



Connections

FALL 2016
Literary Magazine

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND

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Fall 2016 Literary Magazine

volume 24 number 1



Law of the Land *by Robin Karis*

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Connections

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

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

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for submission guidelines at:*

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*Thank you to the
Languages and Literature Division
for its
generous support of the
Connections Literary Series Program.*

Ravens

Kate Lassman

Ravens, three of them, are sitting
on the wall at the scenic overlook,
and a fourth one at the feet
of a tourist couple, accepting store-bought bread,
snatching it rapaciously;
thinking he's just overeager, they both laugh.

One bird allows me close enough,
almost, to stroke his glossy feathers,
but he stares at me with baleful onyx eyes.
When I say, "Sorry, I have no bread for you,"
he returns a harder inky glare
and takes off to join his brothers.

As he moves, I see him shrink
from a free creature with the gift of flight
to a flapping street comic out for tips
whose purpose has become
to be laughed at by tourists.



“May you be inscribed in the *Book of Life*” by *Eileen Abel*

Poetic Euphony

Mallory Haselberger

You have easily become my favorite poem,
Not the Keats or Byron or Coleridge lyric of romance
The fresh green breath of Whitman and Rumi
Or the Dickinson of life, death, and religion.
You are instead a form all your own,
In a world all your own, that eclipses all else—
Symbol and allusion, the serenade of
A narrative for time and patience,
With swirling poetic diction that makes my head spin.
A splash of mutes and vowels and consonants,
Only pausing for the sweet tiny flash of a smile—
A couplet formed perfectly in a sea of words.
The beautiful metonymy of ‘joy’.
When I want to call all that I can see,
In those big, childlike eyes that stare into mine—
Kindness in your expressions to your mother
And an endearing shyness as you regard me,
Persevering continually like rhyme or meter
Commitment and fortitude – Spondaic at best.
Your poetry billows as neatly as Petrarch’s love,
As messily as Stevens’ Emperor of Ice Cream,
And as sweetly as Browning’s Sonnet 14,
But you—you are in a space all your own.
My favorite because of your amiability,
Your individuality, your heart—
Not because of the elements that I can count
Of hyperbole and simile and metaphor.
You have easily become my favorite poem,
Because you are you.

The Viewing

Katie Brewster

She really didn't want to go into that room—the Viewing Room. Why did they call this a “viewing” anyway? Who wants to look at the dead body of someone they love? Why not just close the big black box (“casket”—it's called a casket—where'd it get a weird name like that?) and say goodbye in your heart. You know, kinda like you were still talking with the “loved one.” There it was again, another label—“loved one”—that sounded so—well—awkward? Sure she had loved her, still did, but she didn't call her that or think of her as a “loved one,” but as Grandma.

Couldn't she just wait outside with her memories of Grandma? With the scenes in her head of them planting the seeds together and watering the plants together and cutting the flowers together and arranging them together as bouquets in vases—while they went into the “viewing” and gawked or acted like they were viewing her body when really they were trying to look at anything but the “corpse”—another strange word.

It was like death and dying had this whole language of its own: the “departed” or “deceased,” the “funeral”—(that's definitely an un-fun sounding word!), and “burial” or “cremation”—how does a person know what they want done with their body anyway—once they don't live in it any longer?

Yeah, she had lots of questions, lots of feelings.

When could they leave and go home? She was missing the gardening program she and Grandma always watched together on PBS. Did she really have to meet people that she didn't know even knew her Grandma? They sure hadn't been her garden buddy! Couldn't she just wait in the foyer? There were lots of arrangements out there she knew Grandma would

have liked. Would they also drag her to the “cemetery” and the “graveside” tomorrow? More odd words!

Sure she had read some of these words herself or heard them spoken before by grownups—but back then they hadn’t had anything to do with Grandma.

She hoped—REALLY hoped—they would let her make her own choice about the viewing, the funeral, the burial—all of it. She believed Grandma would have wanted her to be able to decide for herself if she wanted to attend. She thought, “I mean, is it actually mandatory to be there for any of these rituals—or is it just ‘unheard of’ for a granddaughter not to go into the viewing, not to be in the family row at the funeral, not to toss her clod of dirt on the casket?”

All she would really want to see anyway were the flowers. She hoped there were lots and lots of zinnias—Grandma’s and her favorite.

She really just wanted to remember the two of them gardening together—with their seed packets, planter boxes, and potting soil; watering the seedlings, watching them grow, tending them lovingly and finally snipping the bloom off the tall stems with the dainty hand clippers and placing them so carefully in a pretty glass vase. Bouquets— one of the little joys of life.

Seeds. Soil. Growth. Life. These were the words she was much more comfortable with.

Glitter

Yvette Dodson

The stars are like glitter sprinkling across the night sky
Moonshine so bright it warms my face
Glowing campfire embers that pulse and shrink from dark
to light, from soft to intense
Sparkly dancing sunlight splashed on a small part of the
Patuxent River at noonday
Joy gleam in my baby girl's eye as she twirls around in her
flowy dress
Mischievous grin in my baby boy's eye right before he
cartwheels across his goal during soccer
Shiny jewel dew drops on a beautifully geometric spider web
catching sprays of sun through the wood in crisp autumn air
Glimmer of hope in the teardrop of an eye from a kind word
spoken
Every little soul must shine, shine



A Rainy Night in Georgia by William "Ed" Moroney

The Sound the Hummingbirds Make

Mikaela Pollard

I remember the first time I heard them. Hummingbirds, hundreds of them I think. I remember my delight as I observed these beautiful creatures. I was a stranger, an observer to their secret world. Their language was lost to me, but I could somehow understand them, as though our souls were connected. My backyard was their sanctuary, their gathering place. I was allowed, for a few minutes to be a part of their world, a world where the line between human and bird was indistinct. On that sun-soaked, blue sky day, I was one of them. We were the same. I learned their song, a gentle, persistent hum. Never in my life could I have imagined that so small a bird could make such a noise, such music to my ears. I was enraptured in their song, the sound the humming birds make. In all my life I have never experienced such a beautiful sound, a sound most would consider displeasing. But in my ears, their humming was a beautiful melody. In all the universe, I have not heard such a beautiful, heavenly sound. I sit and watch them from my front porch. I constantly observe their every move, their daily habits. I wonder what they are thinking, or if they even have any thoughts. I close my eyes and listen to the hum of their wings. I open my eyes, and it is as though I am in the Garden of Eden, a magical celestial city, in which I am the only human. I look up into the faces of the trees, as they surround me like unmoving giants. I look up even further into the sapphire clear sky, void of any clouds. A gentle breeze whispers in my ear. I look at everything around me, taking in my surrounding. A doe and her fawn searching for food. A great eagle casts a magnificent shadow on the ground

beneath me. But my focus is only on the hummingbirds. Summer is nearly over, and that means my friends will soon be leaving. I mourn every time they leave, even though I know they will come back. I watch the hummingbirds, sadness growing in my heart as I realize that it will be awhile before I see them again. But now I hold on to each precious second that I have with them. We share the world, the Universe. As I observe the hummingbirds, I delight in the perfect balance of nature. Not only am I in their world, but they are also in mine. We are a part of each other. And I will always love them, my precious friends. When I am old and grey, and out of touch with the rest of the world, I will remember them. I will remember the hummingbirds as I fall to sleep at night. Their gentle humming will lull me to sleep. As my mind enters the land of dreams, I will dream of them. When I wake up in the morning to the bright sunshine or pouring rain, they will be there to greet me. When I fall into the pits of despair, their song will raise me up. When I try to fathom the issues of life, they will be there to comfort me. When I am lonely, their gentle humming will keep me company. I am so grateful for my friends. No matter where I go, they will be with me. Even if continents keep us apart, I will remember their song until I fall asleep in an unfamiliar place. When I am confused, I will seek their counsel. In the deep watches of the night I will think of them, their song a part of me. No matter where I go, I will never be separated from the sound the hummingbirds make.



Dragonfly by *Niquisha B. Keys*

We May Know

John D. Lamiman, 1953 - 2015

A Deep Solstice Quiet,
12 fine Christmas days,
how bright winter stars
befriend the warm home
and fat birds at feeders bring word,
as we lean toward the sun,
that Spring's bright riot
will come, bugfull of happiness
and long lists of not done.

How not to prune a tree

Sherbie Carson

This time last year it was easy.
Blade sharpened. Calculated strokes.
For the greater good, without a second thought
of how it must feel to be the one—
The one beneath the blade.
The one being cut.

I approach her slowly.
Not as green. Not as bold.
Not as quick to be the one that decides
which branches may stay—and which must go.

I pull on the gloves of softened leather,
this time they recognize the shape of my palm.
As water to Pilate, praying they will be for me
a barrier of absolution—
from the pain that will come from my hand.

Once green with belief in the lie
that healing follows after time
like a puppy on the ankle.
But healing does not come eager,
and chasing the ball of time as it rolls along.

Healing looks more like an old black lab
cooling his belly on the kitchen floor. Waiting.
Waiting for us to come home to ourselves.
To finish the tireless work of becoming—
content to sit, and simply be.
Soft brown eyes revealing the love,
unconditional, the kind that stops the bleed.

Adam's daughter, this is my right—
To subdue the earth, and give name to its substance.
To steward. To care for. To tame.

It's been told to me that this is how it's done.
How it has always been. How it must be.
I've read the words—
followed the diagrams with tracing fingertips,
the proper form for a fruitful tree.

Her leaves, her veins, pulsing beneath my touch,
Screaming that she does not wish to be contained
within six feet of space—
that she resents the audacity of man to shape her frame.
And I am that man. I do not wish to be.

For I carry my own scars from the blade of another,
yet unhealed by time slow in coming for me.
Gloves off, shears to the ground,
I rest beneath her shade,
forsaking the tireless work of becoming,
finally content to simply be.

To be the one with soft brown eyes
and love unconditional,
hands mastering the art of mercy—
Still learning,
How not to prune a tree.



Mohawk Trail by *Richard Taylor*

“Are we there yet?”

James “Jim” Burd Brewster

“Are we there yet?”

The whine came from Ben in the back seat.

“Not yet.”

The answer came from his dad in the driver’s seat.

“I’m bored.”

The faint smell of peanut butter rose from the wadded wax paper that had wrapped their picnic lunch. Jim knew they were an hour away.

“Well...Let’s see what we can do about that.”

There were seven of them, strapped in their red Chevy Astro, hurtling up the Adirondack Northway at 75 mph racing to reach Gramma and Poppa’s place where hugs, smiles, and sailing waited. Jim glanced right and saw the exit sign for East Raymond flash past. He smiled as the memory came back in vivid detail.

There were three of them, strapped into their red Peugeot station wagon hurtling up the newly opened Adirondack Northway at 75 mph racing to reach their summer place where friends and sailing awaited. They were an hour away and, while no one said it, their thoughts were, “Are we there yet?”

Dad’s baritone broke the silence with the twinkling quality it had when he was about to do something fun.

“Let’s make a limerick! I’ll start.”

The exit sign for East Raymond flashed past.

“There once was a lady from East Raymond. “

Mom and Jim grinned at each other because they had also seen the sign go by.

Jim immediately joined, “That was held up by a High-way man.”

“She fought and she fit.” Mom’s alto voice chimed in.
“She scratched and she bit,” Dad added, not losing rhythm.

Then after a syncopated pause Jim finished, “And that was the end of the Highway man!”

They laughed for a mile; heartfelt, cleansing, uninhibited. They were pleased with their result, amused at their cleverness, and amazed at the ease of the limerick’s birth. So they laughed and their laughter said, “I love you!”

Jim didn’t remember any other limerick they created that hour, but 25 years later every detail of the “Lady from East Raymond” remained etched into his mind and ranked as his all-time favorite-time with his mom and dad.

Glancing at the East Raymond exit sign in the rear-view mirror, Jim realized he didn’t even know if his mom and dad remembered the event that was so significant to him. Returning to the problem at hand, Jim smiled, looked at Ben in the rear-view mirror, and said, “Let’s make a limerick. I’ll start.”

At the end of an hour they were out of the van and hugging Gramma and Poppa.

“Hey, Ben,” Poppa asked after his hug. “How was the trip up?”

“Pretty good, Poppa. We listened to ‘Adventures in Odyssey’ and made up limericks.”

“Reeaally?” Poppa drew the word out. A pleased smile slowly grew on his face as he looked at Jim and intoned, “There once was a lady from East Raymond . . .”



Summer's Work by *Elizabeth Prather*

On the Mantle

Joanne Van Wie

On the mantle

My grandmother is always here
with me,
she is on the mantle gently sleeping
in a jar of clear formaldehyde.
It is not her whole self, of course,
not her exhaled-smile self.
But it is her sick self, her inside self,
her stunted tumor once-removed.

It was not this tumor that killed her though,
this rounded, grapefruit-sized, darkened form.
She lived through the slicing open (too
close to the spine), the removal of
the pressure (pushing on the back of her heart).
The two forms were so close to becoming one
organ, one heart-tumor beating against
her.

Yes, this sleeping form is a solid reminder of
those broken days
when grandpa came home late from the foundry,
or was it the bar, with muttering lips he
complained about the struggle of working
with tensile steel.

It was all about the breaking point

by the fifties,

he might've been done drinking by then
and maybe he even tiptoed on the stair treads
bringing her chicken soup and marigold roots,
but instead,

I picture him passing by the bedroom door,
stopping,
turning back,
and holding up the tumor,
the sickness like a crystal ball,
the wrinkled growth
gazing in at her like an all-seeing eye.
Grandpa would smile through his missing
teeth.

He didn't need to threaten to put this death back
inside, to replace this sickness with a new type of
dying—it was unspoken.

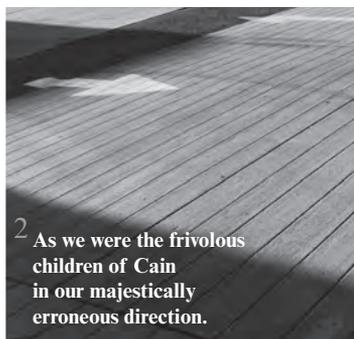
She would play it down and say, George,
just put it on the mantle and let's get a good night's sleep.
But they never had a mantle or a good night to sleep by,
a lit candle to display above the hearth.

There is no part of my grandfather I kept, except
maybe his hard blue irises, his dark jutting pupils,
but I will always have this jar—this
deformed growth of tissue in sight.
It is the preserved inside of one with the threat of
another grasped around it,
it is the lifting up
of the closest thing to her heart—
the reminder of the danger of being held
in his calloused hands.

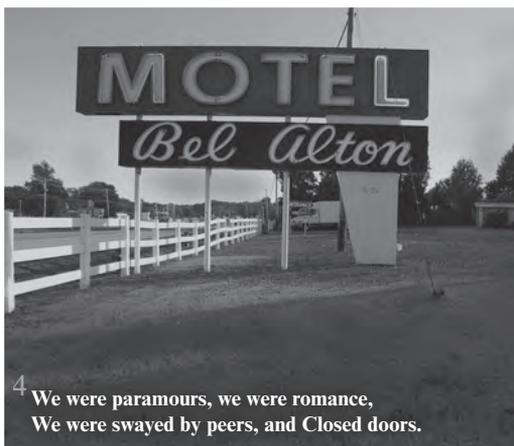
I often run my own gentle fingers around this
edge, this part of the whole, and I feel my own heart
open, (but also close just in time) because, after all,
this is the broken sort of love from which I came.



1 This sphere was our world, and darling, it's rotten.



2 As we were the frivolous children of Cain in our majestically erroneous direction.



4 We were paramours, we were romance, We were swayed by peers, and Closed doors.



5 We drowned in lust. Plowed pep and inhaled dust.



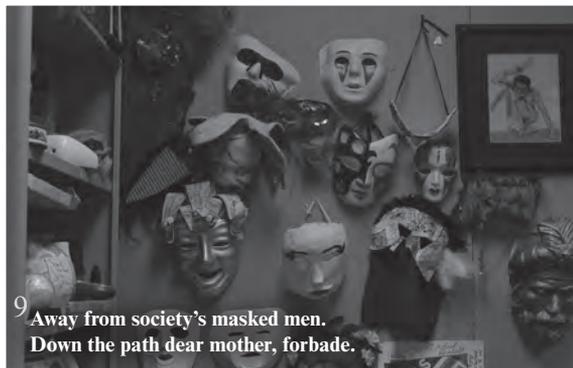
7 And though our souls were the landscape. Exploited and molested. We were power. Fearless at every hour.



8 So the Mississippi delta blues Blessed our stereo while we cruised.



6 Some days, we lounged on the porch, airy,
While our Lungs flaked cigarette crusts.



9 Away from society's masked men.
Down the path dear mother, forbade.

Sin and Serenity by Fantaisatou Gai



Storm Dancing by *Christina Campbell*

Henna

Mackenzie Gaylord

Exotic in the moment, I left my
Heart open
Our lips gently parted, and
Crashed like waves from the
Ocean
Beneath sheets with tangled
Feet, you whispered words I
Couldn't dare repeat
My chest an open cage you exposed my soul, spoke of
Forever and tattooed you
In gold
Come the morning sun you were
Gone without a trace, for your tattoo was just henna,
never permanent ink.



Noon Over Ten Tires *by Jim McDonald*

Contempt

Cindy Summer Collins

Seven...eight...nine...ten...

Here it is.

This is building One Hundred and Eleven, not terribly hard to find, even in the late evening. The new number system made it easy, following them down about ten blocks from subway station A-4. One left turn, one right, and here we are.

The door is...the same as it was. Rectangles and triangles arranged into your usual aesthetically pleasing door design. It had withered, the wood turning from a reddish-brown color to a dull brownish-grey, with cracks creeping from its sides. A rusting bronze-colored mail slot stood at waist height, with a matching peephole sitting further up, just below what used to be the door knocker. A shred of light is breaking through the constructs from behind, striking the metallic numbers that identify this place.

The brick-lined building is no real prize either; just another two-story apartment that's had its fair share of renovations over the years. The two azaleas are still there, decorating the sides of the porch.

The outside almost has a naïve air to it, ignorant of what lived within.

Two weeks ago, Chocola was granted the honor of the grand title: General of the Army, by request of the Queen herself. After ten years of serving their military through strife and revolution, his hard work and peculiar strides of determination had been recognized. This is a position that placed him as second in command to her Majesty: Queen Alexavier. This was supposed to be the highlight of his career, a source of great pride for the young man.

However, on the day of his acceptance speech, he saw a man who had been absent from his life for fifteen years: his father. Standing at a podium alongside the Queen, before an audience that counted in the thousands, he was to speak of his new title and how he planned to use it to the best of his ability. As he gave thanks to those who supported him along his journey, he locked his eyes with the one man who he resented the most. There he stood mere yards away from the stage amongst the sea of eyes, staring back at him. There was a twisted sense of pride carved into his face behind those thick-rimmed lenses of his. When Chocola recognized who he was, immediately he felt a pit rip open in his stomach. There was a reason why he hadn't seen him in so long. He was physically, viciously abusive. No one ever found out since he hid behind his lies. He forced a very young Chocola to stay quiet for him, threatening to hurt his younger sister should anyone ever find out.

His parents had gotten divorced when he was thirteen, due to complications in their marriage. The complications he endured, however, were never discussed since he did everything he could to keep his father's secret. Nevertheless, this divorce was a blessing for the child. He spent the next few years adjusting to his new life. Unable to find his purpose in his college days, he eventually enlisted in the army when he turned eighteen with the underlying idea that since he was used to violence he could find somewhere to fit in under their ranks.

Now, fifteen years later and father has the gall to intrude on his life. In his proudest moment, everything had crashed down around him; he was suddenly unable to speak. Seizing up on stage, he excused himself from the podium and ran behind the curtains. He was sick to his stomach after seeing that monster from his childhood, he couldn't continue his speech.

That's why the newly appointed General tracked this man down. Using his inside sources, he discovered the area the man had lived in, and after a week or so of mental preparation, Chocola decided to pay his father a visit.

This feels like an insult.

This was his home, once.

Pushing down a pang of indignation, Chocola snapped away from his thoughts. The sunlight was dying fast. Stepping up to the patio, Chocola reached into the satchel that hung at his side, promptly flipping out a small pair of keys. The first one was stuck into the bottom lock and turned with a successful click. The top took more coercion, but it gave through.

Same locks.

As soon as he grabbed the doorknob, his muscles tensed and he stood frozen. One, two, three heartbeats later, the five-foot soldier drew in a deep breath and pushed the door open.

Its hinges gave a strained squeak as he opened it slowly but with intent. It was dark, the only source of light came from what little filtered through the arched window above the entrance. There were stairs that led both up to the main floor and down to the basement, the whole house was quiet. He stepped in, the air smelled strange, there was a hint of familiarity, but there was something very different, an old scent hung still. Chocola began to feel his heart rate increase; he could feel the adrenaline beginning to seep into his blood.

Bracing himself against the silence, he started up the stairwell. One foot in front of the other, the wood panels creaked softly. "Perhaps he's not here," Chocola thought to himself as he ascended, as if hoping to find an excuse to turn around and leave without another word. Reaching the top of the stairway, he scanned the area through his rounded spectacles.

The living room to his right, the kitchen before him, and the hallway to his left, all seemed coated in a thin veil of dust. None of this had been touched in years. This simply can't be the place he's hidden away in all this time...

Suddenly, the squeak of a chair crept out from the hallway. Chocola winced, reflexively grabbing for his gun. Drawing the pistol, he aimed the barrel down the hall, but he saw no one. Yet there, to the left stood a door, cracked ever so slightly, letting a glimmer of the dying sun break through onto the dull, red carpet. He realized his hands had begun shaking, more so than he had anticipated, the barrel was shivering.

For a few seconds Chocola stood frozen, barely breathing and unsure of whether or not he'd be able to hear anything beyond the heart thumping in his chest. Slowly, shakily, he lowered his gun and stood upright as he drew in the deepest breath he could muster. Staring at the ground, he propped himself against the railing next to the stairs and thought for a moment. "Why...? After all these years, why am I shaking?" His sight shifted from the floor back to the light, it was deep-orange and fading fast.

Pushing all of his thoughts to the back of his mind, Chocola steeled himself as he let go of the railing and began stepping towards the door ajar. Nothing else mattered, no amount of fear or hesitation, no amount of risk was any longer up for debate in his mind.

The soldier stopped at the door. Raising his hand, he lightly touched the cool wood, only to place the rest of his palm to the grain. He leaned in, and with one swift motion, the door was pushed wide open.

No more hiding.

Light broke out from the room. Within, he saw multiple lamps were turned on, the overflowing book cases reflected the light through their dusty veils. At the back of the room, near the large window overlooking the street stood a large desk cluttered with paperwork of all kinds. A figure sat in the

office chair right behind it, his back turned away. Chocola saw black, thick-rimmed rectangular glasses resting atop the cluttered mahogany desk, next to an emptied bottle of brandy. He saw smoke, rising from what he presumed to be a pipe. But the figure sat motionless, not even a flick of the ear to his son's arrival.

The silence was deafening, Chocola stared at the figure in the chair. A swirl of emotions stirred in his eyes.

"How did you know to find me here?" the man asked, ever so casual as he lifted his head. His voice was soft and delicate, and he spoke barely above a whisper, yet the General could still taste the venom in his father's words.

"You led me here." Chocola responded.

"Well then, allow me to congratulate you on your new job!" He turned his head, a small smile cracked on his face as he locked eyes with the younger man. "Ah what am I thinking?" He swung his chair around and faced him, "I can't even see my boy without my glasses."

Resting his pipe in its ashtray, he reached over and grabbed his spectacles, setting them onto his nose and squinting slightly as his eyes adjusted. His hair was combed over and curled neatly down his forehead; his look hadn't changed a bit.

"My oh my! Haven't you grown?" He chuckled softly, "...a few inches, at least."

Chocola stared straight through him. Rage seethed out from behind his lenses. His breathing shuddered slightly as his dad greeted him. Involuntarily, he clenched his fists.

The man took notice, "Well now, don't get too excited. It's only been about what, fifteen years?" He shrugged his shoulders, tilting his head and casting glances between Chocola and an old photo stowed at the corner of his desk. "Looks like we have some catching up to do, don't we?" he murmured as he leaned back into his chair. Reaching for his pipe, he was careful to avoid letting any ashes fall on to his green sweater-vest.

The words played through his mind faster and faster as Chocola stared the man down. “How dare you.” His breathing began to shake more and more as he stood in his spot, not having moved an inch since he opened the door. His face began to express a subtle twitch as his jaw tightened. “You have the gall...to do this to me...knowing what you did?”

“You’re really enjoying this, aren’t you?” The words slipped out of Chocola’s mouth. He trembled in his attempts at retaining his composure.

“...Hmm?” The man glanced back at him over his glasses. He was now fast at work on his smoke with his pipe fastened to his mouth. “I suppose I am, Chocola.” He paused briefly, “Wouldn’t you be happy to see your son after so long? Why should I contain my delight? Especially after how proud you made me, just the other day?” He shot Chocola a toothy smirk. “By the way...” he continued, “How are the girls?”

Chocola’s eyes flew open. Before he could give himself a chance to process, he turned his back to the man. “I’m afraid that’s none of your concern.” He answered in his calmest voice “...We will continue this in the basement, however.” He concluded, moving back to the entrance.

Briskly, he walked out of the room and down the hall, ignoring the muted chuckle behind him. He started back towards the stairs. His legs felt like they were moving on their own as his mind went blank. The only thing he could focus on was reaching the basement. Along the way, he unbuttoned his jacket and took off his glasses, slipping them securely into the jacket’s front pocket. He couldn’t see, but he didn’t want to.

Reaching the door to the basement, he removed his jacket and hung it on the standby coatrack, leaving him with his multicolored shorts and his black t-shirt. Those were the only two things he was worried about getting caught up in the mess. The rest could be replaced.



Entrance by *Diane Payne*



Thirsty Sheep by *Ginette Krantz*

Words

Jennifer Polhemus

Why are words always half hidden? Why do they float through dreams so vividly only to dissolve into fragments of unidentifiable emotions that linger like cheap perfume? I deliberately try to drown myself in words. I refuse to surface in an exquisite attempt to connect with Something at the moment just before death. But I am terrified. Of what? I am lung-busted and breath-bound, so I careen to the surface struggling to bring a few near-death experience words with me. But they fall away like drops from my body when I rise into the ordinary air. The air is too loose to hold me. Her molecules flit too far apart to be of any use to me. On an August night in Alabama, perhaps there she is heavy enough with words to do some good. But not here. Not in New England's springtime. Yes, there is a green that only appears once but it's only an illusion of density. Words and words and words and words—a deep, man made lake of them—so tightly packed that I can almost float on their surface. But I sink (and I want to sink) and they pull at me like unruly children in a grocery store. They drag me down as far as I will let them. And what I want is to settle to a depth from which I can't escape because I know, as sure as ingrown toenails hurt, that I will gasp for air. But it won't be air, will it? It will be words—watery, wet wiggle and wild—filling my lungs in a rush of sweetness. Trickling to the terminal ends of my bronchial passages where only one sentence, then one word, then one letter will fit. Passing through the membranes into my blood where they reform in ways I will never be able to write because...Because...BECAUSE...some jerk yanks me up by the scruff of my neck, beats on my chest, blows into my mouth and calls himself a hero when I vomit up the only thing that has ever come close to saving me.



Deja vu by *Paul Toscano*

The 1% Love the 1% Patriot

Dominique Wilson

I wanna be loved by you, just you, and nobody else but you.
Let's go skinny dipping in the rivers of Flint, Michigan, to
spite the crisis, despite the crisis.

Take in the moment and float, face down and class up. Live a
little, because breakfast at Tiffany's will always taste
better when you aren't desperately seeking Susan.

Let's live in Brooklyn with the gypsy, hippie, settlers. I'd tell
you "never burn a bridge that you can sell," and you'll
laugh and say, "I love you," and I'll laugh and say "you
shouldn't"

Let's wear Hijabs as masquerade masks for mardi gras as the
sun sets and the sea rises. Fried green tomatoes and steel
magnolias never smelled this good in Atlantis.

Let's assume the most unusual positions while hunting in
Africa. We'll combine and divide rhythmically, and
violently with pageantry. We'll be savages. Instead of
multiplying we'll surround ourselves with trifling ivory
trinkets. Our legacy will survive through them, I hope.
Sometimes in April we will yell "I Hate Mondays" as an
excuse for executing our youth.

Let's flee to Syria to have a picnic. We'll wallow in awe, while
watching the high tech lynching of a pregnant iron
maiden, with a wire hanger as a noose.

I'd say "mommy dearest always said, they're all going to
laugh at you, but I never thought that I'd like it. Not this
much at least," and you'll give a blank stare as you reach
for something in the basket. I'll be Norma Jean and
Norman Bates, and you'll just be happy to be there, I
think. And we can both be Bonnie, and we can both
be Clyde.

500 days of fall will pass. Days of you falling in love with me.
And me falling in love with me.

Let's eat Chinese food in one of the Koreas. We'll eat our
cat well done, and our dog medium rare. If the waiter gets
our order wrong we won't care because they all look the
same anyway. "You'll say I love you" and I'll cry with
grief. And our waiter will laugh with horror.

From womb to tomb, cradle to grave, and from birth to under
earth, I want you to love me so much that it hurts, yourself
of course. It's a wonderful life or it can be an imitation of
life, it has always been up to you and only you.

Let's role play.

I'll be Sid Vicious and you'll be Nancy.

Run, bite the bullet, and jump the gun.

I'll paint black dahlia smiley faces on you as I indulge in
succulent strange fruits, so I won't be considered a racist,
or clueless.

You'll happily be my slave, or at least you'll wear a permanent
smile for a while.

You'd tell me to save others a piece and I'd say,

Let Them eat cake.

Because you're mine, all mind, from the moment you are born
to the moment you are mourned,

We'll play ring around the rosie until I feel like you're worthy.

Let's make America great again and instead of our hearts,
let's wear our bootstraps on our sleeves.

The Girl With the Purple Hair

Sean Rada

To the girl with the purple hair:
I don't know if it was the ambiguity
Of our first and last goodbye
Or the fact that I saw your bare breast
Before we met eye-to-eye.

You sent the first text-
That was so new to me
I thought you had been bought
I was always the seeker
I had never been sought.

I was on vacation
For that first, simple "Hello,"
Maybe I shall forever link
The Freedom of Florida
With the words you put in ink.

We talked all day and night
For a week, and when I returned
I rushed to your house so quick
Not knowing what to expect, except
That purple hair and red lipstick.



Midsummer Token by *Mary Prather*

Contributors

EILEEN ABEL, CSM's vice president of the Division of Academic Affairs, is an avid reader and is fascinated with the interplay of substance and light, both in written word and visual image. She is also a collector of stones and wood.

JAMES "JIM" BURD BREWSTER is the author of the acclaimed "Glad to do it!" children's picture books which include *Uncle Rocky*, *Fireman*, and *Officer Jack*. He learned to walk in Albany, NY, sail on Lake Champlain, and navigate a Polar Icebreaker in the US Coast Guard. He and Katie lived in Baltimore, MD when Ben (6) and Luke (4 1/2) heard the Uncle Rocky, Fireman stories and visited the Overlea fire house. The family grew to five and moved to Pomfret, MD, outside of Washington, DC. Ben and Luke grew also. Ben is a Marine, married, and father of 5 and Luke works for Apple. Jim's heart still flutters whenever his three favorite ladies (Wife Katie, Daughter Rachel, Granddaughter Felicity) smile at him.

KATIE BREWSTER is a mother of five grown children, grandmother of five, and wife of Jim Brewster for 36 years. She was a Creative Writing student in Wayne Karlin's class at the Leonardtown Campus, where she met some good folks and learned a great deal. She is also a daughter, a daughter-in-law, a sister, an aunt, a niece, a cousin, a granddaughter, and a grandmother who is blessed to be a friend of many wonderful people.

CHRISTINA CAMPBELL says that her photos speak to her about the mysticism of Southern Maryland, where she recently spent a three-month sabbatical from her “real” life as a government contractor in Northern Virginia. She is a certified in underwater photography and is venturing into above-water photography.

SHERBIE CARSON says, “The greatest goal that I hope to accomplish during this lifetime, is to bring Joy to the heart of my Creator, and to become a worthy steward of the beautiful children, devoted husband, loyal family members, and faithful friends that He has entrusted to my care.”

CINDY SUMMER COLLINS is a 19-year-old college student. She takes great joy in thinking up fictional stories. Over the years she has grown attached to her fictional characters. Writing is second only to illustration in her hobbies. She started writing much later than when she began drawing, and feels that she still has much more to learn. One of the reasons why she started writing is that after thinking up so many fictional plotlines, she wanted to be able to record them in writing so that she wouldn’t forget them.

YVETTE DODSON is “one who wanders but I am not lost”! She is a mother of seven and an adjunct instructor for CSM. She enjoys writing music, playing her guitar, and singing when she is not busy with her family and teaching jobs. She was born and raised in Southern Maryland. “Glitter” was inspired by a night camping under the stars.

FANTAISATOU GAI is 17 years old. She was born in New York, but raised in her parent’s native country, The Gambia, West Africa. Her photos aim to tell a short, and fictional tale about two misfit or unbothered youths, who

chose to live their lives recklessly. While in lust with each other, though they were aware that their choices were not considered to be socially moral, they felt a sense of total freedom and bliss.

MACKENZIE GAYLORD is being published for the first time in *Connections*.

MALLORY HASELBERGER is a junior at Penn State University studying English. She graduated from CSM in 2016. Although her love for language and literature only appeared after her first read of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams" in high school, she has enjoyed reading, writing, and exploring all forms of literature ever since.

ROBIN KARIS lives in Maryland and enjoys writing, reading, and photography. She has been a fan of the *Connections* Literary Magazine for many years.

NIQUISHA B. KEYS is a 19-year-old student majoring in Communications at CSM. Photography has been a hobby of hers since 12th grade, and she takes pictures when not busy at work.

GINETTE KRANTZ just recently started attending some courses at CSM and began teaching criminal justice courses this fall, as well.

JOHN D. LAMIMAN, 1953 - 2015, was an English professor at CSM. His warmth, curiosity, and love of learning inspired students for many years. Heartfelt thanks to his widow, Claire, for allowing us to publish his work in this issue of *Connections*.

KATE LASSMAN is an adjunct instructor teaching English composition at CSM at the Waldorf Center for Higher Education and La Plata Campus. She holds an MFA in poetry from George Mason University and lives in Waldorf with her husband and two rambunctious kittens.

JIM MCDONALD is a disabled carpenter with two adult sons and six grandchildren. He has lived in apartments, trailers, homes, and now on a houseboat at Port Tobacco Marina. His blog site, *From my Head to Yours*, seems to be a good way of getting more experience as a writer.

WILLIAM “ED” MORONEY is an assistant professor at the College of Southern Maryland and coordinator for the Criminal Justice and Homeland Security curriculums.

DIANE PAYNE currently works full-time for Mail, Distribution, and Fulfillment Services in the Marketing Department at CSM as the mail electronic support technician and is a photography assistant for the Community Relations Department.

JENNIFER POLHEMUS graduated with highest honors from CSM in 1999. She was first published in the *Connections Literary Magazine* in 1991, and her work has appeared there many times over the last two decades. She currently lives in Pennsylvania and has worked in the mental health field since 1998. Her most recent work includes five poems in *Awakenings Review*, 2015, a literary magazine with the mission of advocating for those with and educating all regarding living a life touched by mental illness. “Residue of Dreams,” a poem from her third chapbook, *Women Dancing* (published by *Poet’s Haven*, Ohio in 2014), and previously published in *Connections Literary Magazine*, was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2014.

MIKAELA POLLARD is working towards an associate's degree in English Studies. After earning her degree, she plans on attending a four-year university (Bowie) and earn a bachelor's degree in Creative Writing.

ELIZABETH PRATHER is a student studying for a career in biological sciences. She enjoys sharing her creativity with others through the arts.

MARY PRATHER is a college student, a lover of books, and a dabbler of photography.

SEAN RADA is a student at CSM. He read *Acquainted with the Night* by Robert Frost in the seventh grade, and knew, the second that he finished the last line, that poetry would play a huge part in his life. He states that he can't imagine what a notebook looks like with more notes than unfinished poems. It's helped him through rough times and has made good times even better. He plans on becoming an English teacher so that he can try and instill this same love for poetry in students in high schools across America.

RICHARD TAYLOR currently works full-time for Mail, Distribution, and Fulfillment Services in the Marketing Department at CSM as the mail courier.

PAUL TOSCANO retired from College of Southern Maryland after 35 years. He enjoys taking photographs.

JOANNE VAN WIE is a twenty-year resident of St. Mary's County but was born and raised in upstate New York. Writing has always been her favorite hobby and most healthy obsession.

DOMINIQUE WILSON is in his last year at CSM. He is 22 years old and has been writing for two years.



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