

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND

Featuring New Work by Poet Alan King

Connections

Fall 2018
Literary Magazine

Connections

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND
Fall 2018 Literary Magazine
volume 26 number 1



Rope by *Michelle Christian*

EDITOR

Neal Dwyer

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Sonia Fernandez, Rachel Heinhorst, Krista Keyes,
John Kulikowski, David Phalen, and Diana Sydnor

EDITING ASSISTANCE

Cara Fogarty

PRODUCTION AND DESIGN

Brenda Jones and Katherine Reyes

Table of Contents

POETRY

Lessons, <i>Raisa Lees</i>	6
truth or consequences in Wichita, <i>Randolph Bridgeman</i>	8
Infinity Mirrors, <i>Jennifer Polhemus</i>	11
American Racism, <i>Patrick Allen</i>	30
Wajd, <i>Christopher Wilkins</i>	33
Run, Hide, <i>Sherbie Kardinal</i>	39
Love-things, <i>Joanne Van Wie</i>	41
October Leaves, <i>Kate Lassman</i>	42
Blue Beta, <i>Michele LaCroix</i>	48
Another High Shool, <i>Judy Angelheart</i>	49

CONNECTIONS FEATURES

A Collection of Poems from Students in Women Writers, ENG-2250.....	13
Two New Poems by Alan King.....	26

PROSE

Better Now, <i>Thomas Donahue</i>	24
Trout Heaven, <i>Stephen Michael Berberich</i>	35
Pete and Petey—Tire Swing, <i>James Burd Brewster</i>	44

PHOTOGRAPHY

Rope, <i>Michelle Christian</i>	cover
A Day in the Garden, <i>Heather Christian</i>	5
Ladder, <i>Liane Beckley</i>	10
Hidden Beauty, <i>Diane Payne</i>	12
Dew Drops, <i>Brooke Gatton</i>	23
High Desert, <i>Paul Toscano</i>	29
Distortions, <i>Iqura Rehman</i>	31
The Lovely Sisters, <i>Chaunte Garrett</i>	32
Succession to the Throne, <i>Angela Mroz</i>	34
Light Through the Wall, <i>Melissa Braun</i>	38
Winter Trax, <i>Richard Taylor</i>	40
Profiling, <i>Robin Karis</i>	43
Katy at Grandpa's Grave, <i>Donna Sperry</i>	50

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

*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.*





A Day in the Garden by Heather Christian

Lessons

Raisa Lees

Oh, don't you remember
You know
We've been here before.
When the summers
Of our childhoods
Seemed endless
And these stories were our lore.
Remember when the
Lessons they taught us
Became embedded into our skulls.
Writhing,
Etching words into thoughts
Like graffiti,
Painted in colorful spray cans
On the white and black walls
Of chalk boards
And unmoving boxcars,
On the blank slates of dead windows
And the cold, unforgiving cement walls.
Unlike the lessons our mothers told us
Written in knives,

Carved
In the back of our minds.
First on young trees
Planted in symmetrical lines
To be harvested.
Drawn
In endless beaches of sand
To be washed away by tsunamis.
Sculpted
From the dirt, mud on the ground
Trampled, by the stampedes
Of Ambulances, and Fire Engines;
Ineffectively dousing water
On a burning city.
Now our heads are empty,
Only our hearts,
Are full.

truth or consequences in Wichita

Randolph Bridgeman

on the weekends my father had
visitation rights he was always looking
for someplace to burn off a hangover
he told me to wait in the car while he
stopped off to have a beer in Baldies Bar
it was 102 degrees in the shade
i grabbed the ball on the steering wheel
and imagine i am driving with
the window down in a white t shirt
and jeans cuffed at my cowboy boots
my mother pushed up close
in the seat beside me
i turn on the radio and pushed
the metal buttons going between
the sad song country stations she'd
drink herself to sleep to
he'd leave me alone out there for hours
now days he would be arrested
sometimes we'd just sit in the parking lot
at the Save A Penny liquor store
at the corner of Brownsville and 9th
he'd be drinking brownbag beer
and me a Fanta orange pop while
we smoked roll your owns
and watched the losers coming
and going

what i remember of my mother
is her spit wet hands slicking down
my cowlick before sending me out
the door to my dad
those hands that folded twilight
into paper airplanes that made
nights fly by
and how when she told me that i
was just like my father it was not
in a good way



Ladder by *Liane Beckley*

Infinity Mirrors

Jennifer Polhemus

I sit with residents of nursing homes
while they die.

When either no one is coming
or someone is too far away
to make it in time.

That's when I am called.

The abider.

A first responder to life's last act
after decades of sifting through shifting colors,
fractals of divine proportions
floating beneath the surface of chaos,
turning just enough to recognize
the shimmer of a form or face.

They breathe out to me.

I breathe them in.

They breathe out.

I breathe in.

There is no moment of death,
only moments of resignation...
relief...release...abandon.

Until they are dust
or until they are ashes

life is at work
breaking down
breaking down
breaking up
caving in

to caress bones and secrets,
until they find out what awaits,
perfectly patient,
on the other side of the kaleidoscope.



Hidden Beauty by *Diane Payne*

Connections Feature

“The following nine poems were written by students in my Women Writers class. We journal for the first six minutes of each class meeting. Some of the poems began as journal entries and blossomed into poems after our journal workshop day. This creative and personal experience with my students will be the highlight of my semester; so much fun, and so much wisdom.”

—Rachel Heinhorst

a small poem by me

Elaine Batty

In morning fog
the songbirds' chorus
rattles my bones –
and the sun is beginning to shine brighter.
I am enjoying my own company,
finding peace.

Heart of the Sea, Eye of the Storm: Love is Blindness

Dahlia Jackson

You come aboard

Waves crash against the shore.
Winds ablaze full force.
The ocean rattles.

Oh how you rock my boat

With your love on deck, I'm in for a shipwreck.

The sky cries for me to retreat,
But I am too dazed by you.

Oh Captain, My Captain
Steer me to the rocks, with your steady hands.

Letting go, my compass.
You dive in,
Arms embracing the current.

Call out for me to, and I'll go over for you.

‘Sail away with me’ you whisper

Beauty and danger awaits,
I am caught in the eye of you.

Lungs fill and breath fades.
I tread no more.
I am drowning in your tide.

Deeper I’d sink, but survival pulls me afloat.
Light pierces the sea.
In the distance, a horizon is near.
The drift of wood guides me ashore.

Land is under me, but I am not safe.
There is no escaping your waters.

You are the sand and the bay where I lay.
And the sun’s ray that warms my face.

You lead, I follow.

In Due Time

Camille Harris

There seems to be this really large lump in my life.
Like that which causes cancer, or one that
could possibly bring life. I find it hard to decipher
just which kind of lump it is... I hear over
and over, time heals all things, and as of right now
that seems the only solution. I can't help
but wonder, as time goes on, will I become weak and frail
and have to face this dreadful fate ...
or, over the next few months, will I blossom and
enlarge with so much

Life

that I begin to feel a purpose unexpected.
Life has a funny way of taking left turns and making
things go back right.

Sisters

Megan A. C. Ellis

Someone asks, “When are you going to have children?
Five years of marriage, isn’t it about time?”

I say I have raised them –

One has two lovely children, 7 and 9,
I love being called Auntie even if I don’t see them all the time.

One is overseas teaching in Kanji,
I taught her how to drive; might have been illegally.

One just got her GED.
I bribed her with cookies to call me mommy.

Someone says, “You have grown children already?
Aren’t you only 30?”

I say, my mother left it to me.
My mother left me her children – my sisters –

I did my time.
Now it’s my turn to relax and enjoy the sunshine.

Shameful Relaxation

Karly Wiley

In bed, my knees point
toward the popcorn ceiling,
my head is supported
by a bamboo pillow
and my hands rest
on my unfastened stomach.

The window fan has been moved
to the foot of the bed.
The cool air weaves through
my curled toes,
my mind is blank,
but I can't relax.

I feel the weight of my body shift
and the force of gravity pulls
the mass of my thighs.

My hands unbuckle
and I paw at the fat on my legs.

My mind now full of shame
as my fingers find divots
of dimples and stretch marks.

Flags

Jeanne-Marie Tchoumak

Eating sherbet and holding my thoughts,
I taste you like regret on my lips
Your voice and the warmth of the beach
feel like sandpaper to my skin
You compliment my vintage, pink sunglasses
I smile

red flags look like flags
when I wear rose-colored glasses, baby.

Minute Morning

Joseph Sanchez

Time

The clock alarms at 6:30 A.M.

The jagged, sharp, relentless, blaring noise awakens me

Thirty minutes till the day begins

Sleep still in my eyes

I crawl out of bed to start the daily routine

Breakfast, twenty minutes left

Dressing, fifteen minutes left

Brushing my teeth, ten minutes left

The time for my commute arrives, zero minutes left

I work nine hours and the day repeats

The clock alarms at 6:30 A.M.

Mid-Winter

John Murry

Cold breeze on this mid-winter night,
I am grasped by the warmth of your teddy bear clutch –
You swept me off my feet with a gentle squeeze,
Embracing me with your love.

Beneath me,
I feel the throbbing from your heart –
My waist fits into the puzzle between your hands –
A feeling I have never felt before.

Morning Song

Rachel Heinhorst

I wanted to wear earrings,
feel accessorized
and female – but my body
had a different plan.

Period, bled the sheet,
stripped the bed,
took 3 Advil –

Swollen and bent,
I no longer thought of pretty
or shining or smiling –

No. My plan for this morning
to love my pierced ears
took a turn toward tampons
for my purse –



Dew Drops by Brooke Gatton

Better Now

Thomas Donahue

I can't stop eating all this butter! It's just so goddamned tasty! I munch on stick after stick; the cool salty slabs of fat slide so seamlessly past my lips and down my throat. I had just been so hungry, carrying a craving that needed to be satisfied. I had a real hankerin' for butter, so bad that I went straight to the Shop-n-Save on the corner and bought as much as I could carry. I didn't even wait until I had actually purchased it before I began unwrapping and sucking on a succulent stick and held on to the wrappers to scan at the register—I know, I know, those types of people are the worst. The ones who hand the cashier an empty bag of chips or a greasy ball of butter wrappers to scan. It just always seemed so trashy to me, yet here I am, profusely apologizing to a shocked teenage boy at the register for not thoroughly licking the wrappers clean before handing them to him.

What can I say? I was hungry for churned dairy solidified into block form. Disclaimer: I don't actually know how butter is made; just that I love it. If you're hungry, no—if you need something, shouldn't you fulfill that need? Like all the needs in your life? I fulfilled my need, and now I feel better. I feel butter. Butter—better—butter—better—butter—better—what fun! The two just go hand in hand! Or butter-in-hand. Butter. Better. They slide off of one another so well. Like melted butter, right?

MM. Oh yeah. Right. That's how it goes. It's all part of life, baby. Butter—butter-baby—ooh, just maybe. That's life. That's what happens when you eat so much butter and have so much butter—more butter than you could ever know what to do with! You just eat and eat and begin to screw yourself with all that leftover butter. That's how you get a butter-baby. The real circle of life that I'm willing to commit to.

God, I love butter! And butter loves me, to the best of its ability. I know it. I can taste its love. Butter loves me, for sure. It tastes so good, for me. It loves me, for me. It never tells me that the spark is gone, or that our relationship is falling apart, or that I've "changed too much as a person." Whatever that's supposed to mean. I've been me. Got an itch? —scratch it. That's just how we work. Got a need? —fulfill it. That's been me since day one, that's just how it is. I'm always me, the world is always the world, and butter is always butter. And butter is always better.

Connections Feature

new work by Poet Alan King

In your dream,

You bob your father's jab before
your right hook drops him. Before you trip him up
when he runs for his gun – the one he said
he'd blow you away with if you ever hit him.

You hit him again after taking a knee,
nursing a hatred you once pushed away
like the beer he let you sip before you gagged.

You remember him laughing and saying
it's an acquired taste. At 12, you knew
you'd never learn to love something so disgusting.

But every embarrassment was a forced sip
with your father there, laughing –
like that camping trip with your cousins.

He called you a retard
for pouring him hot Coke and
threatened to throw it on you
when you said he didn't ask for ice.

That smart mouth stoked his desire
to knock you down and pound your chest
when you try to get up.

Wasn't he Cronus attempting to
keep you from besting him,
how he plays down
your accomplishments?

He has an appraiser's eye
for spotting the worst in everything –
like the party you and your wife hosted:
your home full of good food and friends,
everyone fed and happy

except your father, who complained about
your wife's shorts being too short;
how it was inappropriate she bent
at the waist instead of at the knees.

He complained about your barking dog
outside, complained about the house you bought
without consulting him,
the house that drove him to stop
talking to you for six months.

He'd keep you from getting up
if he could. That's what he told your brother,
that's how you know this.

But this is your dream, the one where
you watch a childhood bully cower –
that moment filling you with
a twisted type of triumph.

That's how Zeus must've felt
surviving his father's appetite
and jailing him to the underworld.

Which is where your father fell,
so far from Grace he squints
when he looks up at you.

Persistence

A poet tells another, God won't give us
what we can't handle. Which is why, he claims,
he's not famous. Why he's scrambling for gigs.

You know that hustle – how the desire to be known
and celebrated drives an eager artist like a born-again
peddling religion door-to-door.

You remember the brotha outside Target,
the one slinging church postcards
determined to stack his crowns in heaven –
one for each soul he brings to salvation,

which, for you, is a peaceful place below
the sky of your insecurities.

Where your wife wishes you would go instead
of venting about being unknown – the leaf tendrils
of Envy climbing you like a trellis.

And there's your wife, constant gardener
tending to the plot of you, where
Pride – that incessant weed – threatens
to stifle your growth.

The poet's friend tells him his hustle
is part of life's long lesson in Humility –
that giant church, where Gratitude and
Happiness announce the Holy Spirit,

and the sermon's a constant reminder
that despite how far you travel, you always
fall short of your potential.



High Desert by *Paul Toscano*

American Racism

**We may be blinded by our culture,
but we are not oblivious**

Patrick Allen

I

Fish have no reason to question water.

It is there, was there, always will be there as far as it
knows.

What can it know beyond the Is-ness of what is?

And yet it responds to the currents and eddies of the
water's flow;

It swims away from the too hot or too cold;

It avoids the Red Tide that blooms in the bay each
Summer.

II

How can you claim you did not know;

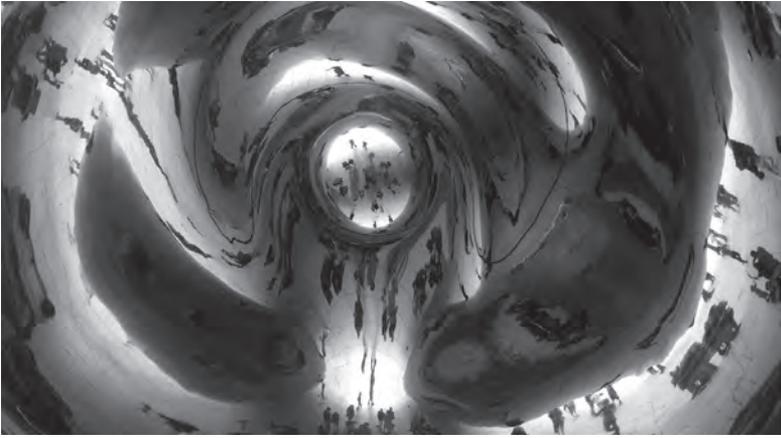
Did not feel a disquiet at each reported death.

Did not think beyond a moment about those
who shouted and screamed?

You walk in your privilege

Averting your blinkered eyes from what you willed to
not see

As Baltimore burned.



Distortions by *Iqura Rehman*



The Lovely Sisters by *Chaunte Garrett*

Wajd *

Christopher Wilkins

Begin with trees, and let them dance.
Watch them rise in air, branch and leaf,
 lightning and fire. Begin, if you like,
 with a fire-and-smoke dance in mid-air.
Either way, a crown expanding.
Wood lives, or once did; it burns or remains
 as table, statue, stave, barn, yoke, or roof-beam.
Alive, it can flower. Dead,
 it can build, or rot, or burn.
Let it flower in pink or blue and then...
 begin living, tree;
 begin living tree.

Begin with the boughs and twigs
 budding and leafing in the air,
Begin with air.
Begin to match un-fire
 with fire, and when it begins,
begin to count (“one, two, three...?”)
Begin to count. Yes.
Begin to count: Yes, yes,
 begin to count.

**Arabic: mystical ecstasy, ecstatic trance*



Succession to the Throne by *Angela Mroz*

EPILOGUE FROM A NEW NOVEL

Trout Heaven

Stephen Michael Berberich

**A Trail Guide to Landing
a Big Corporate Fish
or**

How I Found Love in Foster's Creek

Epilogue

Current late afternoon, near Patrick.

The day is perfect for fly fishing in a swift trout stream in an eastern mountain forest.

A woman is leading a man carefully downhill on a narrow, rocky trail. Relaxed and alert, they listen and enjoy the sound of Foster's Creek. Without saying a word, they each "feel" the sound getting louder.

"I can hear it running full now," he says at the top of a small ridge.

The sound dominates the valley surroundings as they arrive. It is a sound not easily described. As the shallow water of Foster's Creek rushes sharply over the stream bed of smooth rocks and gravel, it is not a burbling sound. It is not trickling, babbling, tumbling or a bubbling, or even a grumbling and growling sound. It is all of it, a fly fishing allegro dominating the woods as they arrive at the stream.

This, their favorite creek, flows west into the Madison River toward Kentucky, not east to the Sassafras, serving

them as another comfort after too many anxious days near that river and freaky Crater Lake. The change was simply psychological.

They stand and admire the gray-green cool water splashing up in frothy white patches and swirling arches of the flowing current that reflects flashes of the warm afternoon sun. For a few moments, they peer into the streaming water's uneven surface to adjust their vision underneath hoping to spot trout on the prey for bugs or moving from spot to spot.

They separate to start fishing. Free of worries, souls at peace, they will play in the stream until dark before walking back up the trail to Smokey Joe's Café for supper.

They wear no traditional fishing waders. They carry no heavy gear. They each carry an insulated catch basket across the shoulder, fly fishing poles and flies in satchels. They plan to get wet and enjoy it, wearing only tennis shoes, tee shirts, khakis and baseball caps, his New York Mets, hers Pittsburgh Pirates. This is not a planned fishing trip.

"Spontaneous is always best," she says.

"I agree. But will the trout like it?" he asks. He cups his hands to give her a tempered shout as they separate. He tries to annoy her with, "But will you spook the rainbows with your orange sneaks?" And, "Hey girl, better tuck in your hair. They know you with that red flag waving behind you. Don't want to give me more advantage than I already have."

They laugh quietly.

"They will more likely be spooked by you, stranger, not me," she teases.

There is clear purpose to her movements as she treads from boulder to boulder along the stream bank to reacquaint herself with her favorite fishing hole since her childhood, about 150 feet downstream. She whispers to still-hidden trout, "Let's show him the state teen champ still has it, ladies."

He watches her and guesses as much. She is out to out-fish him. But, he'd rather admire her ways.

She points the 9-foot flexible fishing rod up and away from her body. And, with the grace of a ballerina and strength of a gymnast, she then whips it straight overhead five times before throwing it out, each time extending more line. The relatively small backward and forward motion of the fly rod sends the line streaking through the air. With a small plop, her feather-light fly and hook drops 50 feet downstream, exactly where she intended.

It is a narrow section of the creek where trout are more confined and, as her theory goes, will more likely be hooked. The winding stream, though, is bordered with overhanging swamp birch, maples, scrubby willows, and service berry. She has told him time and again to cast high to avoid snagging the branches.

Still, his first cast upstream is not arched straight and it hits light-pink rhododendron flowers hanging low over the stream. He whispers to himself, "Hope she didn't see that ... oh, damn."

She did.

She laughs at him until her line tugs tight against her wrist. Her spinning reel whizzes. She's got the first hit where she tossed the fly by a whirling pool of water beside a large boulder. She tugs, lets out line, tugs again, spins, tugs, spinning out less line each time as a rainbow trout fights, splashing and flipping about on the surface. She nets it, unhooks its jaw and gently lowers it into her basket and closes the lid.

Tina catches three more at her favorite "hole" before Hank lands his first trout. No matter. He has been continually watching her, thoroughly entertained and totally unconcerned with her competitive prodding and joking. He is truly contented, having already landed the best catch of his life, Miss Tina O'Leary.



Light Through the Wall by *Melissa Braun*

Run, Hide

Sherbie Kardinal

Eve doesn't want to go to the bathroom at school, because she's afraid (- - - 0 she's going to be locked out _____ of her class) during an active shooter drill.

She's 10.

Run. Hide. Fight.



Winter Trax by *Richard Taylor*

Love-things

Joanne Van Wie

Because things fall apart so frequently,
we need pockets for hearts,
for all the tiny pieces of what's left.

We keep watchdogs, like canaries,
that lull us back to sleep.

Because we lose things so often,
we keep lists on clipboards,
check each other off

like missing jewelry,
like articles of clothing that disappear.

We track our steps as we walk away,
as we run,
we pretend it's healthy to know how far we've gone.

How far we've come is another way we might say the same
thing,
but trust me, these love-things still end like small marriages.

For better or for worse,
these things mostly end.

October Leaves

Kate Lassman

An October wind
whorls through the grove of lindens
with a laughlike hiss;
showered in the yellow leaves
I reach to try to catch one.



Profiling by *Robin Karis*

Pete and Petey— Tire Swing

James Burd Brewster

“Petey Washburn,” my daddy said, “What this yard needs is a tire swing. What would you think if we put one right there?”

Daddy was pointing to a tall oak tree next to the driveway. The tree had a branch way up that was sticking out all by itself.

“I like it, Daddy,” I said. My name is Petey and I am six.

Just then Mom came outside. She said, “There you are. Supper’s almost ready.” Then she saw Daddy looking at the tree. “Pete. What are you doing?” she asked. (My Daddy’s name is Pete. I am named after him, but everybody calls me Petey.)

“Darlin,” Daddy said, “I’m thinking this tree would make a good tire swing.” (My mom’s name is Laura, but Daddy always calls her Darlin.)

Mom looked at the tree and said, “That’s a great idea. The kids will love it. Now, come in for supper.”

During supper, I told my older sister, Heather, and my oldest brother, Sam, that Daddy was going to make us a tire swing.

Sam, who is 10, thought that was a neat idea. Heather, who is 8 and likes books, didn’t care.

Daddy said, “Sam. The oak next to the driveway has a limb about 40 feet up that we can use. We will need an old tire. Have you seen one around the neighborhood?”

Sam said, “There may be some tires down at the bike jumps. I’ll check tomorrow.” Sam and his friends rode BMX bikes together and they had made some jumps in the woods.

Daddy said, “Thanks Sam. On Saturday, Petey and I will get the rope we need.”

That week, Sam found an old tire and cleaned it. Daddy and I went to the store on Saturday and bought 100 feet of rope and a spool of orange string. Daddy let me pay for it.

“What’s the orange string for, Daddy?” I asked.

He winked at me and said, “Petey, in a short while I am going to show you.”

Back at the house, Daddy, Sam, and I stared up at the tree limb.

Sam said, “Dad, that’s really far away. How are we going to get the rope up there?” I agreed with Sam. The tree limb was really far away.

“Let’s try something,” Daddy said. He uncoiled and then re-coiled the rope. He handed Sam the coiled rope. “Now,” he said, “put a coil in each hand and throw the coil over the branch.”

Sam tried and the coil didn’t go very high. “The rope is heavy,” Sam said.

“Yes it is,” Daddy said, “Let me try it.”

Daddy threw the coil higher than Sam had, but it still didn’t reach the branch. The rope was too heavy.

Then Daddy handed me a small wrench. “Petey,” he said. “Throw this as high as you can. Throw it underhanded.”

I threw the wrench into the air as hard as I could and it went higher than when Daddy threw the rope into the air.

“Great job, Petey,” Daddy said. “Now Sam, you try it.”

Sam threw the wrench in the air and it went as high as the branch. I picked it up and gave it back to Daddy.

“Great job, Sam,” Daddy said. “Now let me try.” Daddy threw the wrench in the air and it went higher than the branch. “Petey,” Daddy said, “Hand me the orange string.”

I gave the orange string to Daddy. Daddy tied the end of the orange string around the wrench. He unrolled a lot of string from the roll.

Sam suddenly blurted out, “I get it, Dad. We use the wrench to throw the string over the branch and then we use the string to pull up the rope.”

Daddy grinned. “Good thinking, Sam,” he said. Daddy handed the wrench and string to Sam. “Here, you throw it over.”

Sam threw the wrench and it fell short. I picked it up and gave it back to Sam.

Sam threw the wrench again and it still didn’t go over the branch. I picked it up and gave it back to Sam.

Sam said, “Here Dad, you do it.”

Daddy smiled, “You were very close, Sam. Why don’t you try it again?”

Sam threw the wrench again and it went over the branch with the orange string trailing behind it.

Sam grinned and said, “Yessss.”

Daddy smiled and said, “Nice throw.”

I shouted, “Yeah,” and Sam gave me a high five.

Daddy untied the orange string from the wrench and tied it to the end of the rope.

“Petey,” Daddy said, “pull on this orange string and see what happens.”

I pulled on the string and the end of the rope rose off the ground.

“Keep pulling,” Daddy said.

I pulled and the rope rose higher.

I pulled again and the rope rose even higher. It was getting near the branch.

Then the string began to hurt my hands. “I can’t hold it!” I shouted. “Help me!”

“I got it, Petey!” Sam said as he took the string from me. He gave a big pull and the rope slid over the branch and was dragged down the other side. My hands stopped hurting.

“Thanks Sam,” I said.

Daddy laughed and said, “You boys did great. Now let’s get the tire tied on and see how it works.”

“Before you do,” said a voice. “Who wants a cookie?” It was Mom, and she was carrying plastic cups, a jug of milk, and a plate of cookies.

“We do!” we shouted.

I took the cup, Sam took the plate, and Daddy took the pitcher. Daddy gave Mom a kiss and said, “Darlin, you are the best.”

Mom smiled, laughed, and said, “And don’t you forget it.”

I laughed, too. I like it when Daddy and Mom talk like that.

We ate the cookies and drank some milk. Then Daddy tied the tire to the rope and tested the swing by sitting on it. The rope did not break.

“Petey,” Daddy said, “You give it a try and see how it swings.”

I climbed up on the tire and Daddy pushed me.

It worked just fine.

Blue Beta

Michele LaCroix

The blue beta lovingly builds his bubble nest.

A kiss, a nudge, and bits of breath shape his enduring belief
in one who will surely come.

Flaring fins—he blusters bravely at the beta in the mirror—
banishing his competition—
the only one who ever comes.

Gobbling bits of manna and circling endlessly
He patrols his bowl alone—a life spent preparing—
his offering for the one
who will never come.

Another High School

Judy Angelheart

On the front lines
No distinction drawn
A wall of windows
Offers no protection
Stationed by the glass doors
I must not fear
There is a reason I am here
Always a purpose
An unwavering stance
My heart and soul
Flood with fierce love
For each one
Our children
Our future
Our joy
Today they come
Armed in chorus of voices
Let these be the only weapons
That ring out in our school halls



Katy at Grandpa's Grave *by Donna Sperry*

Contributors

PATRICK ALLEN retired from the faculty at CSM in the spring of 2018. He wants to keep sharing his thoughts with the family that he has developed over the past 29 years.

JUDY ANGELHEART is best known for her soulful, yet playful poetry. She has recently been dabbling in painting out her poetry and adding the words to her paintings. Her inspiration is everyday encounters. She lives in Lusby with her wonderful husband, Dimitrios, and her silly pup, Pudge.

ELAINE BATTY's poem stemmed from one of many mornings where she would open the windows and let the cool air in as the birds sang. These are the times that her best ideas and best poems come to her. She wrote "a small poem by me" as a little bit of *ars poetica* to pay homage to these peaceful mornings that she spends in her own company.

LIANE BECKLEY is a full-time student at CSM, focusing on art and English, aspiring to become an editor/creative director for print media.

STEPHEN MICHAEL BERBERICH is a journalist and novelist, and member in good standing with the Maryland Writers' Association and National Science Writers' Association.

MELISSA BRAUN is a CSM student and a videographer from Southern Maryland.

JAMES BURD BREWSTER is the author of *Uncle Rocky*, *Fireman*, *Officer Jack*, and the *EMT Morales* series of children's picture books. Jim has been published in *Pen-in-Hand* and CSM's literary magazine, *Connections*. His works have been accepted at the Gaithersburg Book Festival, Kensington Day of the Book, and the

Baltimore Book Festival. He is the communications director for the Maryland Writers' Association and has been selected to present at the Bay to Ocean writers' conference in March 2019. His current project is to republish *The Personal Recollections of Private John Henry Cammack*, the recounting of the service of his grandfather's grandfather in the Civil War.

RANDOLPH BRIDGEMAN graduated from both CSM and St. Mary's College of Maryland. His poems have been published in numerous poetry reviews and anthologies. He has four collections of poems, *South of Everywhere* (2005), *Mechanic on Duty* (2008), *The Odd Testament* (2013), and *The Poet Laureate of Cracker Town* (2015). His fifth book, *The Not So Happy Hour Poems*, is forthcoming in the spring of 2019.

HEATHER CHRISTIAN is a graphic design/art major, completing her first semester here at CSM. Her hobbies include photography, writing poetry, drawing, and painting.

MICHELLE CHRISTIAN is a full-time communication faculty member at CSM. Her cover photograph was taken during CSM Travel Study trips to Scotland and northern England.

THOMAS DONAHUE does not like writing bios. He says that he could literally put anything here, and who's to stop him, the biography police?

MEGAN A. C. ELLIS is a writer of many different facets. She lives in La Plata with her husband and three four-legged fur babies: Annabell, Oliver, and Stark. She is currently working towards her English Literature associate degree at CSM. This is her first publication.

CHAUNTE GARRETT is a full-time mail operations assistant for Mail and Distribution Services at CSM, pursuing her Associate of Arts: Arts and Sciences degree.

BROOKE GATTON is a student at CSM.

CAMILLE HARRIS is a CSM college student majoring in communication and minoring in fashion design, and in her free time, she likes to expand her mind by creating art of all forms.

RACHEL HEINHORST is a poet, mother, and teacher. She currently teaches English at the College of Southern Maryland.

DAHLIA JACKSON was born in Germany, has moved around a lot, and has lived all over Maryland. She says that she is known as a lovable jerk with a sarcastic personality. She writes sometimes but mainly enjoys studying the brain and all its functions.

SHERBIE KARDINAL is a local creative writer, barefoot mural designer, picker of wildflowers, and overall seeker of silver-linings. Her greatest loves are serving as a missionary overseas, friends who became family, and those who call her mom.

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

ALAN KING is an author, poet, journalist, and videographer, who lives with his wife and daughter in Bowie, Maryland. He is a communications specialist for a national nonprofit and a senior editor for *Words Beats & Life's* global hip hop journal. King is the author of *Point Blank* and *Drift*. As a visiting author for Pen Faulkner's Writers-in-Schools program, he is inspiring the next generation of readers and writers. Through Pen Faulkner, his visits, as one teacher put it, help young people "see literature as it happens, rather than as it happened in history." King read at CSM recently as part of the Connections literary series.

MICHELE LACROIX is an English professor at CSM. She has contributed to *Connections* in the past.

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 ninth grader at Great Mills high school. She took three classes at CSM during the 2017-2018 school year.

ANGELA MROZ is a former CSM student who is currently studying English at Salisbury University.

JOHN MURRY is a mathematics enthusiast majoring in the computer science field. He says that for him, “Mid-winter” is a story of beauty and innocence

DIANE PAYNE is a full-time mail operations/electronic support technician for Mail and Distribution Services at CSM and assists with photography for the Government Relations and Public Information Office.

IQURA REHMAN is a second-year student at CSM, where she is currently a social science major. She also plays lacrosse for CSM.

JOSEPH SANCHEZ is a full-time student and full-time employee at the Department of Homeland Security. He plans to transfer to the University of Maryland in the fall of 2019 to major in computer science focusing in cybersecurity.

DONNA SPERRY has been teaching mathematics at CSM for over 20 years. This is her first submission to *Connections*.

RICHARD TAYLOR is a full-time courier/mail assistant for Mail and Distribution Services at CSM.

JEANNE-MARIE TCHOUMAK is a student at CSM.

PAUL TOSCANO has been a serious photographer for nearly ten years. His work has been exhibited at several local galleries and in several publications.

JOANNE VAN WIE is a mother of seven and gives birth to poetry like children—out of much pain seems to come beauty and understanding. She is the author of a recent chapbook published by Foot Hills Press, *Surfaces, Edges and Openings*, and, through poetry, she continues to develop her message of self-awareness. “Who are we as we sit here right now experiencing these words, and likewise who will we become once we’ve done so?”

KARLY WILEY is a student at CSM.

CHRISTOPHER WILKINS is a poet, novelist, violist, and Episcopal priest living in Southern Maryland. He has taught at CSM since 2008.



Connections

SUPPORT **Connections Literary Series**

For two decades, the Connections Literary Series has featured writers such as National Book Award winners, Tim O'Brien and Robert Stone; Pulitzer Prize winning poets, Yusef Komunyakaa and Henry Taylor; and Poets Laureate Lucille Clifton, Michael Glaser, and Kay Ryan. Connections readings offer the Southern Maryland community a chance to hear and meet established and emerging local writers.

The *Connections* Literary Magazine is a regional literary journal published twice a year that features poems, stories, artwork, and photography of Southern Maryland. Also featured, from time to time, is material from visiting writers.

With your support, the Connections Literary Series will continue to provide Southern Maryland with opportunities to enjoy featured authors, poets, and the creative works of community members and students at the College of Southern Maryland.

To make your donation today, visit

www.csmd.edu/Foundation

(direct your funds to the Connections Literary Series)

Thank you for your support!



www.csmd.edu/Connections