the grass, conversation from inside the store and the song of a single cricket somewhere near the corner of the building... all filter through the thick haze of humid air and the beer and whiskey buzz. At their feet, pressed into the gravel like shiny cobblestones are a thousand bottle-caps, a rich tableau of new and antiquated brands. Whenever we stop at the store I stare at them, crouched down and squinting like a miniature jeweler poring over a spread of loose diamonds, looking for that unique find, a classic shape and exotic style that make a simple soda or bottle of beer seem so special. Today was no different.

Daddy always spoke to Nace. I had never heard that name before, but later I would meet lots of Naces. Short for Ignatius, I learned. A Jesuit name like most of the Aloyisiuses and Ignatiuses and Francisces that populated half of the county. At one time a Jesuit mission, St. Mary's County had been the Siberia of the Washington clergy, where young priests cut their teeth and earned their first real assignment, middle-aged priests were sent

for lessons in humility or obedience, and the truly old ones came for final pasturing. If you were lucky you got the old one. Then you could doze on Sunday mornings. St. Ignatius appeared in the doorway in khaki with a broad grin and a red and white can of Budweiser buried in his huge hand. He disappeared into the dark with my father, which left me outside in the glaring sun in front of the old porch with Mookie. I stared at the ground more intently now, partly because I didn't know what to say to Mookie, and partly because I was a little nervous. I always had a hard time understanding him—at first. And then, he stared so intently when he spoke. His face was the color of the asphalt road, with pitch black eyes in a sea of yellow ringed with blood red. His black skin sagged, like the pools of road tar slowly cooling after the sun falls behind the side of a building, or behind a large shade tree. White whiskers sprung from his black face, softening the corners and sometimes sparkling when the sun caught them. But now Mookie sat silently in the shadow of the porch roof, framed by the tin Sunbeam Bread sign in the window, chin doubled up on his old chest, the brim of his black straw hat pulled low over his eyes. In this double shade I couldn't tell if they were shut or open. I wanted to know but I couldn't bring myself to look long enough to discern. So I pretended he was napping and didn't speak. I got a stick, and went to work on the caps, prying up an upside down cap to see what was hidden.

“Ef you gits moneh, bawh, its miyun, yheah?”

I jumped. Mookie laughed low and shook. His whole body shook when he laughed, his clothes flapping like so much dirty laundry.

“Heh heh, yeaah... yessir. You one ambitious soul, chile. Lookitchu. Diggin an' carryin' on. Whatchu got naw, somekinda treasure theah? Heh, heh. I done cleaned this place up too many tahms. You fin' sumpin, its yaws, y' unnerstan? You keep it.” He whispered “Gwan in theah an gitchu onna them RED HOTs.” His one eye, the one that sags lower than the other, opened wide, and I pictured RED HOTs after you suck them for awhile, when

the white starts showing through the red, and all I could think of was plunking one of them in place of one of Mookie's red eyes.

"Yessir" I said.

"Ah ain't no 'sir' bawh. Ah's just Mookie... just Mookie..." he trailed off, and chins slowly lowered to his chest, just after a slight chuckle that lightly shook his shoulders.

"Yessir" I said. He just grinned. Soon that faded. Mookie was a fixture at Clements Store, like the antiquated gas pumps, and the icehouse. He pumped gas for the occasional traveler who didn't know their way around the place. He roused himself twice a day to empty trash barrels. His best job in the summer was loading ice into the icehouse, which he did artfully. The ice truck would back up to the wide oak plank loading platform and Mookie sprang to life. Straddled between the open doors of the truck and the icehouse, with a single swift one-handed move he clamped onto block after block of ice with huge iron tongs and gracefully swung them off of the truck and into the icehouse. Thick forearms knotted deeply, revealing a deceptive strength. For a seventy-plus year old man who had worked tobacco fields and road construction all of his life, he was remarkably able. But you'd never notice unless you witnessed an ice delivery. Most other times Mookie's abilities were well hidden, under a worn black straw fedora hat with a white band, and the cover of well-worn and wrinkled khaki work clothes. I looked at him now, at rest in a heap on the old metal porch chair and wondered. I wondered about his house. I didn't know where he lived. I wondered about his family. Sometimes his two daughters came by to get bread or milk, or to drop off his lunch, which he always ate outside at the table under the cigar tree. Unless it was raining. Then he would eat on the porch but never inside. I knew he had grandchildren, because I had seen a boy looking out of the rear window of his daughter's car one day. The boy looked younger than me, or maybe just a little smaller. I couldn't tell. We stared at each other as the car pulled off in a dirt cloud. Was Mookie

married? I wondered, since I had never seen or heard about his wife. He was just Mookie. Like the gas pumps, there to do a job, not particularly important in themselves as long as they function. And after, you go on your way. That was Mookie.

The sound of laughter, and shorter louder talk told me my father was winding up the talk with Nace and would soon emerge, with a brown bag of country sausage, or bread and milk, or some bloodworms for the night fishing he and Mama liked. He also always got Fig Newtons. I ran to the car, reached up and with both thumbs plunged the stiff chrome button that opened the heavy door, and jumped into the front seat, sliding across in front of the steering wheel and over to my side. I waited for my father to step off the porch. Without fail, he would turn just before the steps and make one more comment, which would turn into another five minutes. I bounced on the seat springs on my knees, facing backwards over the seat back, lightly calling “Daaaad. Daaaaad.” He was deaf to me. Finally he turned, got into the car, and we drove off, leaving the icehouse, the gas pumps and Mookie behind in a fresh dust-cloud. I reached into the brown bag, searching for anything good. There was a smaller brown bag, neatly folded shut, in the corner under the bread.

“Those are for later, if you’re good.”

“I’ve been good,” I complained.

“OK—you can have one now,” he said. I reached in and pulled out the small bag, opening it and spilling the contents onto my lap, a half-dozen RED HOTs. I stared. They stared back. I slowly collected all but one, dropped them into the bag, and popped the last one into my mouth. But not before trying it out for an eye and looking into the side mirror. Mookie as an eight year old.

thin dream

Cindy Hardman

Come
a May skinny
day

slipping
into the
wind

petals
unfurled

dew
drip drop
dripping

sunward
stemming

I will tower the trees

Conjunction

Judith Allen-Leventhal

Sentences

Disabled

Enabled:

You love some one.

If you

love some one . . .

You love some one.

Whether you

love some one . . .

You love some one.

While you

love some one . . .

You love some one.

So you

love some one . . .

When you love some one, conjunction is key.



Bicycles by *Karen Smith Hupp*

Open Mouth, Insert Me

David H. Brantley

I've always been fascinated by languages and their origins, which may explain my natural drift toward teaching English, since it is, after all, my mother language. In fourth grade, I learned a minimum of Spanish; in seventh grade I took on a little German and French (which I also attempted a few years later, but to no avail). Unfortunately, my ear for language was not paired with an ability, innate or learned, to speak a second language, so I settled for learning to read and understand a limited vocabulary in each of these foreign tongues. Once I entered high school, though, I found my passion: Latin. It is the root language of so many other languages, and while I did develop a proficiency in reading and writing in this most archaic of languages, I never had to worry much about its proper pronunciation (yea!) or holding conversations with other students in the class or with our very prim and precise teacher, Mrs. Klingenschmidt, to prove I was “getting it.”

I continued my study of Latin in college to fulfill my foreign language requirement. I went from being one of eight Latin scholars in high school to being the sole, independent-study geek who paid tuition at West Chester University and kept my professor employed. My love of the language never waned. I grew from memorizing phrases such as “veni, vidi, vici” to better grasping the evolution of words and their impact on modern-day languages, the ones my current students are learning (and mastering much better than I ever could). I recognize many of the words I studied in their original or derivative forms as I teach literature and composition (argument, rigor mortis, et cetera, bona fide), but the one I use now, every day, is stoma. I have one; I am one.

Although Greek in origin (“mouth”), the Latin derivative of stoma is simply defined as “open,” or “opening.” Its application in my life is two-fold, and both applications—one lifelong, one that is more recently acquired—define me, for better or worse. I’ve always been an open person: open-minded, open-booked, open-ended. I don’t shy away from personal expression, even if I must occasionally couch my thoughts out of respect of others. That’s not to say I never have reservations about things; I do. It’s not to say I can’t be very conservative in some of my perspective; heck, look at the way I dress, and certainly, as I age, my once open, liberal mind finds it less easy to adjust to change, to adapt to the whirlwind sweep of political, religious, economic, environmental, technological, cultural, and social changes that occur under the premise that all changes better humankind. Still, I continue to want to learn new ideas, to expand my worldview, to more fully appreciate the lives others lead and how those lives inform my own—and mine theirs. Age has never diminished that hunger in me.

I am at my best as a stoma in the educational environment. I get to ply my love of language in the classes I teach, and I have the extreme luxury—and it is just that—to witness the day my students become stomas as well, when they open their eyes wider than usual, smile, and recognize that they “finally get it.” That’s when learning itself becomes lifelong for them. That’s when their commitment to remaining curious and open to knowing more is sealed in concrete, whether they themselves realize it or not. They become the mouth of the next generation, and I know they’ll pass on the crown.

Medically I am also a stoma, or at least it’s a defining result of my most recent physical trials with colorectal cancer and a 30-year battle with acute Crohn’s Disease. On November 17, 2011, I underwent surgery for an Abdominoperineal Proctectomy Resection with Total Colostomy. The shorter definition of that

rather daunting and impressive procedural name is that I am left without my large intestines, my rectum, my anus, and the community of lymph nodes and sphincter muscles that typically compose that area of the body. What I am left with is a stoma, an opening created from the end of my ileum (small intestines) not taken as a result of the diseases. About three-and-a-half inches of the ileum are pulled through the stomach wall to the outside of the body, two inches from the navel. That portion is then turned inside out and back onto itself and stitched into place to form a bud, a living piece of tissue to which I attach an unobtrusive ostomy bag that gathers my body's waste. TMI? Maybe so, but it's the end result of a procedure that has altered my life, and it's the result about which most people who have the same fate won't share, as if it's shameful. Yet a large number of women and men wear an ostomy bag, either permanently, or if they are lucky, only temporarily until a follow-up surgery will allow their parts to be resectioned into a typical, internal tract. Mine will be permanent.

The stoma is now an external reminder of the me I have become, of how I am now "open" in a new vein. I care for it as a father would care for his newborn, protecting it from harm and keeping it healthy, much as the stoma now serves me in similar ways as it allows me to get rid easily of the body's toxins. My wound nurse (a term used to define the women and men who work with ostomy patients) told me on the day she marked my body for the stoma's placement that seeing the stoma for the first time would likely be more disturbing than any other site following my surgical experience, more so than the almost 20 inches of staples and sutures that closed me from back to front, more so than the loss of a normal rear end; she was wrong. I remained open-minded about what was happening to me throughout the process, as I have about what is yet to come. So, when I saw the stoma five days later, once my body was finally able to produce waste again and I needed to replace my bag, I simply asked how to properly clean it and prep for the next bag's attachment. I was

neither freaked nor frightened; I accepted it as a part of my body, albeit a part that most other people would never get a chance to see of their own except in x-rays and scans. I acknowledged, at that point, that its function gave new definition to David H. Brantley.

I suppose if I exercised my normally perverse sense of humor, I could name my stoma (I have considered it), but I have too much respect for what being a stoma teaches me about life, about living in the face of adversity, to make light of it. The fact is that I remain a stoma in the way that I have always defined myself as a stoma: someone who is open, frank, and eager to take in as much of life and knowledge as I can absorb. I teach because the academic environment encourages and fulfills that hunger in me. The new stoma that I am, and will be from here on out, is merely a new dimension of myself, an expanded definition, the sort of Latin derivative of a word's Greek origin that marks evolution of language and thought, that alters a life when the recognition lights up inside and frees the mind to "finally get it." My fascination remains intact, and I will use the experience of learning this to pass on the crown.

Homing Instinct

Patrick Allen

“If you move the hive at least five miles they will accept a relocation, but if you move the hive just five feet they will become lost, hovering five feet away, over the last position they knew.”

For Laura Polk, the beekeeper nurse

I

Five miles

Everything feels the same

I have my work

I have my siblings near to me

Mother bathes us with the scent of purpose.

But things have changed

The twin hills are moved

The clover was not where I expected it

The peonies were not there at all

The rhythm of my dance is uncertain, less fluid, somehow.

II
Five feet

A'nt Sue had Windmill cookies with slivers of almond baked into them

Mr. Weller let me clean out the bottle caps from the holder on the front of the Pepsi Cola cooler

Mr. Francis' store had King Sixteen Fruit Bowl soda for 12 cents and Hot Dill pickles out of a barrel for a nickel.

One time, in first grade I came home for lunch

My mother gave me a dime and sent me to Gus's for meat and cheese

I ate Chicken Liver on Rye bread, with American cheese, Kosher Dill pickle slices, Franks Red Hot sauce and French's yellow mustard on both sides of the bread

I took the rinds upstairs to Smoky who gobbled the scraps from my outstretched hand and licked my fingers with his rough tongue for good measure.

III
Between five feet and five miles

We hover above our own honey combed construction

Dancing kaleidoscopic fragments of experience

Memory traces somehow changed

But still familiar across years of time and place.

One foot planted in front of the other we travel

With a restive, vague, feeling of satisfaction

Five miles from where we started.

CONNECTIONS FEATURE



A Candid Discussion with
Author
Randy Fertel
and
CSM President
Dr. Brad Gottfried

By Karen Smith Hupp

Connecting established and emerging authors with the community has been the goal of the College of Southern Maryland's Connections series since it began more than 20 years ago. Kicking off the 2012 spring program was New Orleans author Randy Fertel, reading from his memoir, *The Gorilla Man and the Empress of Steak*. The memoir weaves the stories of his iconic New Orleanian parents, one famous – Ruth, founder of Ruth's Chris Steak House – and one infamous – Rodney, known as “The Gorilla Man” for his quixotic 1969 run for mayor and promise to get a gorilla for the zoo. It is a bittersweet story of one of New Orleans' most legendary families, and the famous steak house that bears their name. In anticipation of that reading, CSM President Dr. Bradley Gottfried talked with Fertel as part of *Southern Maryland Perspectives*, a weekly radio program on Sunday mornings in which Dr. Gottfried highlights local newsmakers, authors, and politicians. The same show airs at 7 a.m. on WKIK 102.9 FM, 7:30 a.m. on WYRX 97.7 FM, and 8 a.m. on WSMD 98.3 FM. The following are excerpts from that conversation, which aired on Sunday, March 4.

Brad Gottfried: Today, I'm really honored to have with me an author, a special author, Randy Fertel, who is an author of the book, entitled, *The Gorilla Man and the Empress of Steak* and subtitled “A New Orleans Family Memoir.” Good morning, Randy. Now, you were born and raised in New Orleans?

Randy Fertel: I'm a New Orleanian through and through.

Gottfried: Wow. Great, great town. We'll talk a little more about that, but Randy, I always start off with the same question. Tell us a little bit about yourself in terms of profession, education, and things of that nature.

Fertel: I have a PhD in English from Harvard and developed a specialty in the literature of the Vietnam War which I taught as a summer seminar for the NEH at the College of Southern Maryland with Wayne Karlin a few years ago. It is

for high school teachers. It's a really rich subject and students are really warm to it because the literature wars basically are about a bunch of 19-year-olds who are abused by authority, and what 19-year-old in your class can't relate to that? I find it a really rich subject. I teach on and off. My last gig was at the New School for Social Research in New York teaching at the graduate level which was wonderful. Now I'm spending most of my time with my book and my writing and two foundations which I run here in New Orleans, one of which my mother founded, the Ruth Fertel Foundation. It's devoted to education in the New Orleans area so it's a really exciting time to be involved in that, with Katrina work; we're doing really exciting things here.

Gottfried: Is this your first book?

Fertel: It is my first book. I've written a lot of academic stuff over the years but none with book lens.

Gottfried: Is there a second one in the works?

Fertel: Well, there is an academic book I'd like to finish but everyone wants to know about the second book and after that I think there will be more New Orleans. We in New Orleans love our town and writing this book involved me in a lot of historical research and coming to better understand why we're so special and why we're so loveable. New Orleans is unique and it's just the soul of America, we'd like to say. So coming to understand that, just not feel it, has been a wonderful experience.

Gottfried: Many people may not know your dad, Rodney Fertel? What can you tell us?

Fertel: Well, I'm sure in Southern Maryland his reach hasn't quite gotten up there. My father was kind of a handful. He was independently wealthy, which gave him license to do kind of odd things. In 1969 he ran for mayor in New Orleans on the platform that the zoo needed a gorilla and that's why he was happily known as the Gorilla Man for the rest of his life. He campaigned in safari outfit and his campaign slogan was, "Don't vote for a monkey; elect Fertel and get a gorilla." He got 308 votes and took that as a mandate to go out and find two gorillas. I don't know how you find two gorillas in 1969 without an internet to track them down, but he did. He found them in Singapore and he bought two baby gorillas and brought them back and gave them to the zoo.

Gottfried: You have to understand, listeners, that for the mayor of New Orleans, we're talking about hundreds of thousands of votes were cast and he was at the very bottom.

Fertel: That's right. I found out after writing the book, and I wished I had known this for the book, he became one of those perennial joke candidates that we love in New Orleans and in his next campaign four years later, having given these two gorillas and announcing that he was the only mayoral candidate in history that kept all his campaign promises even though he had lost, he garnered 4,000 votes the next time out and came in 4th instead of like 9th. I think maybe there's a lesson in that!

Gottfried: Everyone has heard about your mother, this is Ruth. What can you tell us?

Fertel: Everyone thinks they know my mom (though a lot of people don't know that Ruth's Chris started in New Orleans), but, here in New Orleans especially, they think they all know my mom but many people don't connect her with my father whom she divorced in 1958, seven years before she bought Chris Steak House and turned it into this empire, Ruth's Chris. So, I get to tell the story of the birth of that empire and some of the back story that people don't know and we have a lot of fun with it. My father was from inner city New Orleans from the Orthodox Jewish area of New Orleans that catered to the black inner city and a relative of his, of mine, sold Louis Armstrong his first cornet so that's some research that really knocked me over when I learned that.

So, he was from inner city New Orleans and she was from the mouth of the river down by Plaquemines Parish, which now we all know about from the BP oil spill, which is this totally rural and a totally different world. So, my book gets to link and weave together these two worlds which their marriage brought together.

Gottfried: So how did they meet each other?

Fertel: I once asked my mother when I was at some point having one of my many fights with my father, "Why did you marry that guy?" She said, "Well-I-I, I was a tomboy, I was from the country, and I loved horses; your father had a riding stable," and she added with kind of a cynical grin, she said, "You know, the first time I saw him I thought he was a stable hand."

Turned out, he owned the stable, so they had that in common. She became the first licensed women thoroughbred trainer in Louisiana racing history, which is very distinguished. They had that in common, and they had a stable of race horses for many years. Then, when they divorced, they went their separate ways, and eventually the divorce was finalized. She was a gambling woman and she said, "I'm going to stake everything. I'm going to mortgage the house and buy a business." So, she looked in the classified ads and she found this tiny little business-for-sale ad, three lines, that said, "Steak house for sale, owner retiring."

Gottfried: About what year was that?

Fertel: That was 1965. So she mortgaged the house. She went to her banker and said, "What do you think?" and he said, "Well, it's a good deal, \$18,000, but you know you're going to need inventory. You better borrow \$22,000." She always gave him credit for her success because she was ready, she thought she could do anything and she was amazingly capable, but she didn't know that little detail that she would need to have inventory.

Gottfried: Let's fast-forward. Right now, everybody has heard of Ruth's Chris Steak House. Everyone can understand the Ruth, but the Chris? Is it because that was the original name?

Fertel: The steak house she bought was Chris Steak House, and it had been in business for 38 years. In fact, it opened the day she was born... But Chris Matulich was a Croatian who did this tradition of a Croatian steak house...he made a go of it with only 17 tables. It was the kind of place that you stopped at on the way back from the racetrack. It was right near the racetrack; there's that theme again. And, like if you won the daily double, you stopped and celebrated. It was a very simple place. There were just three steaks. A bunch of sides. Before you knew it, she started expanding and now there are like 130 of them. It's the largest upscale restaurant in the world.

Gottfried: Now is this a franchise? Or does the company own each one of them?

Fertel: There are many franchises and the company is now publicly owned. We sold it in '99 and they went public in 2005 right before Katrina hit so it's out of our hands and when the corporation decided to leave New Orleans right after Katrina, I mean the week after Katrina, everyone in New Orleans could not have been more angry. They still get in my face sometimes and say, "Hey, why did you do that?" And I say, "Hey, it wasn't me, man."

Gottfried: Where did they move the corporate headquarters to?

Fertel: To Orlando. Just when New Orleans was fearful that they were going to turn New Orleans into the next Disney World they made this gesture of moving to Orlando. It's not totally forgiven yet. They didn't reopen the original. It was flooded by five feet of water. But they did eventually donate that building to Tulane for a medical center, a community medical center, which is a pretty good second choice. I'm on the board of that and it's run by a terrific woman who is really changing the nature of community health. It's a terrific project so we're proud of that. It hasn't quite opened yet but it's coming soon.

Gottfried: Randy, in terms of your mom, you said she basically mortgaged her home to open the business or at least to buy the business; did she have a background in restaurants, the restaurant business?

Fertel: Well, not really. She had a background in the sciences. She was a math, chemist, physics whiz and had been working at the Tulane Medical School as a lab technician for an eminent cardiologist. She had a brother down in Happy Jack, Louisiana, where they were from, he had a restaurant and she spent some time there and so kind of learned the ropes. She was a very competitive woman and never mentioned that in any of the corporate narrative. There was kind of a bitterness about that from my uncle. But she was multi-talented and a real hard worker. She was very charismatic. Everyone loved her and loved to watch how hard she was working. There's a story about the early days. She was sitting around one day with a customer and she was saying she wished she had more business. You know this was the first few months of business. And he said, "Gosh, I didn't know you wanted more business," like, what else do you want? Of course you want more business. But he said, "I work in the oil patch down in Plaquemines and all my buddies are from Texas, and those guys love a good steak. So, I'll bring them over." So he did. Next thing you know, it was THE place for all these oil workers and of course, the politicians in New Orleans, they follow the money, and the next thing you know the politicians were hanging out, and Ruth's Chris became the power lunch in New Orleans for many years.

Gottfried: So is that when it started to go upscale?

Fertel: That came slowly. It was always expensive. It was always the best prime beef you could get. I'd say it was a very simple restaurant. It was tablecloth, but it was very simple, no carpets or anything. She later moved to a larger space four

blocks away and slowly that became a little nicer. She started franchising in the mid-70s. She had a customer from Baton Rouge who kept saying, “You know, Ruth, I come down here, I get drunk. I drive home; I’m going to kill myself on the highway. If you don’t give me a franchise your eternal soul is going to (laugh), well, so she finally opened. I call her the accidental entrepreneur because she really didn’t have a vision of empire. She just slowly, by accident, by things that popped up, she just took the opportunities and next thing you know, there were more franchises than corporate stores.

Gottfried: This obviously was the time of desegregation?

Fertel: It was, well, the public accommodations act was 1964 and there’s a story I learned in my research. A friend of mine, a guy I knew, was a prominent civil rights attorney in the early 60s and an older man, he told me the story of desegregating Chris Steak House. Because you know, in the South, and I guess Maryland would be included in this, I’m not sure, but desegregation, even though it was the law of the land, happened storefront by storefront. So one day he was invited to lunch by some politician who wanted his support and he knew that this Republican wasn’t going to get his support but he knew a good meal when he heard it, so he went. But when he arrived, suddenly there was this hush that settled over the crowded lunchroom and next thing you know this tall oilman walked up to my mother, who was 5-foot-2, and said, “If that boy eats here, I’ll never eat here again.” And my mother who was from Plaquemine which historically was the most racist parish in Louisiana, it was run by the infamous Judge Leander Perez. My mother said to this guy, “Well, there’s the door.” I’m really proud of that. She grew up in the worst possible racist environment, but didn’t have that. I don’t know if it was because of her parents or just her heart, but I’m very proud of that. So I know the guy that desegregated Chris Steak House. And later when the power shifted and blacks took over city politics, it stayed THE power lunch but it’s often said that Ruth’s Chris Steak House was the first steak house that made blacks feel comfortable. I’m proud of that. It’s part of New Orleans history... She had to teach herself the business. It’s a classic pull-yourself-up by the bootstraps story. She later earned the Horatio Alger award which is all about that.

Gottfried: She must have been very proud of that.

Fertel: I got to go to that. It was interesting. They give out 10 awards every year. At Ford’s Theater, there was an event where they got to tell their story. It was

kind of like a competition to see who had it worst, who had come the farthest. My mother had this quiet charm. She said, "I never knew we were poor in the depression. In Plaquemines Parish, you just reached out and grabbed food that you wanted because it was everywhere." I've been writing a lot about that. You know we're losing our wetlands down here much like you have a crisis in the Chesapeake, we have a crisis in the wetlands in the Gulf and the Mississippi River wetlands and we've been working hard to fix that because it's a real national crisis. You know 30 percent of all seafood eaten in America comes from the Gulf and 90 percent of that has spent some time as a juvenile in the wetland. So we've been losing the wetlands ... we've just got to address that.

Gottfried: You have talked about the perspectives of growing up in a very colorful part of New Orleans, actually all of New Orleans is colorful, but certainly a colorful time. One of the things that impresses me also about the book is while you certainly emphasize your family and the interesting features of growing up with two such colorful parents you also talk about New Orleans at the time, some of the colorful figures that populated the area. Who were some people that really stand out in your mind, who were really unique, even to New Orleans?

Fertel: Well, as I mentioned the story about a family member selling Louis Armstrong his first cornet, one of the joys of me doing the research for this book was getting to know that man, Louis Armstrong. What an unbelievable character. His memoir, *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans*, is a terrific book. He riffed on the typewriter the same way he did on trumpet. He was just an amazing figure, just such an amazing human being. He figures kind of, I use him, as kind of a touchstone. You know, my father grew up with privileges that money brings and yet he had despite his loving to make fun of things, there was kind of a bitter quality. He loved a good fight, he loved a good grudge. And Louis Armstrong who grew up with nothing — his mother was a whore, he had no father — and yet there is a joy about Louis that is incredible. So one can ask, what brings happiness? My family story is "it ain't money that brings happiness," so I use Louis as a contrast to bring that home.

To hear more from Randy Fertel, listen to his Spring 2012 Connections reading at <http://youtu.be/xx2zNVSPD8s> .

cinderella, deconstructed

Rich Follett

she walked into the bar
and he did not look at her.

at first he seemed, to her, a footnote –
a human etcetera –
until the reality registered:
he did not look at her.

she was as she had always been;
sashaying, swaying,
sleek and slim-hipped in the little black dress of legend –
an ephemeral, pheromonal enchantress
with a panther's predatory precision.

he was inexplicably aloof.

from the moment she realized
he was indifferent,
he became the sole object of her desire:
she began a relentless, externally imperceptible implosion.

lowering herself to flirtation,
she freshened her luscious lipstick,
feigned inexperience,
projected an air of prurient innocence
and (this was her *pièce de résistance*) pouted.

for fifty feet in every direction,
fully formed adult males

became puerile, panting pinheads
throbbing and drooling untidily,
scenting conquest –

he alone was unfazed.

having no referent for diffidence,
she became centrifugally desperate;
a frantic, antic moth to his frore flame.

as midnight approached,
she exhausted the lexicon of known feminine wiles
in pursuit of his faintest apperception;

when at last he looked up,
he looked past her –
he did not look at her.

at one minute before midnight
she, lurid in her lust and bereft of reason,
deftly executed the last step of the dance of the seven veils
with wild abandon
and threw herself prostrate and quivering before him.

as a barful of sweating barbarians erupted in ecstatic paroxysms,
he looked at his watch;
he did not look at her.

disgraced, defeated and devastated,
she ran shrieking from the bar.

months later,
dressed like a scullery maid,
she was folding her laundry

at Duds-n-Suds
when the little black dress of legend appeared unbidden
between two dish towels.

bemused by the folly of her former self,
she snickered wryly
and allowed the barren garment to fall in a heap on the
pockmarked tile.

a quiet, gentle man
picked it up and handed it to her;
she did not look at him but
(sensing his warm and admiring gaze)
murmured embarrassed thanks
and began a casual conversation to mask the awkward moment.

through six washloads their dialogue continued,
ranging from the everyday to the existential –
he said “i like the way you think”;
she said “i feel as if i know you.”

at one minute before midnight
she finished folding her laundry and (at last) looked at him.

this time
he did not look at his watch –
he looked only at her.

they lived happily ever after.

duh.

Untitled

Nikki Odimba

I wish I could talk to the oldest tree. I wonder what it would
say to me.
Generations have come and gone. Earth bows before its throne.

Wrinkled eyes from storms and rain
Arthritic branches bent in pain
Yet
It remains.

Branches stretching
Roots reaching

All the while
Quietly teaching me

How to be strong.

poets are like birds

Wendy Kibler

poets are like birds
pulling words like worms from earth
singing poems
singing “fee-bee fee bee/chick-a-dee-dee”

pulling words like worms from earth
brown thrasher couplets on telegraph lines
singing “fee-bee fee bee/chick-a-dee-dee”
I lean on the kitchen windowsill, watching

brown thrasher couplets on telegraph lines
now the baby is awake
I lean on the kitchen windowsill, watching
the joyful bouncing flight of poets and birds

now the baby is awake
hungry and needy I hold her, seeing
the joyful bouncing flight of poets and birds
dishwater and soap clinging to my hands



Crows on Fire by *Robin Karis*

Welcoming Spring

Mary Beth Klinger

As the sun began its slow, languid stretch over the horizon, Ellen thought about her day. It was just after 6 a.m. on this spring morning and already she could tell it was going to be a warm one. At 15 years of age, Ellen was just beginning her journey in adulthood and quite frankly, she could not wait. She was an energetic young woman, not one to sit still for long. She still had a couple hours before the bus came for school and she was looking forward to seeing her horse, Felix, before she left.

She went to the tack room and found her saddle, where she had placed it the day before, the saddle pad, girth, and bridle, and made her way down the aisle way of her family's modest six-stall center-aisle barn to where he waited for her.

With a soft nicker of delight he saw her and his eyes lit up. And hers for him. He was beautiful. At approximately 15.2 hands, the horse was steel gray with a black mane and tail. He had a handsome head with soft gray-black eyes and a sleek neck that made its way to tall shoulders and a steady back. She loved him.

The feeling had not always been mutual. He was a difficult young horse. Stubborn and willful, he was not an easy horse to ride. She remembered the early days with Felix. Trail riding with her friend, he spooked at a deer and tore off through the hilly pasture running faster-and-faster until she could no longer hold on. It felt like minutes, but it was probably only seconds as she fell off his right shoulder onto the hard ground below. He must have thought it was a game because when she sat up, there he was, slowly eating grass and looking at her from about fifty feet away with a quizzical look on his face. Or was it one of amusement? She was never quite sure. She dusted herself off and climbed back on.

With patience and friendship, she slowly built a bond with Felix that took years, not days or months. Day after day, she cared for the horse, and day after day, he grew to trust her.

This morning she was going to ride him through the woods and around the bottom pasture of her grandparents' farm. It was a perfect morning for it. Sunny, bright, fresh, and not oppressively hot like the morning weather report said it would be later in the day. She grabbed her brushes and hoof pick and set to work taking off the afternoon mud and dirt from what looked like several good rolls in the pasture last evening. The horse was quiet and cooperative. He understood the procedures of tacking up and grooming and seemed excited as well to begin his day out on the trails.

When he was ready, Ellen led Felix out into the aisle way of the barn and out the door into bright sunlight filled with birds singing. A tractor started up off in the distance, and she could hear cows calling for breakfast at the farm below. She loved this place. The open spaces, the fresh air, land as far as the eye could see.

Ellen had lived here her entire life. Her grandparents were the true farmers, with cows and chickens, and fields of hay and corn. Her parents had built a small farmette, called Sydney's Place, next to her grandparents' farm. Named after her great aunt, Sydney, who traveled the world many times in her lifetime and always brought back to the family a sense of joy and beloved stories that lasted into her next visit.

She figured she would take Felix to the old homestead of a great-grandparent and the newly blooming daffodils in the fields below. She swung her leg over the saddle and settled in, softly patting him on the neck.

He was a bit fresh after being in his stall all night and hopped up a little, eager to get on his way. She laughed and clucked to him and off they went, trotting down the hill to the land and the old farm house below. They trotted through a path

in the woods, both breathing deeply in the clear morning air and then she quietly sat in the saddle, and with just a whisper of her outside leg, put the horse into a canter as they exited the woods.

Felix was happy. So happy some days he thought his heart would burst. He had finally found someone who loved him and who cared for him in a way he never thought possible. Felix was a former racehorse and a great good one, if he dare say so himself.

He loved to run and he knew he was fast. He also knew that Ellen wasn't quite as good of a rider as some of the jockeys who had ridden him at the racetrack, so he tried to keep that in mind. He couldn't always slow down though...

He remembered those days of running just for the sake of running fast and Ellen getting all lopsided on top of him. He kept running anyway until he felt her weight come off of him.

Then he would pull up and eat grass. At first he thought she was just trying to hold him back but he knew that he was the best horse out there and should not be held back. He didn't have to do what she said. After all, he was a famous race horse and from a very proud lineage. In the early days, he didn't care about her and if he wanted to run, well darn it, he was going to run.

As Ellen coaxed him quietly into the canter on this glorious spring morning, he needed no more than that. Remembering it was Ellen and not some nimble jockey on his back, Felix was careful not to jump to the moon, but his impulsion still caught Ellen off guard and she steadied herself for a minute. Ellen had to learn not to be afraid of this horse. While not a big horse in terms of size, he was mighty in terms of impulsion. He could ramp-up from 0-50 in no time flat. And as Ellen had heard people say and although she hated to admit it, she was more of a "timid" rider than an aggressive one. But even so, she and Felix had worked it out. They seemed to have an understanding

of each other's strengths and weaknesses, so that while Ellen took care of Felix, Felix also took care of Ellen. That silent agreement between two living beings seemed to work well.

They cantered quietly and comfortably from the woods into the parameters of the field moving quickly towards the side of the hill that contained the daffodils. Someone, a long time ago, must have planted hundreds of daffodil bulbs, because every year, for a few weeks, the hill was alive with yellow perky flowers welcoming spring. Ellen slowed Felix down to a walk and they moved towards the happy flowers. Ellen patted her horse's neck, and he moved his head quietly up and down in agreement.

They continued to walk past the flowers back into another section of woods that contained a creek, and there Ellen let Felix drink. The birds sang, the squirrels climbed trees, and Felix relaxed into the water with a soft slurping sound.

As they made their way back to the barn, the other horses were being turned out in their paddocks, and Felix and Ellen said hello to each one. "Hi Manny." "Hi Mona." "Well, hello, there Dave." The other horses shook their heads in greeting or turned and kicked their hind legs out from behind as if to say, "Catch me if you can!" Everyone was enjoying this spring day.

Ellen got Felix back to the barn, untacked and brushed him, and then gave him a warm hug and a big red apple as she led him out to his paddock for the day. He nuzzled her hand, and then off he galloped to be with his friends. She heard her mom yelling from the kitchen door that the bus was coming down the road and to hurry. She grabbed her book bag, brushed her long hair into a pony-tail, and bounded down the lane with a big smile on her face.

Four Haiku

Jane Klemer

“Mellow Yellow”

Goldfinches in Spring plumage

Mimic the brilliance

Of my daffodils.

“Stepping Out”

Egret wears long black stockings --

Like a can-can girl

At the Moulin Rouge.

“Flight Delayed”

Pragmatic Great Blue

Challenges darkness,

Fishing for one more big one.

“Quiet Beauty”

I pluck the Black Jack oak leaf.

Colors subtle

As a female Red Bird.



Untitled by Jessica Cooperstock

Cold Morning Poem

Krista Keyes

Every few months or so I get up before the sun

and feel responsible among the workers

walking in the stark cold, into the seven-eleven for coffee.

I feel it through my stiff jeans and love to watch all that breath come out of my nose and think of my warm bed. Note to self: write down how there's such camaraderie out here, among these men, how you can feel it, their shared sense of pride for withstanding this cold.

And proud of my father, for

every day of my life, he has done this for me, and when he got home at night he couldn't understand why I cared about poetry.

But he paid to send me to school

to write poems

and took off a whole day of work to bring me here

and told me he was proud.

We write for those who will never read what we say—

for those who

already know how to live.



Light and Shadow #2 by *Paul Toscano*

The Stone House with the Tall Pine and a Round Barn in the Field

Michele LaCroix

When I arrive at my home in heaven
I'll walk up the familiar stone steps, put
my key in the worn oak door and enter.

The bags from this life litter the floor
to be unpacked and reassembled later.
What seemed like a long visit of sorrow
I know now was only a week-end trip with a few hassles.

Memories flow back from the past
as my families greet me, and
timeless companions join me once again.
I show them my luggage and latest lessons

Out the window my old war horse rests still
head down and hip slouched in the endless green field.
Guard dogs and lap dogs and the last dog
pack at the back door baying their joy at my return.

The One who has been friend, family, and lover,
appears in the parlor.
We sit quietly— see each other's thoughts,
sipping tea in eternity.

A Walk With Richard Cory

Brandon Aksteter

I doubt that all the eyes can see
I'm losing, and lost, and always late.
However slim I appear to be,
I worry my feet won't hold my weight.
I wish to draw no eyes in town.
I feel unworthy of concern.
Instead I'd rather face the ground
And ponder what I've failed to learn.

The man I just passed, and his loving wife.
The child up ahead, and the shoes she cleans.
They're all a part of one word: life—
And I've given up on what it means.

As my long and beaten path divides
The crowd, splitting a frozen sea,
I pay my tears no mind. Besides,
I doubt that all the eyes can see.

What's It Like To Be Penny?

Kayla Kittel

Penny was ok last week. Wait, scratch that. Penny was ok maybe last year. That was when she knew that. Penny hasn't been ok for a while. So Penny wasn't ok last week. Last week she felt like she was lost, and the feeling has carried over into this week. Weeks come, weeks go. Elections are held, the popular one wins. There's talk of social gatherings. When writing a nice-girl-feeling-lost story it is important to lay out her background and thoroughly explore her mind. And to ask "How does that make you feel?" That may be the most important question of all. Penny didn't know how she felt. She felt like she'd like to go home and change clothes because she didn't mean to put on what she was wearing. She didn't like it anymore. When her best friend Ann approached her while she was lost in her dark brick bubble through which she could see out but no one could see in, Ann reminded her of what was expected tomorrow. Penny asked for help. Ann told her about a new skirt she was buying that afternoon. Penny said it again, louder. "Ann, please help me. I really need help I can't control anything anymore." Ann was her best friend. Ann knew everything about her, like how Penny loved junk food and romantic comedies and had a soft spot for dogs. Ann knew that Penny was normal and enjoyed normal things. Ann knew Penny had a normal family that was very supportive of her in all her decisions. Her family ate dinner together every weeknight seated around the wooden faux oak table from the furniture section at Pier 1. Now that Penny has been introduced to the reader, back to her little-girl-lost story.

Penny was ashamed. Inside her dark brick bubble that no one could see in but she could see out she counted 11 floor tiles quickly. Smoothing her hair she continued down the hall. Her

feet were also normal to everyone else, but only she could feel the lead weight that had been inserted at the top of each foot before she put her shoes on in the morning. She went up the stairs, 15 pounds on her back. Why was everyone yelling so loudly?

Penny wanted to yell too. “Hey everybody! I’m feeling kind of lost! Someone HELP!” Everyone looked at her. No, just glanced. It wasn’t fair. You don’t even know what. The reason she came here was because 1. It was the law until she became of age and 2. This is what she’s supposed to do, of course. Everyone knew that, or they knew then. Penny knew they did their best to hear her. She counted 14 ceiling tiles. She kept walking, talking all the time. “So I’m spiraling out of control and I’m hurting really badly. You can’t see the hurt of course because I took an acting class in the seventh grade. I’ve changed since last year.” Still they walked. Penny and everyone that was going the way she was going, but only in a physical, directional kind of sense. Where she was going mentally no one knew. So by now the reader has figured out that Penny has a problem. Anyone else could have seen that, but mostly anyone doesn’t know how to see. They know how to look, but if they don’t know what they’re looking for, or if they’re not sensitive to that kind of thing, or like most they’re just too self-absorbed, then the purpose is lost, just like Penny.

Hold nothing back.

Well now doesn’t Penny feel stupid. She forgot to do her math project. That probably means she’s not worth anything. Most likely. It’s kind of hard to do math when you’re lost in a dark brick bubble that you can see out but no one can see in, but that doesn’t matter. Penny should have found a way. She walked up to her Teacher. “I’m sorry I didn’t turn my project in, but I’m feeling kind of lost no wait I meant to say I’m

totally lost I'm spiraling down I have no purpose I am helpless hopeless and still no good at math I'm pretty good at English though, I feel like you don't like me which makes it hell for me in your class you think I show no effort but really I try it's just hard to spend time on something you loathe, you know? I'm thinking of letting go." Penny counted 10 boxes behind her Teacher's head. Her Teacher glanced up at her standing there and Penny placed a Get Out of Jail (Temporarily) pass on her desk. She really couldn't take it anymore. At each new block of time that ended and began with bells ringing, she got a pass out of her cell, at least for a little while. Though it didn't cure the restlessness. She left the room. Constant or linear, constant or linear, constant or...

It's just a pain.



Girl on a Train; Milan, Italy by William Poe

Something Stronger

Rachel Heinhorst

I suppose I deserve applause
each time I approach the dumb walls
that raised me. The alcoholic
whose knees ran out of hair
to soften the carpet kicker blows,
the Catholic Italian daughter of a florist
whose rose stem hands, bleached and cracked,
never wanted to hold mine in public
places. These thin walls knew nothing of quiet
shelter or keeping out the cold. Their
all day noises and low lying drafts
had nothing to do with how I learned
to build something stronger.



Winter's End by Zachary Rosenfield

An Artist Heart

Carol Harvat

Relate not to past connections
No preconceived ideologies
No judgments
From past experiences.

Relate not one to past disappointments
To past disillusion or lies.

See a new soul on its own accord
With fresh eyes
No disguise
No motives, no notions.

Just a pure bleached blank sheet of paper
To create what you choose
With a color splattered pallet
Draw a just conclusion.

Contributor Notes

BRANDON AKSTETER is 18 and completing his freshman year at CSM working towards a degree in business administration/marketing.

PATRICK ALLEN is a professor at CSM and the chair of the Social Sciences, Human Services, and Teacher Education Division. His interest in poetry is to reflect on how simple events contain within them hints of what is profound and mysterious. Sometimes it's hard to say such things without laughing at the pretentiousness of such a statement. He states, "I don't know anything as ultimately true, but I like to think about it."

JUDITH ALLEN-LEVENTHAL teaches at the College of Southern Maryland in the Languages and Literature Division and lives in Southern Maryland.

DAVID H. BRANTLEY is a former English and communication professor, who now spends his days in Wilmington, North Carolina contemplating quilt patterns and enjoying a life free of grading essays.

JESSICA COOPERSTOCK is a student at CSM in her fourth semester. She enjoys photography in her spare time.

RICH FOLLETT has recently returned to writing poetry after a 30-year hiatus. He lives in the sacred and timeless Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, where he joyfully teaches English and theatre arts for high school students. His poems have appeared in numerous contemporary journals and e-zines including *BlazeVox*, *Paraphilia*, *Exercise Bowler*, *Calliope Nerve*, *Sugar Mule*, *Four Branches Press* and *Counterexample Poetics*, for which he is a featured artist. He is the author of *Silence, Inhabited—Poetic Reflections on Surviving Childhood Sexual Abuse* and co-author of *Responsorials* (with Constance Stadler), both for *NeoPoiesis Press*. In 2010, his haiku/photo combination, *Aurora's Adieu*, received first place honors in the first international iPoetry Poe-Tography Competition.

CINDY HARDMAN teaches English and is an alumnus of CSM. She enjoys poetry and music, playing handbells, sewing, and quiet conversations over dinner or coffee.

CAROL HARVAT observes people, culture and nature through poetic verse. In many works she takes a first person approach perceiving emotions of other people, and often uses personification. She has had careers in environmental writing and social work, and recently resigned after four years of writing for a local newspaper in order to pursue creative endeavors.

RACHEL HEINHORST is an adjunct faculty member at the College of Southern Maryland in the Languages and Literature Division.

ROBIN KARIS lives in Maryland and enjoys reading, photography, and writing. She also enjoys working on her family tree, in the hopes that she'll find a relative who lives in a land far, far away, who maybe has a castle she can visit.

KRISTA KEYES is an assistant professor of English in the Languages and Literature Division at CSM. She received her MA in English from the University of California, Davis in 2007.

WENDY KIBLER, an adjunct instructor in the Languages and Literature Division at the College of Southern Maryland, has read her poetry at various venues, including libraries, bookstores, coffee houses, and colleges. She has been a featured poet in Annapolis and Leonardtown. Her poem "ENG1020 Spring '09" received an honorable mention in the *Baltimore Review* annual poetry competition. Her publishing credits include *avatar*, *Bay Book News*, *Connections*, *Scribble*, and *Women-in-Poetry Anthology*. She has had the honor of studying under Lucille Clifton. Currently, she is working on a novel.

KAYLA KITTEL is being published for the first time in *Connections*.

JANE KLEMER arrived on the local scene in the mid-sixties, having migrated from a lifetime in the metropolitan New York/New Jersey area. After a brief experiment at apartment living, she bought her house in Fort Washington Forest and began perhaps two decades of employment at St. Elizabeths Hospital. After-hours were devoted to earning a master's degree in counseling psychology. During retirement, after 21 years, freelance writing became central to her life—articles published in national magazines, opportunities to meet and interview Pulitzer Prize winners, and a Nobel Prize recipient, several years as commodore of the Sailing Club of Washington, and additional time as editor of their monthly newsletter, opportunities to spend workdays aboard the vessels of oystermen, eelmen, etc. who labored on Chesapeake Bay—those times provided ongoing opportunity to indulge her interest and prowess in photography.

MARY BETH KLINGER is a professor of business and management at the College of Southern Maryland. She holds a PhD in organization and management, a master's in international management, and a master's in business administration. Her academic research interests are in the areas of knowledge management, international business, and entrepreneurship. Interests outside of academia include equestrian activities. Mary Beth currently rides and shows in dressage.

MICHELE LACROIX is a full-time professor of English at the Prince Frederick Campus, and a very part-time writer. She writes when the need comes over her, often finding inspiration from the human-animal connection.

MANDY LAMOUREUX is a 17-year-old senior at Great Mills High School and is currently enrolled in ENG-1020 at CSM.

LARRY O'BRIEN is a native of Washington, DC, whose family moved full-time to Southern Maryland when he was young. In high school, he was the editor of the Ryken school newspaper and graduated with a scholarship to Syracuse University for journalism. Larry has contributed poetry to *Connections* in the

past and also enjoys singing and playing acoustic guitar and bass guitar with The Rum Runners – a local classic rock band. He lives on St. George Island with his wife, Julie.

NIKKI ODIMBA Created to create, Nikki Odimba presently resides in Maryland and plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in psychology.

GINNY PHALEN is a CSM student studying digital media production.

JUDI POE is the mother of two lovely daughters. She has finally begun pursuing her interests in photography and writing and is an avid gardener.

WILLIAM POE is a published writer of poems and essays. He is also a published documentary photographer. His book, *African-Americans of Calvert County* was awarded the Calvert County Public Education Award in 2009. He is also the creator and host of *Voices of Calvert County*, a local cable program featuring vignettes of local African-American residents. He also produced the cinema verite-style documentary film, *The Life and Death of Sharecropper Enoch Tyler*.

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