

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND



Connections

Fall 2019 Literary Magazine

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# Connections

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND  
Fall 2019 Literary Magazine

volume 27 number 1



**Window**, *Michelle Brosco Christian*

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# Connections

*Connections* is published at the  
College of Southern Maryland in December and May.

*Opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect  
the official views of the College of Southern Maryland.*

*Please see the College of Southern Maryland web site  
for submission guidelines at:*

**[www.csmd.edu/Connections](http://www.csmd.edu/Connections)**

*The Connections Literary Series is sponsored by  
CSM's English, Communication, and Languages Division,  
and, in part, by the  
Arts Council of Calvert County,  
Charles County Arts Alliance,  
St. Mary's County Arts Council,  
and  
Maryland State Arts Council.*





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# Desert Dawning

*Kate Lassman*

The desert is never in a hurry,  
especially at night. Time floats  
like a yucca moth on the wind.  
The great rock forms grow cold,  
and the Milky Way watches,  
silent, over everything.

The desert moon cannot be rushed;  
dawn comes as it comes.  
In fact, the light transforms  
from soft and cool and silver-blue  
to reddened molten gold, so deftly  
that the finished change will startle.

On a pensive desert night, a lot of movement  
goes unseen—a scurry in the brush,  
a chirp that echoes off the canyon wall.  
If you cannot see, or have, or know  
beyond a campfire's meager range,  
it does not mean you never can or will.

---

# The Golden Years (Father-in-Law)

*Kimberley Donnelly*

He looks out the window  
again  
and again.  
“I thought they’d be here by now,”  
he tells Grandma.  
The minivan pulls up.  
Hugs all around.  
The grandson goes to the bathroom.  
The son goes to check the garden.  
The daughter-in-law starts unloading the van.  
Her backpack and purse are on the couch.  
A laptop is dropped on the kitchen table.  
The phone rings.  
The son’s friends know he is in town.  
Ribbons of anxiety unfurl.  
“Where is the grandson?”  
“What’s he doing?”  
“The garden is fine.”  
“You can’t put that in the trash.”  
“Who called?”  
“Who went in the basement?”  
“Why...?”  
“What...?”  
“You can’t...”  
Ribbons become banners.  
Banners become gags.  
90 minutes later...  
“We have to get going,” the daughter-in-law says.  
“You’re not leaving already,” he says.  
“We can’t be late for <<fill-in-the-blank>>,” she says.

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# The Golden Years (Daughter-in-Law)

*Kimberley Donnelly*

268 miles later...  
I'm brimming over  
with stories to tell.  
Things your grandson has done.  
Funny little moments.  
Life lived.  
Moments later...  
You are glad to see us, but  
Your anxiety expands to fill the space.  
My words bring you stress.  
My presence in your house  
upsets the delicate balance.  
I don't know the rules you live by.  
I intrude.  
Unintentionally.  
With the best of intentions.  
90 minutes later...  
"We have to get going," I say.  
"You're not leaving already," you say.  
"We can't be late for <<fill-in-the-blank>>," I say.  
Back in the car,  
I try to unravel my  
sadness and guilt  
and figure out what to do differently  
next time.



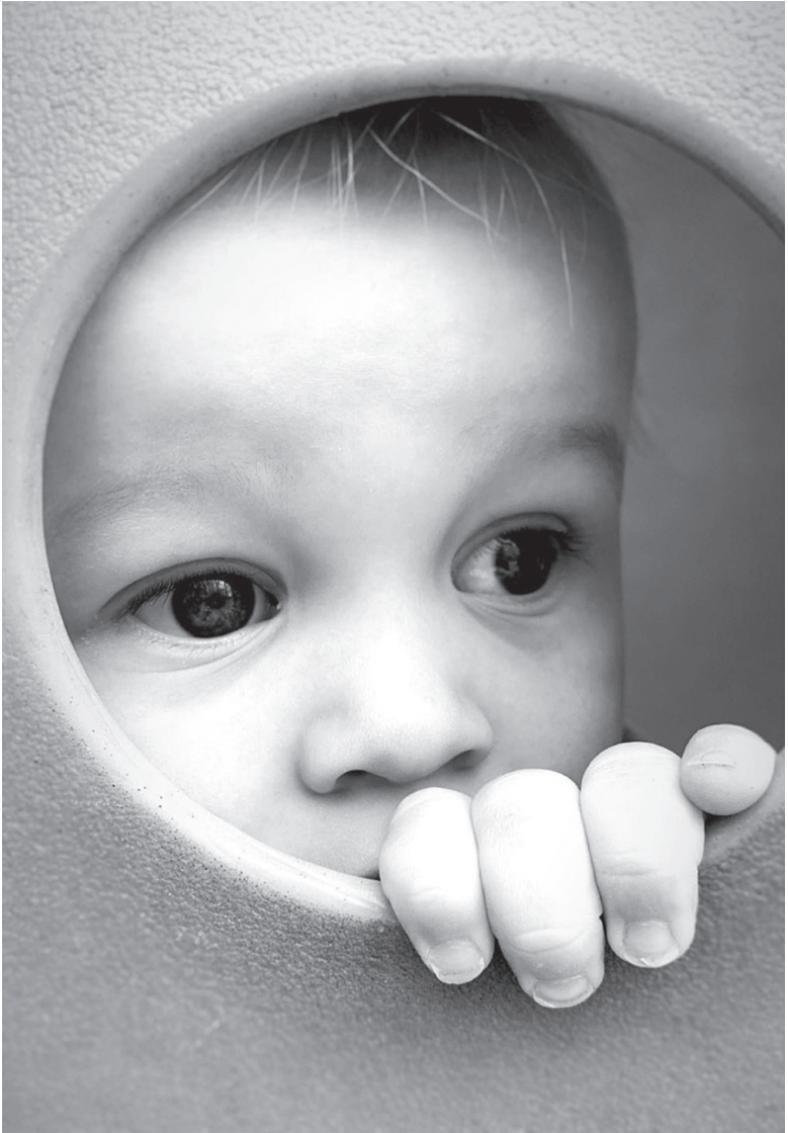
**Passing Storm, *Charles O. Gauthier***

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# Cosmos

*Raisa Lees*

Drink in the night from a crystal shot glass  
Would you like that on the rocks  
By the sea  
Or with a silver slice of lunar eclipse  
Sprinkle the stars around the outer ring  
And gaze into the intoxicating abyss



*Curiosity, Lena Hancock*

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## Over the Hills: Burn

*Dahlia Jackson*

I like to sit atop the hill that looks over the mountains where the flames burn into the trees. I lie back as I watch the air turn rotten and the ashes fill the sky. They say the weather will run cold before it'll reach us but it's the time where the leaves run yellow and red and orange, and the atmosphere is getting thicker with every blow the wind takes in this direction. Soon, it will reach us soon.

The cough of a thousand smokers fills the lungs of the weak, and the strong are fighting back with the power they don't have over mother nature's wrath.

Yet, I still sit atop this hill, without a care in the world. With the smoke in view and the mountains between the fire and me.

---

# Awakening

*Jennifer Polhemus*

The press of our bodies  
brings me back  
into the land of the living.  
I feel your belly  
swell against the  
numbness between my  
legs and I think  
that God just might  
love me.

How many burns  
and cuts  
brought this pain  
from inside to out?  
You trace the scars  
with the silk of your  
tongue or the delicate  
pulsing  
of solid fingers.

---

Take me away  
leave me alone  
save me  
support me  
let me suckle at your breast  
and fall in silence  
by your ear. Help me  
unravel this twisted  
mystery that throbs  
inside my chest. Let me stand,  
arms outstretched,  
on the palette of autumn  
and say  
*I am*  
*God's child.*



**My Ospreys, *Jim McDonald***

---

# Take Me

*Sherbie Kardinal*

Sometimes, I wonder if God lets people outlive their usefulness.  
That's how I feel. And I know I shouldn't say it.  
Especially with the grandchildren in the other room.  
But, I just can't help but feel this way.  
And, my eyes are failing. My hearing gone.  
I can't even see to sew anymore.  
Or quilt a blanket. My hands... they just don't.  
I can't make art. And that was the one thing, you know?  
I've had a good long life, and I feel like it's time.  
But, God doesn't want me.  
\*Sigh\*... even God doesn't want me.  
I just miss your grandpa, honey.  
It's been too long now.  
I can't even remember the last time I was touched.

---

# The Storm

*Heather Finstand*

A forecast, a prediction,  
Cloudy skies, no vision,  
In the mirror, reflection missing,  
Chance of rain, is a given,  
Heavy showers, loss of power,  
lights out, her darkest hour,  
hurricane here, louder & louder,  
Stuck on the inside, destructive outer.  
The devils grip, tighter around her  
a chaotic calmness, is where we found her,  
Deadly combination, or upper & downer.  
The center of madness, she's not sitting,  
In a puddle of blood, deep red crimson,  
pain loud as hell, she's not listening,  
eye of the storm, now her prison,  
no way out, burnt bridges  
Vicious cycle, constantly spinning  
Self-sabotage, cruel intention,  
Picked up where she left off, endless addition,  
Thought she was done, never finished  
no period at all, just a run-on sentence  
Haunting nightmares, became nonfiction  
a story to tell, words unwritten  
of what used to be, but now isn't  
riddled with guilt, emotions dripping  
open wounds, a soul deeply scarred  
Solid structure, of jail cell bars  
Solitary confinement, her own prison guard  
This storm she formed, so nobody sees  
Trapped inside herself, a sad tragedy  
If she escapes...will she really be free??



**Norway Fjords, *Ramona Weber***



*Untitled, Heather Christian*

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# Hunted

*Jordan McNew*

I take aim at a sudden sound, pointing the barrel of my pistol down at the furry face of a young fox. I pay the animal no heed as it continues on its way, passing beneath my tree, safe in its ignorance. At least I know my adaptive camouflage is functioning. Just in case, I check the readout again and confirm that it is, in fact, online.

Gunfire suddenly echoes through the woods and I whirl around to aim at a woodpecker hammering tenaciously at another oak tree. I flex my titanium fingers and try to calm myself. All of my sensors are in overdrive, picking up every single sound, and...

I whirl around again and nearly fall from the tree. What I thought was the sound of creaking metal joints was just the branches of the neighboring tree shifting in the wind. What am I doing?! I reset myself on my branch and close the lenses over my optics. I thought only humans could experience panic, but even now, with my vision gone, my code is sending alarm after alarm through my subsystems. I want to move, to leap out of this cursed tree and run, but... I open my "eyes" and slowly scan the forest around me. The thick green leaves obscure everything in the distance, while the trunks turn the forest floor into a striped mosaic of orange leaves and brown wood. He's watching.

I look down directly beneath me at the patchwork of orange and tan that is the leaf-covered forest floor. My chassis is made of titanium, a wonderful, but heavy metal. The sound of my feet crashing down on the leaves would be deafening in the quiet of the forest. I have to force myself not to react as I hear a faint

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clack behind me. It's just a squirrel. I know it's just a squirrel. I've heard it make that sound four times now. It clacks the nut against the tree again and again.

Suddenly, the noise is different, and I turn my gun's muzzle on the rodent. It had finally managed to crack the thing open and was about to indulge in the soft insides, when I rudely interrupted. It stands there like a statue now, only its little nose twitching, beady black eyes staring down the spinning scores in the barrel.

I can't handle this much longer. I'm like a cornered rat. I scan the forest again, but I still can't see him. I know he's there somewhere. The only reason he hasn't found me yet is this adaptive camouflage, but if I move too much too quickly... I check the system again. It's still working. The striped mosaic, brown wood against orange leaves, vertical lines evenly spaced like the bars of a cage.

Suddenly, I hear the crunch of leaves and take aim. I see black fabric, his cloak. My pistol rings out through the forest, and I watch in horror as a simple crow explodes into a ball of blood and feathers.

I move instantly, launching myself from the branch mere milliseconds after the shot. I only need three hundred milliseconds, less than one third of a second to be out of that spot. Two hundred too slow I realize, as I am suddenly swatted from the air by depleted thunder. The roar of the Anti-Materiel Rifle echoes through the trees as I crash through the splintering

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branches and crush my titanium bones on the stone-like dirt hiding beneath the orange carpet. Dead leaves puff into the air like the plunk of water sending droplets sailing into the low whistle of the wind. I can see the sky through the green of the leaves. I've never noticed how beautiful it was before, the little white wisps of cloud dancing in the blue. I must be malfunctioning. The sky is blocked by a steel face and a single green eye sticking out from under a black hood. He lifts up the sights of a pistol to his eye. I can see the rifling twisting down the barrel. I should be afraid, my survival code should be going into overdrive but... I'm not scared. Instead... Instead I feel oddly... Relieved.

---

# Upon your door

*Mary Ellen Bailor*

In your deepest hour  
no one will care,  
not a soul,  
when the banshee,  
comes wailing during the night.

Some may say, it is the owl that flew that morning,  
that foretold;  
another may tell you,  
the old father clock stopped ticking that evening;  
One might say to you; a lone white dove  
sat upon your roof.  
A rabbit hopped by your foot.

Truth be told.  
The crow; spoke, "Caw,"  
so waiting; we wait,  
how much longer to go?

That dog you heard before dawn  
Was he calling for your soul?  
That mirror that fell to the floor  
and cracked?  
The harmless, sweet ladybug that walked across your toe?  
What about that dream? You know?  
The one about that sweet little bunny?  
Tell me it is so, you had one. Please tell me so!

---

Do not worry,  
just don't forget,  
a banshee may decide to howl  
and that alone will  
let you know.  
Do tell, won't you please?

And please, I beg of you  
Watch out for that beautiful swallowtail  
you watched under the moon  
last night.

Is your spine sending chills down your back,  
it is no concern,  
it is just me walking across your grave,  
don't worry,  
just don't forget.

---

# DNA

*Joanne Van Wie*

I am the sheer length of the word,  
d i o x y r i b o n u c l e a i c a c i d,

the grasping nature of the double helix,  
coiled around itself and then another.

I am so many parts that are too small to see with the naked eye:

but how infinitesimal is a memory that can't be viewed through  
any lens?  
how colossal?

I've learned that radiation attacks the body's genetics by  
confusing the DNA,  
completely severing the double helix.

This cut, like the touch of a hand that shouldn't have been,  
fails to heal, becomes a swollen place.

We end up different people every time we hurt this completely.  
We replicate something like mutated cells.

I am still my own mind-blowing curvature,  
my own amazing length of 93,000,000 miles of DNA,  
but notice that tiny spot where you entered?  
where you left off?  
and how different it's made me.



**Round of Kisses, *Chaunte Garrett***



**Winter Cotton, *Robin Karis***

---

# The Drag

*Nicholas Ritter*

You always forget how aggressively left-handed you are until you have to drag the mouse and mouse-pad over to the functional side of your body. I'm used to the red marks left from oppressive right-handed scissors, but man—that drag. The drag sucks the most. The drag feels self-aware that it is a drag.

I wonder if the person at the computer after me looks at the position of the pad with affirmed disgust. “Why did some loser leave this here,” while they drag it back to its right place; It's like our own little game of tug of war. My own pen-stained palms struggling to plant a flag of world domination.



**Morning Dewdrops, *Amy Dieffenderfer***

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## O-at-ka

*James Burd Brewster*

O-at-ka stopped at the water's edge. He recognized the lake and knew he was two paddles and one portage away from his village. The portage that brought him here had been an easy one, less than a mile and reasonably flat. He liked portages with his canoe acting like a bonnet, the overturned hull concentrating and accentuating sounds, and his view focused by the sides and bow. He was a strong man, and the weight of the birchbark canoe on his shoulders did not bother him, even now.

He stood at the water's edge with the canoe framing the scene. He could see sand and water and trees on the far side, but no sky. He swung his gaze left and then right, the canoe swinging with him. Each time he stopped his swing, the canoe tugged at him to continue. There was no wind. The lake's surface was flat, smooth, and reflective. It reminded him of new ice at the beginning of winter before wind broke it and snow clouded it.

His people waited for the news he brought from the South. He had paddled and portaged to the Mohawk Longhouses to negotiate their territory and been successful. The Mohawks set Roch Reggio, at the end of the mountain cutting the Sea of the Iroquois in half, as their northern boundary. Natural boundaries—the Sea of the Iroquois to the East, Kaniatarowanenneh (the big waterway) to the North, the Adirondacks to the West—protected their Longhouses. Only the South invited invasion and now a treaty stopped that.

He shrugged and the canoe rolled off his shoulders to the right. O-at-ka stopped its descent with his hip and held it with both hands at waist height. He controlled the collapse of his

---

knees, easing the canoe to the ground. The “grch” of canoe disturbing gravel let him know it was safely down. He walked to the water’s edge, knelt down, and scooped a handful to drink. Ripples moved outward in a semi-circle, but were no match for the calm of the lake and soon died out.

He stood, released from the blinders of the canoe, and took in the entire tableau. The beauty stunned him, like it did every time he stood before a calm lake. Birch and pine intermingled on the far shore, the pine dwarfing the birch. The birch fought back, their white trunks dividing the green into vertical sections through which deer would walk. Smoke puffs clouds—same-sized, evenly spaced, in rows—came towards him as if walking on parallel trails. The bank on the far side was a precise horizontal line separating the view, top from bottom. The trees and clouds had twins in the water. If there had been a light breeze, the twins would have been fraternal, but these were identical. The reflections in the water seemed to dive down as deep as the sky was high. He knew he could not fly, but sometimes he wanted to dive down and see if he could go deep. It was also quiet, not a quiet of nature cowed and scared at his approach, but a quiet of peacefulness. His soul soared.

O-at-ka took in and exhaled a deep breath to calm himself. He took another breath, opened his mouth, and sang. He sang love to the Spirit—slowly, quietly, respectfully—for making such beauty. He sang love to the Spirit for giving him eyes and a mind to enjoy it. He raised his hands to the sky like a son seeking a hug from his mother. He raised his pitch, increase his volume, and sped up the tempo. He moved toe-heel, toe-heel and sang

---

gratitude to the Spirit for his safe trip and the new border. He sang gratitude to the Spirit for his people were safe. Then he danced turning right, because the wolf moved right. He bounced on the balls of his feet and sang as loud as he could. He sang thanks because it was a great time to be alive. He sang thanks for his family, for fish in the sea, and deer in the forests. He sang thanks for a Longhouse and canoe that didn't leak. He sang thanks for the crop and papoose that would arrive next year.

O-at-ka's song carried across the calm lake, echoed off the hillside, and returned to him. Hearing his echo, he stopped dancing and listened. He shouted and the echo shouted back. He shouted again and again it returned. Worship was over and now he was having fun. It was a good time to be alive.

O-at-ka picked up his canoe and placed it in the water. He apologized to the Spirit for disturbing the scene, stepped in, pushed off, and paddled on. He still had two paddles and one portage before he could deliver the good news.

---

# My vagina is a misogynist

*Dominique Wilson*

My vagina is a misogynist  
It has to be  
It allows me to call another black queen  
a black bitch way too freely  
It makes me feel inferior to men  
and never lets me forget that  
I am a woman  
gave birth to the patriarchy  
and is Ashamed to bleed  
And won't shut  
his damn lips  
My vagina is a misogynist



**Chesapeake Avenue and 2nd Street,  
North Beach, Maryland, *Gary Jameson***

---

# To Be an Owl

*Elizabeth Prather*

What would it feel like to be an owl?  
To soar through the black curtain of night  
And to fly to the moon?  
To sleep through the day  
And to wake at the night,  
Watching the ground for trespassers?  
To whoo, whoo, at the other birds' nests.  
To be free to go wherever you'd like best.  
The thought of that freedom is a wonderful thing –  
If only I had but just two wings!

To soar through the darkness,  
Wherever would be pleasing.  
To know the secrets of the night  
And the songs of the sleeping.  
The idea of that knowledge gives me a chill to the bone.  
Oh, what I would give to hear the tales being told!

What does it feel like to be an owl?  
With the wind against the soft feathers  
And the ground far below?  
With all the noise gone  
And the treetops so close,  
Feeling the thrill of adventure?  
With every night being different,  
Everything would be new.  
The thought of that freedom is a wonderful thing –  
If only I had but just two wings!



**Untitled, *Katie Hairston***

---

# I'm Not Your Fetish Toy

*Michelle Ginju Larkin*

My lips are not swollen  
savory silicone,  
my behind is not injected  
with trucks full of cement,  
and my breasts are not contained with  
plastic found along the oceans.

I'm not objected to cook dinner  
every night in padded lingerie,  
and six-inched stilettos that are laced  
up to the bruised knees.

I'm not objected to conceive crying children  
with a man  
who cheats on me continuously  
with his wedding ring on.

Don't expect me to have my hair  
constantly curled like a python,  
or my face beat  
every time you meet me either.  
Stop perceiving me like a prize.  
Stop determining my lifestyle like a doll.  
Stop telling me what  
and who  
I should be.



**Wilma Tiger Lilly Marble Cake, *Richard Taylor***

---

# Grandmother of the Bride

*Christopher Wilkins*

i.

Nice grapefruit in December,  
*osso buco* trimmed and bound,  
*la tua storia* recalling  
the sounds of a kitchen  
and a minstreling violin.

ii.

On the day your granddaughter  
wed, your eyes smiled to hers  
from grey chiffon and untouched gardenias  
at the end of a nave, a long white  
aisle by shining brass screens.

iii.

The groom, the priest, the altar  
awaited the one you cradled. Tears  
welled again when she cradled sons.

---

iv.

Afghanistan, Helmand, IED,  
a captain's grave, shots fired  
*in memoriam*, a flag folded,  
a young widow holds your arm.

v.

On the day she wed again, your eyes  
smiled from gardenias and chiffon,  
held great-grandsons, fresh tears.

---

# Tire Swing

*Rachel Smith*

To sleep with windows open,  
mornings bring birdsong  
seemingly distant,  
enough to allow us to wake  
softly, to at least once or twice  
acknowledge what is waking  
with us

but to swing with branch and tire,  
with four or five birds fluttering  
and gabbing at the breeze,  
is a crisp awakening,  
a tune-in production  
of translating the music  
to word language,  
like wisdom  
finally understood.



**Ancient Web, Sarah O'Grady**

---

# A Quarter Past Midnight

*Hector Lopez-Lucero*

When I received the news, I was ecstatic. I was joyful beyond all belief. Sadly, though, I was alone in my emotions. Everyone, from my mother, may she rest in peace, to my sweet father, who always sought the silver lining, considered my circumstance an impediment to my happiness. It was not the situation itself that they scorned, but with whom I so happened to get myself involved with. Both family and friends have spent countless hours and late-night patio conversations attempting to have me see just how miserable I truly was and how much happier I could make myself. I did not see until then just how correct they were in their observations.

I told him as soon as he got home from work at night. He was always working and sometimes even stayed into the late evening to finish up important reports. As he was getting undressed in the bedroom, I said, “Honey, I went to the doctor’s office today.”

He did not so much as give a glance in my direction and said with such contempt, “So?”

“Well, she said the results were positive,” I said with such false joy because I already had a general idea of what his response was going to be.

“Wonderful,” he said in such a sarcastic tone that I imagined myself backhanding him and demanding him to treat me with the dignity and respect that I, his wife, deserved.

But, of course, that was not how I responded. Instead, I did the exact opposite. I bowed my head and began sobbing.

---

“Why are you always crying?!” He yelled. He hated when I cried and argued that I cried at the simplest and most ridiculous things. He attributed it to what he refers to as the “nature of women.”

“I just thought you would be even a little happy for us,” I replied as I brushed the tears from my cheeks.

“Oh, don’t worry sweetie,” he began, “I’ll be filled with overwhelming joy once we find out that it’s a boy.”

“How could...” I started to say, but he cut me off.

“Look, I am extremely tired and do not have time for this nonsense,” he said, “I am going to shower and go to bed so do not bother me any more tonight.”

I should have been appalled at what he had just said. But, sadly, I have heard such disparaging remarks about women from him many times before. I tried to recall a time when he was not degrading. He was much different when I met him my senior year in college. At the time, he was the most charming and most intelligent man I had ever met. He was the editor of our college newspaper, president of the SGA, and captain of the chess team. But he was harboring some sentiments that I would not discover until he had already proposed to me soon after graduation. By that time, I would already be blinded by his good looks and tricked into thinking that he was my soulmate.

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The following morning, I attempted to strike up the topic again, but I was shut down because he was in a rush to get to work. He always tried to beat the morning rush. So, instead, I sat in the dining room alone with my thoughts and contemplated my future—our future.

Days and weeks went by and the same routine played out. I would try to converse, but he would not listen. He always had an excuse. Then, suddenly, he started to stay at work late more often. I could not help but think that this was how the rest of my life was going to be. It was in those lonely moments in the dining room when I glanced over to see empty seats at the table that I realized what I had to do to save the only relationship that truly mattered. As I lay in the ultrasound room a few weeks later, I was already determined to salvage our future, no matter the outcome.

“Hello, how are we today?” the technician greeted me as he walked in.

“Well, I am a little worried,” I began to reply.

“No need to worry. This is simple and non-invasive and you will not feel any discomfort,” he replied with such genuine concern for my perceived anxiousness.

I responded, “No, it is just that over the last several weeks my belly has been growing immensely as if there is a human developing inside.”

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At first, he was a bit taken aback by my comment but then figured it out and let out a laugh. I did as well. It was the first time in a long time that I experienced laughter and joy.

As we began the ultrasound, I closed my eyes and focused on that sweet and lovely sound—a baby’s heartbeat. My baby’s heartbeat. I could not help but cry from extreme joy. If he were there he would have glared at me for crying yet again.

My thoughts were interrupted by the technician’s voice. He asked, “Are you ready to know the sex?”

Without hesitation, I exclaimed with utter joy, “Yes!”

“Well, I’m sure you’ll be immensely happy to know that you are expecting...” his words and voice faded away as he told me. I could not believe it. It was in that moment that my future with my husband was determined.

Later that night, I stayed up and waited up for him. He arrived extremely late that night. It was a quarter past midnight when he arrived. As he came into the bedroom to get undressed, he did not notice me sitting up on the bed. I noticed some unusual marks on his neck and collar but I did not give it any mind for I was too busy gathering my thoughts. “Why are you late?” I asked.

Startled by me, he replied, “What’s it to you?”

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“What kind of husband leaves his expecting wife alone all night on Mother’s Day,” I rose out of bed and started approaching him and that’s when I noticed. “You did not even have the decency to notify me of how late you were expecting to be. Is your work truly more important than your family?”

“Well, if I don’t work who will, you?” he said, scoffing.

“Work?” I questioned, “Is that what they are calling affairs now, work?”

“Stay in your lane, woman!” he shouted. “I will not be insulted in my own home.”

“Screw your home and screw you!” I yelled back, adding, “I want a divorce!”

“The hell you do! You are pregnant with my child and I’ll be damned...”

I could not believe it. Here was this patronizing cheater trying to dictate my life as if he had any moral ground to stand on. “You can forget about me as your wife as of this very instant,” I said with immense satisfaction. “I’ve already packed what I need.”

As I was outside, heading down the last step, he grabbed my arm forcefully and attempted to pull me towards him, but instead, he made me lose my footing, and I fell to the ground. One of the neighbors, who was outside at that ungodly hour waiting on her dogs to relieve themselves, witnessed the whole ordeal.

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“I’m so sorry,” he said as if it were not too late to apologize.

“No, not yet,” I muttered. “But, you will be.”

The neighbor rushed to my aid, with her dogs barking, and threatened to call the cops if he did not leave me alone. The loud barks woke up half the neighborhood and people began to peer out their windows in curiosity. Feeling helpless, he resorted to insults directed at both of us. It did not matter for I had already made it to the car and felt safer as I pulled out of the driveway. But, I was also beside myself because I fell hard and could not help but think that maybe he had terminated what I so dearly loved. I cried the entire drive to my parent’s home.

I saw my doctor as soon as I could, but the hours I spent in uncertainty seemed endless. To me, it seemed as if the world kept spinning, but I was stuck in this purgatory of extreme dread, expecting the worst. I pleaded to a God that I had not spoken to in years to take me as well for that was better than the alternative of living alone. But, all those thoughts and fears vanished as soon as I was told by the doctor that everything was fine. I was elated.

I filed for divorce on the grounds of being a victim of domestic violence. I had witnesses and bruise marks to back up my claims. He had nothing. It’s not like he would ask his lovers to give character statements on his behalf. The ensuing criminal and civil trials were hell. But, in the end, I got the house, child support, and a restraining order. He got probation and some hefty fines. While I was furious that he was not put away, I took solace in knowing that they would indeed do so if he ever came near me again.

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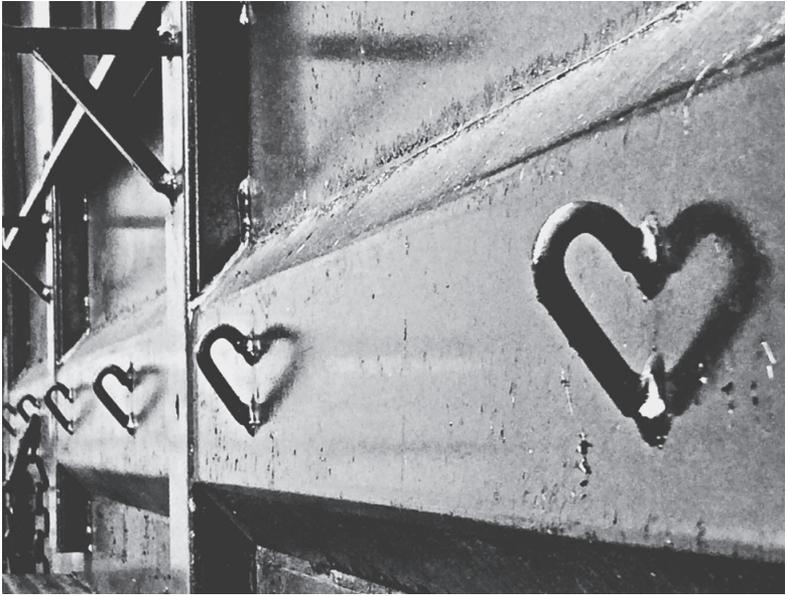
I tell you this story now, my lovely daughters, on the occasion of your 16th birthday, because you are old enough, I believe, to understand the circumstances of my relationship with your father. I wish I never had to distance you from him, but I could not bear the thought of him mistreating my sweet and beautiful twin daughters as he did me, as I stood idly by. I would have welcomed death before I let that happen. So, as you bloom into the fine young ladies that I know you will be, take my life lessons and make them your own. When searching for love, care not for material things and aesthetics, but put a premium on true love and companionship. Only then will you be happy. But remember this, no one can love you as much as I do.

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# I See

*Cedrick Hawkins*

I see a world of people full of fear.  
I see the wise being silent.  
I see the fools being spoken.  
I see the pain on people's face.  
I see the weight on people's backs.  
I see the pressure in people's hearts.  
I see the rich live poor.  
I see the poor dream about being rich.  
I see the happy be neglected.  
I see the sadness be reflected.  
I see people's ego desperately be protected.  
I see opportunity bang on empty doors.  
I see the innocent become... not so innocent anymore.  
I see all things.  
All the things my eyes can see, what we call real.  
Above and beyond all things that I see,  
I see, because I feel.



**Hearts Illusion, *Diane Payne***

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## Contributors

**MARY ELLEN BAILOR** studied arts and humanities under the Sisters of Mercy for numerous years at Mount Aloysius College before attending the College of Southern Maryland as a communication major. She currently is the manager of Del Ray School of Music and a swim instructor for Arlington County Department of Parks and Rec.

**JAMES BURD BREWSTER** is a musician, actor, writer, Christian, father, and husband. He authored the *Uncle Rocky, Fireman; Officer Jack;* and *EMT Morales* series of children's picture books. Jim's first publishing success was in 2012 when "The Start" was selected to be included in the *Connections* fall issue. Jim learned to walk in Albany, sail on Lake Champlain, and navigate a polar icebreaker in the Coast Guard. He and Katie raised five children and live in Pomfret, Maryland.

**HEATHER CHRISTIAN** is presently a CSM student and has been published before in *Connections*. Her hobbies include writing, painting, and photography.

**MICHELLE BROSCO CHRISTIAN** teaches communication at CSM's Leonardtown Campus. She has been practicing photography since her college days and early work days as a community journalist. Her window photograph was taken from a Scottish manor house on the Isle of Skye during a CSM Travel Study trip in June 2019.

**AMY DIEFFENDERFER** is a student at the College of Southern Maryland. She is a freelance photographer and dabbles in it in her free time. It may become a bigger career someday, but right now it's simply a hobby.

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**KIMBERLEY DONNELLY** is a professor at CSM, teaching developmental reading and writing.

**HEATHER FINSTAND** is a mother with a slow, shy smile. She is fiercely dedicated to her family as you can see from her poems. She is a supportive friend. Heather would want you to know that her crimes, addiction, and time at a detention center have taught her a lot about who she wants to be and how to get on the right path.

**CHAUNTE GARRETT** is a student and employee of CSM. Her major is graphic design and has earned a certificate in graphic design.

**KATIE HAIRSTON** is a student at CSM majoring in practical nursing and working on her arts and science associate degree. One of her favorite hobbies is photography. She first became interested in high school when she took photography. Katie was able to work in a dark room, loading and developing film. She has taken photos for a baby shower, wedding engagement, and pregnancy shoot. Also, the Hilton Garden Inn Time Square used one of her photos on the their Instagram page.

**CEDRICK HAWKINS** is 19 years old and is working on his associate of science degree at CSM. He plans on earning a bachelor's degree in education and aspires to be an English teacher. The poem that he wrote was inspired by how he believes our world currently is today, where everyone is different, based on class, race, gender, sexuality, and talents. His poem, from his

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perspective, is how he views the different people in our society and believes that respect, patience, and love is what can unite this world some day.

**LENA HANCOCK** is the assistant director of Marketing Operations at the College of Southern Maryland (CSM). She considers herself an amateur “iPhonetographer” and enjoys taking pictures of her two children as well as sunsets on her farm.

**DAHLIA JACKSON** is a CSM student who likes to write sometimes.

**GARY JAMESON** is an adjunct instructor teaching studio art and art history at the College of Southern Maryland.

**SHERBIE KARDINAL** is a local photojournalist, barefoot mural designer, picker of wildflowers, and overall seeker of silver-linings. Her greatest joys are snuggling with her family, engaging her community, and serving as a missionary overseas.

**ROBIN KARIS** lives in Maryland and enjoys writing, photography, and music.

**MICHELLE GINJU LARKIN** is a current student at the College of Southern Maryland. This will be her last semester, as she will obtain her associate’s degree in January 2020, and then proceed to continue her education at University of Maryland, College Park. From there, Michelle plans to study English and journalism, to pursue her dreams of becoming a writer and

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political-heavy journalist. She has always enjoyed writing poetry ever since her father passed away which has been a way of internally escaping reality and has served as a healthy way of coping with the inconveniences that happen in her life. She credits two of her CSM professors who really inspired her to use her beloved skill for the greater—her sociology professor and poetry professor. Her poetry tends to be deemed as more controversial and political, but the themes send a strong agenda about America. Also, she feels like a lot of mainstream poetry currently is boring and doesn't reach a higher audience.

**KATE LASSMAN** is an adjunct instructor of English composition at the CSM La Plata campus. She holds an MFA in poetry from George Mason University and lives in Waldorf with her husband and four spoiled rotten felines named Hope, Joy, Grace, and Zany.

**RAISA LEES** is a sophomore at Great Mills high school who loves poetry, writing, and music.

**HECTOR LOPEZ-LUCERO** is an alumn of the College of Southern Maryland who received an AA in arts and sciences in Fall 2017. The following semester, Hector enrolled at the University of Maryland, College Park, studying environmental engineering and minoring in sustainability studies. Hector enjoys hiking near the water in Southern Maryland or up the mountains in Western Maryland. In the future, Hector hopes to have a career that can have a positive impact on rural populations that don't have access to important resources or maybe go to

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graduate school and become a researcher to give others the tools to help others. Hector credits Professor Rachel Heinhorst's Women Writer's course (ENG-2250) which provides guidance to becoming a good writer.

**JIM McDONALD** is "The Houseboat Poet" and has been a Southern Maryland resident since 1965. He has been drink and drug free since 1989. In 2014, he returned to College of Southern Maryland to earn an English degree. He lives in Port Tobacco and is finally fulfilling a long-standing dream of becoming a poet and writer.

**JORDAN McNEW** is a simple man from Annapolis and youth leader in his local church. He has, of course, come down to the South for the culture and marginally lower taxes. He is proud to display this, his first ever published work, assuming that it made the cut, which, it did, of course, if you're reading this and commenting to yourself about his excessive use of commas.

**SARAH O'GRADY** is a current art student and an active member of several on-campus clubs here at CSM. She is the vice president and treasurer of the English Club and works as the art lab assistant in the Fine Arts Center on the La Plata Campus. Painting, drawing, and writing poetry are areas of the arts that she is particularly interested in.

**DIANE PAYNE** is a full-time mail operations electronic support technician for the Marketing Department at CSM. She is also a photography assistant for the Government Relations and Public Information Office.

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**JENNIFER POLHEMUS** lives in Pennsylvania’s Cumberland Valley. She celebrated her 50th birthday with an eyebrow piercing, faery tattoo, and a swath of bright pink through her short and sensible brown hair. Now, two years later, she’s not much more “age appropriate.” Jennifer’s fourth collection of poetry, *Balloons: And Other Things That Float*, was released in February 2018; one of its poems, “Almost Spring,” was nominated by her publisher for The Pushcart Prize. She didn’t win, but it was exciting to be nominated—again!

**ELIZABETH PRATHER** graduated from the College of Southern Maryland in May 2019 with degrees in criminal justice and arts and sciences. She is currently studying psychology at St. Mary’s College of Maryland.

**NICHOLAS RITTER** is a sophomore at CSM currently in her fourth and final semester. She is pursuing a degree in English.

**RACHEL SMITH** is a CSM Professor who believes poetry to be a treasure that lifts up the value of life in a pure and beautiful way.

**RICHARD TAYLOR** is a full-time mail courier for Mail, Distribution, and Fulfillment Services in the Marketing Department at CSM.

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**JOANNE VAN WIE** is a poet who is originally from upstate New York. She holds a degree in design and architecture and currently enjoys homeschooling her children. Presently, she has one published chapbook, *Surfaces, Edges, and Openings*, through Foot Hills Press.

**RAMONA WEBER** currently works at CSM as the Associate to Bachelor's Degree in Nursing coordinator. She enjoys traveling and capturing beauty around the world with her camera. Mona is amazed that no matter how far away you travel from home a smile will always open doors to great experiences. As they say, those who wander are not always lost. Mona will always be a tourist with a camera in hand, seeking out new things no matter where she lives.

**CHRISTOPHER WILKINS** has taught English at CSM since 2008, and serves as the priest at St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Brandywine, Maryland. He lives in Laurel, Maryland, with his family, library, and cats.

**DOMINIQUE WILSON** is a teacher who works in Prince George's County. She is a black trans woman.

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