



# Connections

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND  
**Spring 2019 Literary Magazine**

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COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND  
Spring 2019 Literary Magazine  
volume 26 number 2



**Captivating** by William "Ed" Moroney

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# Connections

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# Word of God

*Thomas Donohue*

Liz Packard, over at Brighter Days Marketing, LLC, had been the first person to think of placing advertisements within The Holy Book. It was inane and downright ludicrous, really, that such a vast market had remained untapped for so long, a market of over one hundred million copies a year. And Liz was just the person to tackle that market, just the person to pull all the right strings in all the right places. It suddenly became very important that every man, woman, and child around the globe get their hands upon the good word of God—now an extra five hundred and forty pages long, on average. There were protests in the beginning, of course. People are going to do what people do, but Liz knew that it wouldn't last forever. Besides, she had a strategy; soon, every version of the Brighter Days Bible could be found in several major hotel chains, with a large two-page ad for the establishment right before Genesis.

The first few editions were shit quality, of course. They were five-pound pulp fiction tomelets, literally being given away by the truck-full. But as Liz's version of the Bible circulated, people got more and more accustomed to it. The builders of the tower of Babel were scattered and their language confounded, but Genesis eleven, verse nine and a half assured you that with Rosetta Stone, you wouldn't need to build a tower to learn a new language. It was a relatively similar message, and yet far more comforting. People began to prefer Liz's book over God's. It was actually entertaining. That was the genius of it—Liz did more than just throw pictures and price tags into The Book. She did, in fact, do that, of course. But she also integrated the ads.

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She really made them feel like a part of the story. There's a sense of familiarity in having the forbidden fruit turn out to be a Mac computer. You can't quite place it, but there's comfort in it. The general consensus seemed to be that advertisements just took a lot of the edge off of the "holy wrath" aspect of the Bible and made the characters more relatable. Revelations now ended with Jesus saying, "Come on Dad, you're just not *you* when you're hungry" as he handed God a Snickers bar. Any Joe Schmo reading that can stop and say, "Hey, yeah, this Jesus guy is pretty, uh, stand-up. He shops at Walmart and puts his Levi's on one leg at a time, just like me." The Catholic church eventually stopped pushing against it because:

1. Church attendance was skyrocketing.
2. Jesus' popularity was soaring, too.
3. The Pope and Brighter Days, LLC worked out a deal behind closed doors. Catholicism would have several full-page ads in subsequent editions.

There comes a point in many sinners' lifetimes when they are struck by the weight of their actions, often subconsciously. Liz Packard was no exception. A week before the fourth edition of the Brighter Days New Bible was set to hit the printer, Liz had a dream. In it, she drifted aimlessly and powerlessly throughout a black nothingness. The way she moved, it felt as if she were on a rollercoaster, which suddenly dipped down, down, down into a fiery abyss. Indeed, her stomach churned sickeningly as if she were on a rollercoaster. Rotting hands grabbed at her as she continued to dip and coast helplessly throughout the inferno. Distorted laughter taunted her. She felt the sensation of being chased by something that only ever existed outside her peripheral vision

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as she began to slowly ascend out of the fire. Liz rose up, back into the black fog, and even higher still, choking for breath as she gained elevation.

Suddenly, she was blinded by a dazzling light as she came to a rest, surrounded by endless swaths of blue sky and pillowy white clouds. A voice boomed with a crackle of lightning and the roll of thunder. “Lizzy Packard,” it began—and Liz rolled her eyes at this mention of her name. “You have strayed,” the voice continued. “Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. *Do not avert your gaze. Heed this warning.*” Liz felt the ground fall from underneath her as she began to plummet endlessly downwards, only catching the last of what the voice had to say. “The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead. When the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.”

Liz never hit the ground, of course. She woke up, unable to move for several minutes. Although sweat ran down her face, she felt ice cold. It took her several minutes to catch her breath, and when she was finally in control of her breathing, she rolled over and cursed. “God, the infallible hypocrite,” she thought. “Christendom changes.” Liz closed her eyes and steadied her breath. It was four in the morning, and she could easily fit in two more hours of sleep before she had to wake back up. And in the morning, she would do yoga, go for a jog, come back for an egg-white scramble over brioche, and get a shower before she had to meet with some Exxon Mobil representatives—the ones who were aggressively bidding against BP over who gets the big Exodus ad where Moses stops in the Red Sea to drill for oil. Liz silently went over

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her day, and her days to come. She had already landed VP of Marketing, and as she drifted back to sleep, she counted the months until she could possibly become President of Marketing, COO, and even CEO. She counted the days until the fourth edition would hit shelves across the world, and the days up to the fifth and sixth and seventh editions, as she slowly cut more and more Bible passages in favor of keeping their editions more compact. She counted the days until the ads were worked into sermons as protesters gave the Brighter Days Bible the best kind of advertising: the free kind. She counted the days, she was sure she would be there to see, where most of the original Bible was replaced with advertisements. And people only ever ate it up and washed it down with the cool, refreshing taste of Coca-Cola.

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# She

*Annalise Grey*

her whisper soft lips

speak

pages upon pages of unhurried words

and I'm there

a small, hungry wild thing upon the bow of her

mighty oak arms

starving for something

I never knew I needed

like ice cream on a Tuesday

or forgiveness of unchallenged sins

the she of she and she of me

understand crashing storm of yes

less no

more us



**Siesta in Brixen, Italy, *Mona Weber***

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## Hope's Poem

*Kate Lassman*

I need a poem.  
I've been looking all day,  
but found none  
at the grocery store,  
among the bills I paid,  
or in with the laundry.  
No poems today  
in the painting above my desk  
or in all the music  
I loaded on my phone.  
No poems today.  
Then Hope, the regal brown tabby,  
jumps on my lap and purrs.  
I have a poem.



**Cupid's Surprise, *Lena Hancock***

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# Crosswinds in Ocean City

*Benjamin Sonnenberg*

“NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, I AM *NOT* GOING THERE AGAIN.”

“Oh, you’re going, Ben,” my mother said as she packed up her sunscreen and beach books.

“But we go *Every, Single, Summer.*”

“You’re going, Ben. Now pack up quickly and get in the car.”

It was no use negotiating. The logic was simple: it was the end of summer, the Maryland heat was intolerable, and we had a beach house just two hours away. Under ordinary circumstances, I would have been perfectly amenable to a late-summer getaway. Only one problem: we were going to Ocean City.

My 17-year-old self could hardly stand another summer at the horror. I suppose that anyone else would have been elated to spend even a night in Ocean City. Our condo, the lovely Laguna Vista, was only a 5-minute walk from the beach and bustling boardwalk. It was situated on a shimmering marina, replete with the sounds of yacht horns. And towards the end of the day, as the heat subsided, you could go to the top of Laguna Vista and see a vista of another sort: the so-called “greatest sunset on the Eastern Shore.” For me, at least, having just finished a miserable four years in high school and worrying about starting college in a few weeks, Ocean City was the last place where I wanted to spend a weekend.

For me, Ocean City was a place of confusing extremes, and it all started on the famous 2.5-mile boardwalk. Walking from Laguna Vista, you started your boardwalk trek on 14th Street. From there, you could take a left or a right, both distasteful. A left took you along the historic homes, the

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beachside cottages from the 1870s, when Ocean City was first founded. “BEWARE OF DOG” signs hung on the outsides of these old cottages, and as a little boy, I would always steer clear; the slightest sound—a snapping twig, a little yelp—would conjure up images of Rottweilers. At the end of the left-hand path was the Dunes Manor Hotel, the finest in Ocean City. To a 17-year-old, it wasn’t worth a 5-minute visit, let alone a summer getaway. Wet children ran through the halls, slapping me with towels, while disinterested mothers followed. I smelled rancid popcorn every time I entered the main foyer.

If the left path was bad, the right was no better. In contrast to the stuffiness of the Dunes Manor and old cottages, the right path was a menagerie of tattoo and piercing parlors, tacky souvenir shops, and overpriced restaurants. The right path was decidedly more modern, and its major attractions—the amusement park, haunted houses, and Ripley’s Believe It or Not—were all created in the 1960s. As a boy, I saw the path as made up of low-class clientele and astonishingly overweight beachgoers; the sounds of wailing children and yapping dogs were cacophonous.

So, in sum, our treks to Ocean City had been my annual bore: mediocre food, unsavory sights, and a cold beach. I asked myself the following question every year: why does Ocean City appeal to so many people? What makes it worth its fame?

The drive to Ocean City on that humid August evening took the regular two hours. We made our way over the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, and I looked back at the mainland, sad to see it growing smaller with each passing second. I spent the car ride in silence, cogitating and pondering what I was going to do in college and how I could possibly turn a dismal academic record around. It was not going to be easy; then

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again, neither would this trip. I reached into my bag for my headphones, but to my shock, my hand found only empty space. Frantically, I looked for any of my electronic crutches—video games, cell phone, anything to get me away. Nothing. In my haste to pack, I had only brought clothes and a toothbrush.

“Perfect,” I said, resigned to my fate. I didn’t realize it at the time, but losing my headphones proved to be a valuable turning point.

So, for the first time on a ride to Ocean City, I looked out the window. As the hours passed, I found myself surprised by what I saw on the trip through Maryland’s Eastern Shore. I saw deer, flying geese, and foxes sprinting through the marshlands. There were cars with every bumper-sticker known to humankind (“Don’t Honk At Me: I’m Late For My Anger-Management Class”). We passed a host of family restaurants and burger stands, little places that somehow survived. Tackle shops and gun stores appealed to outdoorsmen, who had hunted in the woods and fished in the streams of the Eastern Shore for over a hundred years.

And then there it was: a clearing in the woods and a little bridge to Ocean City, situated on the barrier island. It was the first time we were entering Ocean City in the late-evening, after all the traffic had subsided. A brilliant orange sun was slowly coming down, lighting the water on fire. Boats of every kind were nearby. I saw a smiling man pull a fish from under the bridge. Never before had I truly taken a moment to look at Ocean City’s stunning reveal.

The sun finally set, and we meandered through Ocean City, which is really a small town of 7,000, although the summer months see it hosting upwards of 350,000 people. Our car rolled into our Laguna Vista parking space, and after retrieving our luggage, we went upstairs and promptly fell asleep. None of us even ate dinner.

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I woke up the next morning to the sounds of the nearby marina. I walked through our condo to the outside deck and sat down in an enormous armchair overlooking the boats below. It's hard to explain exactly what I was looking for. I suppose lacking my electronic gizmos forced me to find a different type of stimulation. The fishermen were just returning from their early-morning activities, towing bluefish and striped bass behind them. The yachts were also there, containing clean-cut men in crisp white polos, smiling and featuring their \$30,000 dental work. I smiled and waved, and fishermen and skippers alike waved back. I suddenly had a strange inclination: I was going to visit Ocean City by myself, for myself.

I put on some shorts and a t-shirt and left our condo. After the 5-minute stroll, I was on the boardwalk. Under ordinary circumstances, with Game Boy in hand, I would have missed the sights and sounds of what is consistently listed as one of the greatest beaches on the Eastern Shore. I would have missed the whirling helicopters and soaring Cessna planes, little advertisements for half-priced beers and crab feasts trailing behind their tails. I would have also missed the beauty of the beach itself, which now seemed so clean and so white. A little girl dropped her banana peel into the garbage can and played with a beachball. A kaleidoscope of animal-shaped kites fluttered fifty feet high, and even when these birds crashed down to the earth, everyone laughed. I found myself growing giddy.

I turned left. It was more sparsely populated along this stretch of the boardwalk, and I found myself enjoying the quiet. Slowly, I approached the cottages and saw the familiar "beware" signs. The thoughts of Rottweilers and bleached bones came to mind again, but this time, I noticed another sign out front: "THE INN ON THE OCEAN: BED AND BREAKFAST."

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I decided a walk-in would be welcomed and entered the beachfront cottage. A man dressed in a butler's livery was playing the piano while a family ate breakfast in the nearby dining room. Suddenly, I heard a dog in the back and froze in terror, at least until a little Maltese popped out from behind a corner. So much for the Rottweiler! A tiny plaque hung on the nearby wall, which told the story of Ocean City. It had been a small backwater on the Eastern Shore, at least until the expansion of the railroad, which brought in wealth and haggard tourists, ready for relaxation. These cottages had seen everything: hurricanes, expansion, contraction. They had been buffeted by both the sands of time and those 100 feet away.

Leaving, I walked the other way, toward the tattoo shops. The crowds swelled. I had no books in hand, no electronic do-dads to entertain me. I was surprised by the sheer volume of variety there was on the right side of Ocean City. Conservative Muslim women with hijabs strolled side-by-side with hairy bikers wearing "Hell's Angels" apparel. I walked into one of the dozens of souvenir shops and found myself grinning at the wares. There were t-shirts with "I ♥ Ocean City" printed on the fronts, and pants with "Juicy" scrawled across the backsides. Plastic sharks and palm trees inhabited every shelf, and boogie boards, snow globes, and every brand of sunscreen were on a perpetual summer sale.

"Can I help you?" the Russian girl from behind the counter asked. I later learned that Ocean City is a prime destination for Russian college students who come to the U.S. during the seasonal months to work off their student loans. For many of them, Ocean City is their first taste of America; the opportunity to make money while enjoying beautiful beaches and amusement parks entices them and many other newcomers.

I promptly returned to Laguna Vista, but not before visiting a pier I had seen for years but never walked on.

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The pier was absolutely filthy, with beer cans, fishing hooks, discarded lines, and cut bait of every stinking variety lying around. I initially grimaced until I saw three shirtless men tossing their lines out into the surf. They saw me and showed off their smiles. Unlike the yachtsmen, these fishermen had fewer teeth, none white. I liked them immediately.

“Any luck?” The universal greeting to fishermen.

“Oh a coupla perch and a striper, nuthin’ too big,” one answered.

I looked out over the rail and saw their lines dangling. Fresh salt spray poured over my face. I talked with the fishermen on and off for twenty minutes. Our topics covered everything from the start of school, to Ocean City, to the best times to go fishing. Eventually, I let slip that I loved to fish, but rarely caught anything. Upon hearing this, one of them reached into his tackle box and held out a little fish-shaped lure to me.

“This is a popper!” he said, and he shone with pride. “I’ve caught some hogs with this. You can have it.”

I thanked him, but not without feeling a wave of sadness come over me. I felt that same sadness for the rest of the weekend, partly because I realized then that I had spent so much time looking down on people like him, on a place like Ocean City. I went back to the condo and showed my mother the popper. She didn’t like fishing, but she could feel my excitement. My dad had just woken up and was ready to go on a walk of his own.

“Want to head to the Dunes?” he asked. “They have tea-time.”

I agreed, and we walked to the hotel together. The foyer had undergone some renovations to appear more Victorian, with antiques and period paintings on the walls. I was pleased to notice that the horrible popcorn smell was replaced with the sweet scent of scones. We went upstairs, took our tea and

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sweets, and went out onto the porch overlooking the beach. We were caught in a crosswind coming from shore; the salty breeze cooled my tongue. Dad and I sat outside, and as we talked about life, school, and Ocean City, I realized I was in the process of experiencing my own internal crosswind. I started to cry a little and Dad hugged me.

“What if I don’t do well?”

“You will,” he said.

“But what if I need you while I’m at school?”

“We’ll come,” he said. “I promise.”

We were silent for a while. I saw hotel guests bustling about before me, people from both sides of Ocean City. It was funny: two classes intermingling in an old-style hotel built in the 70s. It was a sight unique to O.C.: old and new, “high” and “low,” melded together into a nearly seamless whole. And just like that, I began to understand the root of this place’s idiosyncratic charm. It was the little things: historical markers in the renovated cottages, the salty watermen beside expensive yachts, the two sides of the boardwalk. These all anchored O.C. in its past while preparing it for its burgeoning future. It was these little bits of seeming incongruity that made this place so unique and enticing. And it was those little things that I came to like best on that last visit before college. As I sat on the deck thinking about my own future, I discovered a connection with this little place. If all these different people could come together for a week of sun and scones, maybe I could be a little less condescending in the future. Like Ocean City, perhaps I could learn to slow down, relax, and accept some incongruities in my own life.

Children ran by, Russians served tea, the sun bled crimson, I bit into a scone packed with blueberries, businessmen toted briefcases, and everyone had a little sand in their hair.

The crosswinds began to subside.

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## **A Glimpse of the Multiverse at 29**

*Raisa Lees*

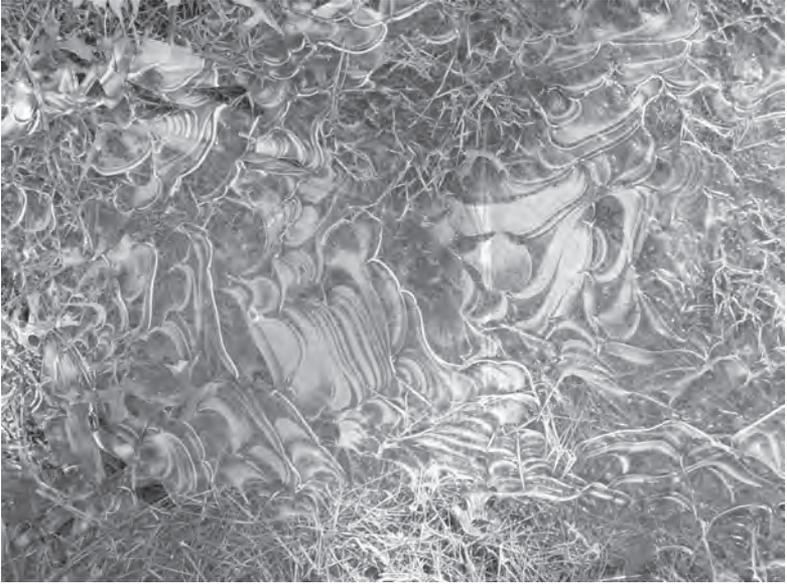
Doodles form on a page  
Form on a page,  
Trickling down into the watering can brushing the flowers.  
So sweet their smell,  
Like my daughter's cookies  
Crumbling like the sides of mountains  
So tall,  
So tall like my husband  
Strong like my wife.  
She gives me hope for the planet I protect without her,  
In the snow of Massachusetts  
Crying at a funeral.  
With no one, all alone now.  
Except when I am dead,  
A car crash built on the lies and truths of drunk driving  
That I neglected like my son  
In his crib, crying,  
Like me crying,  
Remembering fifteen years ago,  
Has it been that long?  
Yes, and I was happier then,  
But now as the sun rises,  
I wonder what the future will bring.

---

# Moon Image

*John Timothy Robinson*

An old woman's  
half-darkened face,  
weeping  
in blue, moonlit crooks,  
pale crevice and cloud.



**Ice Dream, *Linda Cooke Smith***

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# Crane

*Shayla Herron*

I so love my crane.  
It is whimsical and prolific.  
With an overt beak  
And two alabaster wings  
When it flies I feel exempt.

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## Two Fathoms, A Captain's Eulogy

*Sherbie Kardinal*

You didn't want a funeral—  
afraid no one would come.  
No voices left to re-tell the tales  
of the battles you thought your bravest.

Shipmates would have talked story—  
Submarine warfare in the salt  
of oceans far from Glens Falls, New York—  
where fallen brothers sleep in seabeds  
beneath air-breathing diesels, and a world at war.  
They would speak of medals and honor—  
the Naval Academy, and far-off countries  
that no longer answer to the name of their mother.

But you didn't want a funeral—  
afraid no one would come.  
No heroes left to sing the praises  
of the legends you hoped would be remembered.

Your granddaughter would rise to tell the story—  
of homemade cassette tapes received in the mail.  
Your voice, the voice of all her favorite story book characters—  
Tigger, Piglet and Winnie the Pooh.  
To her you were Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn, and Mickey Mouse—  
Courageous adventurer, reckless hope, and the freedom of  
endless possibility.

---

You were—  
The hand that salted heavy.  
The soft brown eyes of her father.  
The man who never left someone a stranger.  
The neighbor who taught the mill-town men to read.  
The heart that made time to listen to the whole of it.  
The smile in the face of disappointment.  
The mind that never weakened itself by complaining—  
The body that didn't cooperate with the dreamer inside,  
    still adventuring.  
The spirit who watches over us still.

---

# How My Dad Sent Me to the Firehouse to Become a Man

*Jim Payne*

When I was eight years old, my dad put me on a 1953 GMC Fire Truck. I knew then, in that very moment, that was all I wanted to do with my life. The Brentwood chief was my dad's friend, and he asked my parents to let me join the fire department. I was sixteen when I joined, and my first call came in when I was at my grandmother's house. The firehouse was nearby when I heard the sirens. We had a fire call in Cottage City.

The next memorable fire call was in Brentwood, and that's when I saw a dead person for the first time. It was a husband and wife trapped inside their burning house. After the fire was out, I had to bring both of them down the ladder. The department had seven DOAs that week, and that included an ambulance call in Hyattsville where a deputy sheriff committed suicide.

On a lighter note, I was at the firehouse sleeping in when we had a house fire in Cottage City. I flew out of my bed so fast, I did not realize I didn't have my running boots on! When we got to the scene, I got off from the back of the fire truck, ran the hose down with my ass flapping in the wind, and ran back to the truck to tell them to charge the line. The chief told me to get back in the truck.

In 1972, I ran the most fire calls at Brentwood. I ran 250 calls out of the 500 total calls that the department ran. Out of those calls, we had a four-alarm fire at the Bladensburg Roller Skating Rink. It was so bad that I saw the steel melting. By 1973, I was hired by the Walter Reed Fire Department.

---

The bad experience that I remember that year was when the Vietnam soldiers were coming home in helicopters, and I had to put them on the ambulance.

In 1979, I transferred to National Airport Fire Department. Being in the fire department is like having one big happy family. We ate lunch and dinner together, and there would be cases where we would be away from home for long periods of time. In between calls, we played tricks on each other. I watched my co-workers prank the pilots by supergluing a quarter on the ground, and I watched to see how many of them would pick it up. They also tricked the pilots by putting a wallet on a fishing rod. I was even pranked. They put a rescue dummy in my bed, and they put one in my car. As a team, saw and experienced a lot. We had an ambulance call in Brentwood where a man had too much alcohol. So, when we were riding in the ambulance, the man was kicking and screaming and claiming he was seeing snakes everywhere. Another crazy experience was when we arrived at the Air Gas Welding Company. The air tanks were exploding like rockets, and we had to duck into the bushes.

I met my wife three times before I married her. The first time was at my dad's friend's house; he had committed suicide. The second time was when she set me up with her goofy friend, and we double dated at the movies. We ended up seeing *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. The third time was when I hurt my knee on the fire truck. I proposed to Elaine at Greenbelt Lake, and we got married on July 1, 1979. We will be celebrating our fortieth anniversary this year.

Time after time, Elaine has witnessed me coming home with battle scars from the job. One case was when I had fire training at Dulles Airport. I was fighting a big fire when smoke and flames went up my jacket. I came home with burns on my neck and hands, and I was bandaged up like a mummy.

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Another case was in 1982. I was eating dinner with the boys when we heard an “alert three” come in for a 737 airplane. In the severe snow conditions, the plane was missing off of the runway. No one in the tower could see it, and eventually the plane crashed into the 14th Street Bridge. The assistant chief told me to put the airboat in the water, but on the way out to the scene, we got stuck on the ice. I helped the DC Fire Department pull a thirty-four-year-old man out of the water. He lost a leg, and he was already dead. I wasn’t physically hurt that day, but the emotional impact still haunts me today.

In closing, I have been retired from the fire department for 20 years, and there are days where I still feel like the job is in my blood. I was on my way home one day from working on fire extinguishers when I saw smoke from someone’s house. There was a fire in their attic. I got the people out and tried to put out the fire with fire extinguishers. In another case, I was at home working on fire extinguishers, when my wife told me that the house next door was on fire. I took fire extinguishers to the house, and I got the girls out. I was able to put out the fire. No matter where I am, I will try to help anyone the best way I can. I loved being a firefighter. It has made me be the man I am today, and I have my dad to thank for it.

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# 98th Percentile

*Taitzion Johnson-Williams*

It was odd being told I had a lot of potential as a kid.

It makes me feel like every day,  
every minute,  
every second of my life  
I have to live up to that.

And that I've failed,  
am constantly failing,  
when I don't.

So I go through life with a certain determination to live up to  
everyone's expectations,  
raising them each time I succeed.

Yet even those successes feel a little like failures.

Top 10% of my graduating class,  
but not top 1%.

98th percentile on the SATs,  
but not 99th.

Scored an internship with a political group  
where I met senators  
saw laws being made,  
but let it slip away after a semester.

The praise almost makes up for that lack of happiness  
and passion.

Not sadness mind you.  
Just emptiness.

It's worse in a way.

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# Your Time Starts Now

*Liane Beckley*

You have twenty-five minutes.

Keep your head down,  
stay focused.

Don't pay attention to those around you.  
Don't listen to the hands ticking on the clock,  
moving at the speed of sound.

Tune-out the boy snoring behind you,  
sleeping away without a worry.

You're almost halfway through,  
but you've barely started.

Don't change your mind.

You won't have time to catch up.

Fifteen minutes left.

Ignore the size twelve foot kicking your chair,  
almost as hard as you are yourself,  
for not studying more.

You must flip to the second page.

You're taking too long.

Seven minutes.

You can't stop to think.

You can't stop to breathe.

Your time is up.

Pencils down.

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## Picked off

*Liane Beckley*

It can be difficult  
to see mistreatment,  
when it's masked as affection,  
and spread out over time.

It's as if every day  
a single petal  
is plucked off a flower,  
and I don't notice it's been removed until the entire vine is bare.

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## Six-word Memoirs

*The “six-word memoir” is part of an assignment that I give on cultural identity during my Introduction to Intercultural Communication class here at the College of Southern Maryland.*

*Using a similar challenge presented to Ernest Hemingway, to write a story in six words, students were asked to encapsulate their cultural and ethnic identities in only six words.*

*The following are some samples from my 2019 spring semester students.*

*Michelle Simpson, Professor*

### **So young, and yet so damaged.**

Growing up in this generation has become one of the toughest battles, and still is the toughest battle, that I face with myself. In this society, we were taught, but didn't realize, how the United States has manipulated us to divide and separate through technology. We've become so individualized that we don't make time for people anymore; we've become so individualized that we see nothing wrong with being lonely. We've become so individualized that part of me feels damaged for assimilating to the rest of the society.

—*Briana Bledsoe*

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**A Black sheep in white America.**

The idiom “a black sheep” describes a disreputable member of a group. This relates to my identity because this is how it feels to be an African American in America. As an African American I am usually what sticks out in a room. Not only because of skin color but also things like my curly hair. These simple character traits, that are a part of my identity, are what make most black people odd to the eye of white America.

—*Kiara Miller*

**Perfect storm; nothing good to say.**

This six-word memoir explains how, as a white, middle-class, female, Christian, I have many of the qualities that seem to disqualify someone from having a meaningful opinion in society and the culture around us. There is quite a bit of racial stress; people are angry at white people in general. No one wants to listen to middle-class people because we did not grow up poor or experience poverty. Many people are tired of “feminists” and thus do not want to listen to women at the moment. Finally, Christians have a growing stereotype of being judgmental and closed-minded, rendering our opinions worthless, whether the stereotype is true or not. I believe it is important to value everyone’s thoughts, regardless of our feeling toward them or if we believe them to be right or wrong. Sadly, it seems most others do not share this sentiment.

—*Grace Vangorden*

**Scared to play my cards. Fold.**

This memoir relates to my identity because often in my life I get a chance to do something and I don’t because I’m scared of the outcome. It’s like playing a game of poker and you’re scared to play your cards because there’s a chance someone might have a better hand than yours so you fold even though you have a full house.

—*Chris Williams*

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**A free spirit, unchained and unbothered.**

This six-word memoir is a reflection of my identity and personality, and it is inspired by my care-free and (somewhat) defiant nature. Despite the struggles of African Americans living in the United States, I don't feel like my skin color is a disadvantage, and despite what others may believe, I know what my beliefs are and stand by them. The bigger culture of the United States has allowed me to feel the way I do by embracing and encouraging individualism. As a result, I don't blindly follow trends or believe whatever I'm told, nor do I take offense when others disagree with my beliefs or values. Also, in regard to my ethnic roots, despite the fact that I know nothing about them, I am not bothered by it. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't at least a little curious, but overall my ethnic roots hold no importance to me and do not necessarily shape my identity.

—*Dominique Payne*

**My appearance does not identify me.**

My six-word memoir is about how being Mexican American can be difficult at times. Even though I live in the United States, my family forces me to follow my Mexican culture. Sometimes people can be really discriminatory towards me. I have to prove to Mexican people how Mexican I am, and I also have to prove to American people how American I am. My dad always said, "You have to be more Mexican than the Mexican and more American than the American to show that you belong."

—*Luis Damian*



**Long Road Home, *Omar Yunis***

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# This is a windshield

*Joanne Van Wie*

not a poem.

It breaks things like birds and deer  
and keeps going.

It knows when something is in the way:  
a protective lens  
that watches but doesn't really look.

Smooth like my skin,  
it erases pretty things that might make a mess  
like birds and deer.

It reminds me that roads have shoulders,  
clean-up crews for days like these.

I know you are better off behind me  
but still, the word *you* car-crashes in my throat.  
I can't seem to swallow

thank God, this is a windshield  
not a poem.

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# Butterfly

*Dahlia Jackson*

The aura of break lingered like a dream of sun-kissed skin mixed with the end of finals. It was summer when I realized what he meant to me. I said, "If in 10 years we are both still single, let's get married." He said, "How about in 8 years, we just get married." I mumbled, "I love you," that he didn't hear, luckily. When he left this first time, he took my butterfly clip. My sister said he took it because he wanted something to remember me by.

When he came back around, it was winter, and he met my grandmother. The stockings were hung, and the air smelled of pine. I wasn't sure if he meant the words that he said months earlier. That night, we were alone. He looked at me with his puppy dog eyes and smiled, as he leaned in for a kiss. The weather was cold, but my heart at that moment was warm. This time when he left, he took my heart.

When he came around again, the city was down from the high of reds, and pinks, and purples. It was Winter but felt near Spring. This time, however, when he came, it was different. He was right there but so far away. He was like snow on skin. I would say Us, he would say You. "Whatever you do, with your life," he said in a low voice, unable to meet my eyes with his. This time before he left, I asked for a longer hug because I knew it would be the last. When he left, he still had my butterfly clip.

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# The Basket

*Karen D. McIntyre*

“Grandmother? What is that?”

“Hmm?” The grandmother came to stand next to the young girl, looking to where she was pointing. “That? I knew you would ask someday, child. Let me show you.” The old woman stretched, reaching upwards, and reverently brought down the basket from the high shelf. “Come, child, let’s sit over here.” She placed the basket in the middle of the buffalo rug, in front of the fireplace, and sank awkwardly to sit across from her granddaughter.

“It’s beautiful! Grandmother, why do you not use it? Or leave it where it can be seen?” the child asked, reaching out her hand toward the basket.

“Go ahead. You can hold it, just treat it gently.” She watched as the child picked up the basket, turning it this way and that. “It was my grandmother’s, and her grandmother’s before that.”

“Oh! It is very, very old then, isn’t it?” the child whispered in awe, as she gently set the basket back down on the rug.

The grandmother chuckled, knowing the child had meant no insult. “It is said that the Sky God watched as my grandmother’s grandmother made it. It pleased him that she wove in the green of the trees, the purple and black of the forest shadows, the white of the snow. He promised good fortune to her family, as long as the basket was kept safe.”

“What about these?” the child asked, pointing to the acorn caps along the basket’s rim.

“When a child is born into our family, we add a new one. See—this one was for you; this one for your mother before you.”

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“Which one is yours, Grandmother?”

“This one here. Someday, the basket will pass to you. You will add caps for each new child; you will have the responsibility of safe-guarding the basket.”

The child’s eyes widened as she looked between the basket and her grandmother. “But, I’m just a child.”

“For now, you are. But you won’t always be. Someday is far enough off, and you will be ready by then.” The grandmother slowly got up off the rug and held her hand out to the child. “Let’s put it back, for now, and make some hot chocolate. What do you say to that?”

“Yes! I would like that, Grandmother,” the child said, rising gracefully.

As the grandmother stretched to put the basket back on the high shelf, she paused, looking down at the child. Then she placed the basket on a lower shelf. “Come. I will tell you a story about my grandmother while we have our drinks.”



**Grandmother's Box, *Judy Angelheart***

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# The Claw Master

*Cassandra Higgs*

Caitlin buried her face into her teddy bear as Carolyn struck down all ten bowling pins. She was now six points ahead of Caitlin.

Caitlin left her bear with Nick before grabbing the bright blue bowling ball off the rack. She winced as the shoes pinched against her ankles, but the ball barreled forward, knocking down five pins in the process.

*C'mon. I need one more.* She urged the ball as it rolled forward and slid ceremoniously into the gutter.

*At least I'm good with claw machines,* she tried to assure herself as she went over to congratulate Carolyn.

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## to home

*Nicholas Ritter*

driving around the old cul-de-sac,  
it's hard to recognize what has stayed the same.

the same brick pathway is laid,  
but I don't know who walks it  
the same door locks,  
but I no longer own the key

I wonder if they have kids wandering the woods as we had;  
getting lost to memories birthed by the creek.

I hope the energy they bring is better than the one we left behind;  
I'm sure the new owners can still hear the echo of us yelling.  
our demons radiating out from the walls—

I pray they see better days



**Eyes of the Past, *Robin Karis***

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# Laissez les bons

*Christopher Wilkins*

Melic, wholly given to harmony  
and in good time, had this to say  
as we flew away: Laissez les bons

temps, les bons temps – but hold on,  
hold on, for my heart is hot, hot,  
full of Tennyson and the wine—  
roulez, roulez, in the middle of a rain.

Actually, in the midst of a storm,  
the jet rolling from Kansas City  
on to the Big Easy. Laissez.

We looked for more drink, a pen,  
but someone, rats, did the In  
Flight crossword wrong, so “Maud”  
it is, in a bed-of-daffodils sky,

violets as blue as your eyes,  
up all night for your sake,  
thanks ever and the morning.  
You say, “Read to me and sing,”  
so I do, a song at peace with itself,  
tuned to ‘cedar’, ‘mute’, ‘gallant’  
and ‘unmeet,’ five miles above  
the river and the bending corn.

The airliner, twanged like a bowstring,  
turns, drops, and calms, but too late.  
The wine spills, “Maud” gets wet,

your gooey cookie drips chocolate  
everywhere. You dab it, giggling,  
on my nose. We laugh. We roll on.

---

# The Prince of Andalusia

*Katie Spivey Brewster*

You spectacular bird  
peafowl, peacock  
makes no difference  
where you flock

preening yourself  
for all to see  
right under our noses  
pretty as you please

you strut and stride  
'cross the yard  
with all that pride  
for nothin's too hard

when you're plucky  
and sprite  
you always feel lucky  
though never in flight

forward and backward  
dancing, you go  
backward and forward  
surely and slow.

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# Shiva's Lucid Dream

*Patrick Allen*

The Dreamer stirs but does not awaken  
Visions blink into sharp contrast like Dorothy awakening in  
Technicolor Oz.

He almost knows what will happen to the emerging figures  
He can command them to do this, or to be that  
He can glimpse his life, frozen in stark Bas-Relief.  
Then the surprising truth fades, the colors become muddy  
He remains in sleep until the Millennium  
When he, roused from slumber, becomes Shiva, Destroyer  
of Worlds.

In that dream state, what of us?  
We are the dreams of the Dreamer, illusions of that  
greater mind.  
While the Dreamer sleeps we keep watch over the beacon fire.  
We establish true North  
We divine the shapes of the constellations  
Name what is or is not  
Take moments and stretch them into eternal truths of that  
Inscrutable Mind.

In that Lucid state, what of us?  
We experience a sharpening of perception  
Pregnant whispers come out of the dark beyond our signal fires  
We confront the paradox of knowing that we do not know  
We seize our luck into our own hands  
Leave the Dreamer to his sleep patterns  
Awake to our power to curate what dreams we might choose.

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The Dreamer drifts back to deep sleep.  
Our senses once again become dull  
We no longer hear or see into the night  
We are no longer adrift in a sea of unknown length or depth  
We see the stars realign and the world made whole again.  
Safe within our new constructed certainty  
We once more dance and chant around the campfire's light  
Comforted that our prayers will hold back the night.



**I'm Still Standing, *Richard Taylor***

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# Foraging for Food

*James Burd Brewster*

“Momma, he’s back,” my 4-year old whispered. He squirmed in my lap.

It was snowing so we were inside, reading, snuggled together in the window seat. Actually, I was pointing to the words, and he was reading. Actually, he wasn’t “reading.” I was pointing to the words and he was reciting what he knew by heart.

Turning the page broke his concentration and he had glanced out the bay window.

I mimicked his glance.

“Sure is,” I whispered back. “He’s a beauty.”

“Look! He’s eating,” my 4-year old whispered. He started to bounce.

“Careful,” I said, “or we will scare him away.”

“I’m careful,” he whispered.

As if on stage and needing a prop, the grey squirrel carefully picked up a sunflower seed from the pile we had placed on the tree stump outside the window.

As if performing for a cooking show audience, he shelled and ate the kernel, paws and teeth moving at machine speed; up - down - rotate - repeat.

A quick look in each direction and he selected and ate another and another and another. Actually, he wasn’t eating, but storing them in his cheeks. We could see them expanding.

“Momma, I’m hungry,” my 4-year old whispered. He smiled up at me.



**Sea Shell, *Diane Payne***

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# Nature

*Bethany G. Gopinath*

Nature so bright,

Dancing deep and dark in the light,  
Watching the sun go up and down,  
The wind whistling around and around.

Nature so bright,

Going to sleep in the night,  
Dancing deep and dark in the light,  
Dancing deep and dark in the light.



**Bridges Between Us, *Sherbie Kardinal***

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# A New Road

*Nick Brady*

I always adore a woods travel  
It always delights me  
There are two roads that unravel  
And I take only one of them, I guarantee.

I have taken one path endless times  
Even though there lie two.  
There must be a change that defines,  
A concept for something new.

A new day I decided,  
I should try the other path.  
I felt adventurous and misguided—  
The path was like a strath!

So much hidden beauty!  
I had been missing so much.  
So much to see absolutely,  
Every piece I could touch.

This one taught me a lesson—  
To explore life every day.  
Leaving a lasting impression,  
I took a new route to portray.

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# happiness conversation with my little cousin

*Shayla Herron*

i spy happiness.  
where?  
there, inside of you.

look, i know you've been struggling with being happy.  
yes I have.  
i'm going to be honest with you,  
i do not know what happiness is,  
but i know i feel the opposite.

you feel lost, which is  
normal for someone your age.  
you're still a bud  
waiting to bloom. yes i know  
you feel a constant gloom. but  
there is always a sunshine  
waiting—

why can't I bloom now?  
patience is all you need  
the things you seek,  
you will soon feed.

once i figure out what happiness is, what will it feel like?  
happiness feels like a leaf,  
falling from a tree of grief,  
free.

what does it sound like?  
the laugh of a newborn baby,  
warm.

what does it look like?  
it looks like you,  
happy.

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# Arbuckle Spring

*John Timothy Robinson*

The first sign is when  
chicken-hawks glide  
in late, February flight.

The second, old harbingers;  
Robins  
gathered in an open field.

Once,  
I saw them as early as the fourth  
in that cold,  
second month of a year.

Eventually,  
Quaker Ladies and Blankets of Stars  
constellate the lawn.

First thunder  
wakes the snakes,  
though I even heard this  
a month before.

Faint scent of coal cinders  
drifts in wind.

Rain crow notes,  
a lonesome sound.

Frogs call out the daylight hours,  
this truest sign  
that spring has come.

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# The Universes' Oldest Soldier

*Michael J. Klotz*

If you had the choice to become immortal, would you take it? What if it came at a cost? What if you had to sleep for the immortality, and each time you woke up, in order to keep your immortal sleep, you had to kill?

That was my life for six thousand years. I jumped at the chance to become a cryo-trooper. To see the stars, serve the Orion League, all at the cost of having to sleep in a human cooler, a job that was seen as an easy way to see the stars and be a hero while doing it. I enlisted back in 2234, back when Mankind was new to the stars, and our allies banded together with us and each other to become a beacon of light and civilization in the darkness of the stars. The Orion League was composed of four races: us Humans, the Xendakk, the Darchon, and the Nochra; together we reached out into the darkness in optimism and in hope, before we realized how dark the void was.

The wakeup call we got came from the Andromeda Galaxy about a hundred years after I first went into the cryo-tank, the Llu-Null, silicon based life-forms, they easily took all of our bullets, our bombs, and everything else we could throw at them. It took luck and swift observation to see that they were weak to incendiaries, but by then, we'd lost five worlds. But we pushed them back, and after ten years, the Llu-Null were returned to the void between galaxies. We celebrated, and I went back under expecting a long sleep. It was a long, peaceful sleep until we encountered the Union.

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About six hundred years after I enlisted, I was deployed to the frontlines of the Union War. They were biologically closer to home since they were carbon based, and had more in common with us culturally than the Llu-Null. But they were an ancient nation, older than our fledgling league, and they were determined to rebuild their fallen empire. Rebuilding it would involve subjugating us to use as slaves and labor for their new empire. We took offense at that. Eight years later, they were broken up and integrated into the League. We'd won. But we lost something in that war somewhere, our unity.

The cracks in the League began to show, something in our fight against the Union changed us and how we viewed each other, I've never quite figured out where it was, and my next deployment was against the Xendakk, I couldn't fathom why. I was good friends with a Xendakk during the Llu-Null incursion. I also noticed that the Nochra and the Darchon in my unit had been reassigned to units of their own race during this campaign. I thought what we did to the Llu-Null was bad, what we did to the Xendakk still haunts me in my sleep.

Then the campaigns and the dates begin to blur together, the Brazil Uprising, the Zalaman Inferno, the Egypt Incident, the Rebellion of the Seven Moons, the Nochra Subjugation, the Siege of the Wimar Drift, the North War, the Darchon Extermination, the Jupiter Crusade, the Battle of Perun's Hammer, the Break, the Second Llu-Null Incursion, the Battle of the Corm Asteroids, the Ugarl War.

Over almost fifty campaigns, I visited over a thousand worlds, some that no man living has seen since the campaign that I was a part of had left them in ashes. And each time I woke up, I was fighting with less and less context and even further from home than before, and each one came with even

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more brutal orders. And now that I'm out, the League doesn't exist anymore, everything I believed in was gone. Now, all that was left was the Hegemony.

The first war I fought for the Hegemony was the War for Centauri. When we discovered that the Centauri system had been colonized by an unknown alien threat, and that they had been amassing ships in system, we troopers were sent in to deal with the threat before it could become realized. The fully assembled force involved twenty thousand Cryos, ten thousand starships, and almost fifty thousand levies. We were the hammer that would bring the wrath of Earth on the unknown once again. But we were now the monsters. When we arrived, there were no armies, no warfleets, simply large scale colonizing, just like we were doing across the stars. But we were ordered to go through with the campaign, and to follow our orders anyway. Never once did we think to question our orders, over four and a half thousand years of following orders had turned us off to such atrocities, such brutality that we brought down on their heads.

We never learned their names, their language, or their point of origin, we simply descended on them like predators, and devoured them. Every world was scoured of alien, no, xeno, life and then we moved on to the next one. Our fleet managed to keep the alien ships from leaving the system and boarded and captured them one at a time, inevitable, slow, and efficient. The last world we finally met a challenge, and when the aliens held us at bay for a month? We burned the atmosphere off the planet in nuclear fire. The soil burned until it was nothing but glass, the ashes clouded the sky in eternal night, and the very ground itself buckled beneath the iron will of the Hegemony. Simple, brutal, efficient.

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Have you ever heard of democracy? Gone. Just like everything I knew. Now leaders aren't chosen from the common man or career politician, they're engineered, bred and built for the singular purpose of ruling worlds for centuries as kings in all but name. Earth worked so hard to rid itself of these kinds of governments when we were still expanding across the stars, and they ultimately became the government of our children.

I can't even complain about how the government does anything anymore, much less actually argue against the current system. That used to be a human right, now I'm a "threat to the established order." I'm on a watch list now because I stand for everything the Hegemony used to be when the League still stood tall, when what I was fighting for existed. And because of my experiences and ideas, they are right to fear me, I've conquered whole moons with only the immediate squads under my command.

I didn't fight to build a system that oppresses, I fought to keep the peace and order in the galaxy and to expand the light of knowledge and civilization ever further into the unknown. Now the Hegemony holds a gun to everybody's head and dares them to step out of line. I didn't fight for this. But it's what I ended up building the foundation for.

I'm retired now, older than any of the current rulers, and certainly older than the Hegemony. And I don't have anything left to do but warn you, all you who want to be troopers, the future you may be fighting for, isn't the one you want to build. Once you step in that pod, there's no going back.

No matter how much I want to.



**Untitled, *Corey Bernard***

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## Contributors

**PATRICK ALLEN** is a retired division chair of Social Sciences at CSM who has an interest in the question of the individual's ability to know his or her own destiny. Are the walls we create real?

**JUDY ANGELHEART** is usually deeply immersed in an activity and forgets to take pictures. However, occasionally, a scene will capture her attention or she will have some idle time. She enjoys capturing small moments and often overlooked everyday objects. Like most people, she uses her phone to take photos.

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

**COREY BERNARD** is a CSM student. This is his first publication in *Connections*.

**BRIANA BLEDSOE** is a student at CSM majoring in communication. She plans on transferring to Towson University.

**NICK BRADY** is a CSM student. This is his first publication in *Connections*.

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**JAMES BURD BREWSTER** is the author of the *Steve and Stevie*; *Pete and Petey*; *Uncle Rocky, Fireman*; *Officer Jack*; and *EMT Morales* series of children's story books which can be seen at [www.gladtodoit.net](http://www.gladtodoit.net). Jim is a regular contributor to *Connections*. He is on the board of the Maryland Writers' Association ([www.MarylandWriters.org](http://www.MarylandWriters.org)). Jim learned to walk in Albany, sail on Lake Champlain, and navigate a polar icebreaker in the Coast Guard.

**KATIE SPIVEY BREWSTER** was raised in Wilmington, NC, learned to body surf at Wrightsville Beach, married Jim Brewster from Slingerlands, NY, and raised and home schooled five children (Ben, Luke, Rachel, Andrew, and Sam). She is the author of *Feast of Memories* and of *Aunt Louise Comes to Visit* – a story in rhyme. She is currently Nana to five grandchildren (Levi, Micah, Judah, Felicity, and Seth).

**LINDA COOKE SMITH** is the lead administrative assistant for the English, Communication, and Languages Division at CSM. She has been with the college for 20 years. She enjoys being an amateur photographer and has been published in one previous issue of *Connections*.

**LUIS DAMIAN** is a student at CSM majoring in accounting. He enjoys watching sports and having a good time.

**THOMAS DONOHUE** is 22 years old and currently looking for a job, so if you see anything good, let him know. His only marketable skills are writing weird stuff and making balloon animals.

**BETHANY G. GOPINATH** wrote this poem when she was seven and eight. She will be nine in April.

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**ANNALISE GREY** is a Pennsylvania native, dreamer, explorer. She writes because she likes talking to the voices in her head. Her work has been featured in *Tiny House Magazine*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, *Courageous*, and *Microfiction Magazine*.

**MICHAEL J. KLOTZ** is a Maryland native who has been a fan of writing for several years, has attended CSM for two semesters now, and looks to gain a history associate degree here in the near future. He is a big fan of classical fantasy and sci fi, setting most of his stories in these settings, making unique narratives with elements seen before but in a new way.

**LENA HANCOCK** is the assistant director of Marketing Operations at the College of Southern Maryland. She considers herself an amateur “iPhonetographer” and enjoys taking an obsessive amount of pictures of her two children as well as sunsets and animals on her family’s farm.

**SHAYLA HERRON** is 19 years old and a current student here at the College of Southern Maryland who is scheduled to graduate this spring with an associate’s degree in Arts and Sciences. Shayla has been writing poetry since the age of nine; her first poem was a haiku. She wrote for fun at that time. At the age of 11, an event triggered an eight-year revolving door of depression, anxiety, and post traumatic stress disorder. Shayla’s writing then became her means for survival. Most of her work, until 2017, was all dark, pain-stricken, and very uncomfortable to read. In January 2019, Shayla found freedom, peace, happiness, and her purpose. From fun, survival, to purpose, being a writer is the only label that Shayla will sincerely embrace.

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**CASSANDRA HIGGS** is from Waldorf and currently an English major at CSM. She also like musicals.

**DAHLIA JACKSON** is a CSM student who tries to write on occasion.

**TAITZION JOHNSON-WILLIAMS**, or Tai, has big dreams of being a lawyer, politician, and community leader, who dabbles in the arts; of bringing long-lasting change to my community, country and world; of never being forgotten. She was studying to become an engineer, and not enjoying it, when she heard a track from a famous musical about a historical political figure and realized that's what she wanted to do. CSM has been a great start, as was her time as an intern with a state lobby group in Annapolis. Tai explains all this to say, "That's what defines me, not my goals, but my determination to actually reach them, and the fact that my shot for the stars is taking into account the curvature of the universe and the direction of the solar wind."

**SHERBIE KARDINAL** is a local photojournalist, 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.

**KATE LASSMAN** holds an MFA in poetry from George Mason University and teaches English composition at the College of Southern Maryland. She lives in Waldorf, MD with her husband and four spoiled rotten cats named Hope, Joy, Grace, and Zany.

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**RAISA LEES** is a freshman at Great Mills high school who took two courses in English and history at CSM last year.

**KAREN D. McINTYRE** lives in La Plata, Maryland, with her husband and three cats. She retired after twenty-eight years teaching in middle and high schools. In the spirit of the Renaissance woman, she taught reading, English, social studies, science, math and art. Once she retired, she finally had time to devote to her writing. Karen has published two novels, *Parham's Mill* and *Ruby*, and is currently working on her third.

**KIARA MILLER** is a student at CSM majoring in general studies. She plans to transfer to Morgan State University next semester.

**WILLIAM "ED" MORONEY** is a professor at CSM, teaching criminal justice and homeland security.

**DIANE PAYNE** is a full-time mail operations electronic support technician for Mail, Distribution, and Fulfillment Services in the Marketing Department at CSM and is a photography assistant for the Government Relations and Public Information Office.

**DOMINIQUE PAYNE** is a student at CSM currently majoring in arts and sciences and has interests in photography and music. He plans on transferring to Bowie State University to major in music technology.

**JIM PAYNE** of Waldorf is a retired firefighter from National Airport. He dedicates his life story to his wife, son, daughter, and Dad, a DC Fire Lt.

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**NICHOLAS RITTER** is a sophomore at the college currently in his third semester, pursuing a degree in English.

**JOHN TIMOTHY ROBINSON** is a mainstream poet of the expressive image and inwardness from the Kanawha Valley in Mason County, West Virginia. His poetics was developed in the tradition of James Wright, Rita Dove, Donald Hall, Marvin Bell, Maxine Kumin, WS Merwin, Tess Gallagher, and Robert Bly, among many others.

**MICHELLE SIMPSON** is a professor in the English, Communications and Languages division at CSM.

**BENJAMIN SONNENBERG** is a recent graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park. He studied history, Middle East Studies, and Global Terrorism. He has been professionally published over a dozen times. His work is featured in *Pseudopod*, *The Jewish Literary Journal*, and *Roshangar*, a Persian studies journal. He has received the Whall Honors Award for Writing Excellence and the Persian Studies Essay Award. His literary interests include travel writing, immersion pieces, and short stories.

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

**JOANNE VAN WIE** is a poet who has resided in Southern Maryland for over twenty years. She loves the change of seasons and the way it seems to bring new poems to life each year. Joanne is the author of *Surfaces, Edges and Openings*, a chapbook published by Foot Hills Press.

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**GRACE VANGORDEN** is a student at CSM majoring in general studies. She plans to transfer to UMBC to major in global studies.

**MONA WEBER** currently works at CSM as the Associate to Bachelor's Degree in Nursing coordinator in the Health Science Division. She graduated from Bowie State with a masters in Counseling Psychology. Mona had the pleasure of working for UMUC's European Division where she had the opportunity to travel to various places around the world. She attempted to capture the beauty of different cultures and historical sites through the lens of her camera. Mona is amazed by nature's beauty especially as to how it attempts to take back things that were built in the name of progress but since have been abandoned and forgotten. Mona is currently working on a series of children's books in hopes of sharing her love for animals and nature and is working on a book about the adventures of an osprey who lives on the Chesapeake Bay.

**CHRISTOPHER WILKINS** teaches English at the College of Southern Maryland and is priest-in-charge of St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Brandywine, MD. He lives in Laurel, MD.

**CHRIS WILLIAMS** is a student at CSM currently majoring in psychology and minoring in massage therapy. He plans on helping athletes get over trauma from past injuries.

**OMAR YUNIS** always hops from hobby to hobby, trying out a new thing every single week, but photography was something to stick to through thick and thin. The pictures define who Omar is as a human and each one reflects back upon Omar's personality.

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