

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND



Connections

SPRING 2023
LITERARY MAGAZINE



EDITOR

Neal Dwyer
Cara Fogarty

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Christopher Ankney, John Kulikowski, Rachel Smith, Diana Sydnor

PRODUCTION AND DESIGN

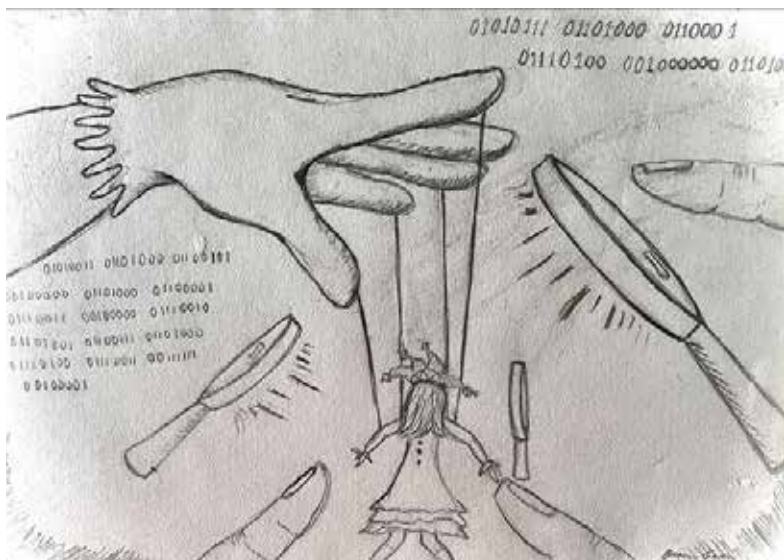
Kim Quigley



Connections

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND
Spring 2023 Literary Magazine
volume 30 number 2





Cover Image: Woman's Manipulator, Briana Garcia

“Woman’s Manipulator” represents how women have been controlled in past times as well as in modern. The hand controlling women like a puppet is man’s societal control on women as well as studying them as if women were animals. The fingers pointing at the woman with curiosity as well as the magnifying glasses symbolize how women are a sort of experiment to men as well as objects. The coding numbers on the left translate to say, “she has rights?!” and the right side translates to mean, “what is she? Woman?” The coding number is meant to depict how men’s study of women is scientific rather than emotional. The image’s overall premise is to capture how women in society are objectified, controlled, and manipulated to act in a certain way according to societal standards. The image continues to display women’s struggles past and current, which is woman’s folly in being manipulated to fit men’s idea of what a woman is.

1010

Table of Contents

POETRY

July, Brienna Harkness 6

Perfect, Breanna Kekesi 8

Mist, Kate Lassman 11

Permanence, Kate Lassman 12

My Offer, Jennifer Polhemus 14

Please Do Not Yell at Me, Elizabeth Wolfe 16

Wyoming, John Kucera 17

When One Door Closes, Morgan Carder 18

Occupy Space, Lily Ridgell 22

How to Get Older, Lily Ridgell 25

Gas Station Coffee, Angie Corado 26

Renovation, John Kucera 27

Flood, Michael Glaser 28

The Children of My First Marriage, Michael Glaser 29

The Poem I Can't Yet Name, Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai 33

PROSE

Medevac, Wayne Karlin 30

PHOTOGRAPHY

Woman's Manipulator, Briana Garcia 4

Safe Mode, Jennifer Houchin 7

I'll Be There with..., Donna Sperry 10

Under Cover, Karen Smith Hupp 15

Fields in the Berkshires, Mona Weber 21

Lady, Craig Powell 23

Reflections, Diane Payne 24

CONTRIBUTORS 34



July

Brienna Harkness

The walk is long.

The stars twinkle, bright, but

I can't even see the pavement

underneath my feet.

Dirt, then gravel

sliding under my soles

I can barely get a grip.

I feel for your hand, a firm tug;

the view is worth the ache in my calves.

Tiny pebbles poke into my back.

I turn my head and

lock eyes with two stars

brighter than what's shining on us.

I'd stay here forever

despite the cold.

I know I won't forget this

but I take a picture

just in case.



Safe Mode, *Jennifer Houchin*



Perfect

Breanna Kekesi

You can never reach it

No matter how hard you try

How you spin the words or deeds

In a feeble attempt to please

And shoulder the weight of the work and the weeks

You can give your all and still get nothing

It is simply how the world works

And maybe that should tell you something

But just as the clock won't spin the other way

It's impossible to return to the days that you crave

In some regards, it's better that way.

Though it's easier said than done.

Lying in bed

Sheets and mind tangled

You will never attain the meaning of those racing thoughts

It will never change

You can try and you can fight

Beg all you please

But at the end of the day, it is a burden

That you just can't afford to keep

You will never reach it.





I'll Be There with..., *Donna Sperry*

Mist

Kate Lassman

Morning, early, and once levered out of bed
after a restless night, I stand
by the picture window. Beyond the trees
thick white mist envelops the lake,
a veil under cool dawn air.
Fretful thoughts and pending choices,
like the mist, refuse to coalesce,
yet unlike, they yearn for peace
as found in those white swirls.
Why do we all so crave answers,
to see beyond the fog?
Why is it so hard to carry questions,
until, soon or late, the time is right?
For instance: are you drawn enough
by love, and have the courage,
to extend your hand and touch the mist,
the first syllable of mystery?

Permanence

Kate Lassman

I.

The giant maple tree was such a fixture,
producing seeds with wings that rode the wind,
and shapely leaves, fresh green in spring,
red-gold in autumn. So permanent it seemed.

Yet when its growth threatened roofs and walks,
a single day saw the tree's demise.

The arborist pointed at the stump to say
that if it stayed, the rot that ate
the jagged hole inside would lead
a storm to bring the tree down anyway.

When does permanence mean security,
and when is it stagnation?

And what is meant by permanence
in the first place?

II.

How did the winds of change become cliché
except by being true?

Why should our souls, just like our bodies
not need air, variety, stimuli,
scents borne on the wind,
in order to survive, to grow,
and become, little by little,
what we are meant to be?

III.

In the space
with the maple tree removed,
more daffodils than I ever planted
bloom in the sun, move in the wind.



My Offer

Jennifer Polhemus

Broken things love beauty.

The way a deer dies on the road

and a sunset explodes red across the sky.

The way I smile at you when you are not there,

Believing you can see me through the darkness

that weighs down on my frightened chest

expecting miracles from shards of glass

and three smooth stones gathered silently from a stream bed.

Broken things remember that the right questions

are far more important than the wrong answers.

That “Do you love me?” holds more promise

than the answer “No.” or, worse yet, “Only if...”.

That negative energy is the easiest to detect

and high vibrations are elusive in their vitality.

Broken things never miss the innuendo.

The way a poem leaves you wanting.

Like this one.



Under Cover, *Karen Smith Hupp*

umbrellas, windshield
screens from weather, each other
in plain sight, yet not



Please Do Not Yell at Me

Elizabeth Wolfe

If your words grew abrasive
I'd cut out my tongue.
It'd be more persuasive
than words that would've stung.
To stay silent is preferred,
I'd rather not speak a word,
it's best if I'm not heard.
Please do not yell.

If you were to bite
I'd pull out my teeth.
It'd feel about right
than keeping them in a sheath.
To stay docile I choose,
I'd rather the situation diffuse,
it's best to do nothing than to possibly lose.
Please do not yell.

If your hands were to lunge
I'd declaw my digits.
It'd be better to nudge,
than to reach my limits.
To stay reserved, that I can do,
I'd rather stay out of view,
it's best to oblige, I know this as true.
Please do not yell,
at least not at me.

Wyoming

John Kucera

I wonder whether I woke to heaven:
The woods all clouds. Out my bedroom window,

only two tall black trees stand clear.
The pines mere smears of soft watercolor green.

Am I afloat in this new white-veiled world?
I feel my own breath now

and the winter dawn in me. Understand
that snow, not clouds, swirl through the wood now.

Head on my pillow, I study the squall
lost in wonder, I feel I awoke to heaven.



When One Door Closes

Morgan Carder

When one door closes, another opens
You were once a door, bright eyed and a little timid; an adolescent
outcast just like me
A new door, a friend
The first girl-friend I'd ever had
Bright-eyed and anxious, I'll have someone to help me through middle
school
The door stays open for a good, long while
Memories fall into place, the sun sets and there's no chance we'll be
going to sleep
Photographs of us standing side-by-side stack up nicely

Two girls
On top of the world together
Best friends 'til the end
A separate door opens near the beginning of high school
Not a friend, but a door to a closet
A door to a revelation, a new understanding of myself
At that age (forever, truly), you didn't like that door or what it meant
"You can't come to my house anymore, Morgan." is what you told me
I confided in you for something innocent and it doomed me - us

Despite your own words and the closet door, the sun would still set, and
we'd stay awake during sleepovers
The conversations weren't as simple as they were when your door first
opened

I had many thoughts in regard to you, I loved you
Stupidly, I loved you
Another door, *shut it tight*; you believed you loved me, too
Shut it tight, hush your words
That door can never be opened
Maybe... oh, just a crack

In private, in my bedroom when the house is asleep
Actions never taken; many plans were spewed out
A nice house away from it all, a comfortable life together
We could be girlfriends, not girl friends; no more timid space
between us

A means to an end, it was all just ideas
I couldn't *stand* ideas
Too loose, too uncertain
I needed something certain, something solid; something I could hold in
my hands and know it wasn't just some dream from the night before

Another door pushed open, "Morgan, I told *them* that you're..."
Shut that door, lock it up
Why did *they* need to know? Yours knew before mine
I wasn't ready to confide in others yet, rip that away from me as you
please

A means to an end; resentment burns, bright and aching
Tell whomever, tell them of my obnoxiously loud heart, keep your
own safely hidden away
Abandon me, avoid anything and everything
Avoid me to avoid *what you said* in the darkness of my bedroom, what
they will never hear of

Graduation comes sooner than we thought, the plans of the nice house
away from it all are fuzzy and loose
An idea that you avoid as well, a life with me is off the table for you,
for the people you *told*

Distance grows and regret replaces desire, replaces hope that we could
work out
We're adults now, no longer those bright-eyed girls on top of the world

A sinking ship, heavy, *heavy* doors
Words said, bitter and brutally honest
You slam the door shut, the door that stayed open for almost a decade



Hard and fast, one final blow, you just *put up with me* and all of this for
that long
Goodbye

I feel as if I'm drowning in the remnants of the ship for a good, long
while
Darkness, the water getting deeper
I can't see any light, no more doors

At least, that is what you thought, your door shut, and I was
hopeless - *helpless*
Leave me out to die alone

Though, when one door closes, another opens
Your door closes, I learn to close it on my own terms
Slowly, close the door and sift through the memories and photographs
Take it all for what it's worth, a lesson well learned; keep an
obnoxiously loud heart as safe as you can

Bright-eyed on my own now, like the little girl in the pictures stacked
away in the back of my closet
I am not hopeless nor helpless, I am happy once again

You were one door, many more lie ahead
I understand that now
Many more lie ahead

1910



Fields in the Berkshires, *Mona Weber*

Occupy Space

Lily Ridgell

I occupy space

In the morning when I wake

Cascading sun between the blinds

Floods me in warm embrace.

I am matter

A mesh of atoms and complex systems

To keep me alive even if I did not ask them

To work so hard for me.

I matter

I am meant to exist

Alongside the cooing mourning doves

Melting me with morning hymns.



Lady, Craig Powell



Reflections, *Diane Payne*

How to Get Older

Lily Ridgell

Birth,
Mother's embrace,
Talk, walk, play.
Childhood friend,
Bike ride,
Moving away.
Count, read, write.
Middle School play,
High School party,
College essay.
First love,
Last love,
Wedding day,
Sickness and health,
Father's embrace.
Job termination,
Beach vacation,
Baby, toddler, teenager.
It's only Tuesday.
Worry, hope, pray,
Lover's embrace,
Rebirth.



Gas Station Coffee

Angie Corado

It's cold and raining

I watch the stream of water heading down the storm drain on the side of the road

The car heater is taking its time heating up

I sit trying not to shiver and have my teeth do what teeth do when we're cold

We are such small and insignificant beings in this universe

We are 3 dimensional

There could be a 4th dimension that exists and we can't see it because of some physics law

We are worried about money, and taxes, and when the next deadline is

It's so surreal that people don't realize time is a man-made construct

The car door slams

You've brought me my warm gas station coffee with enough sugar and creamer for it to be considered creamer with coffee

Renovation

John Kucera

First, the oil refinery, bringing
our father to work

at 5:00 am.

Then the grain elevator.

He claimed to re-wire
security cameras, my mother

driving me across the bridge
at just the right time for him

to wave at me on the ladder
at 105 feet.

Old growth timber,
embers glimmering for days.

The third time I watch
my hometown catch flame from afar - the collapse.

The alarm. The peace or the illusion
of peace.

From afar I see houses on hills and sober-colored
blue sky telling me it's now morning and the sun still rises.



Flood

Michael S. Glaser

Against the rapidly rising waters,
our small gestures -
composting, fixing the leaking faucet,
turning off the lights -
seem entirely insignificant.

Against the floods that have already happened,
the floods that will yet occur,
how might we understand that the word more
is like the twin forks on a serpent's tongue?
I'd like to think that each small gesture is a prayer.
The butterflies are disappearing.
So too the fireflies and the honey bees.
How do we remember
that they too, are sacred?

The Children of My First Marriage

Michael S. Glaser

The love that should have poured forth
when they were young
became imprisoned in my failures.
How now, might that love
escape the barbed wire
I locked it in to hide my shame
And what, now . . .
as I pray my tears might water
the ground of their healing,
that they will find
what I failed to give them
and learn from the hurt
that still laces their lives,
that their love will grow larger
than mine knew how to be,
that their children will escape
what I never intended to create.



Medevac

Wayne Karlin

Reprinted with the permission of the author from his upcoming collection
Memorial Days: Việt Nam Stories 1973-2022, Texas Tech University Press, May, 2023.

Standing by for missions, he always has the feeling he is being centered in the lens of a movie camera. Flight suit and sunglasses, focused in sharply by the magnifying clearness of the Danang air. A loud buzzer sounds with dramatic insistence. A long shot: the crews running self-consciously to the helicopters, loading machine guns competently, talking flight talk, sticking their thumbs up. Switch to the interior of the helicopter; the lens zooms in for a really fine shot of his sweaty, grease-stained face framed over his machine gun by the open port. Then a full shot of the interior: the black crew chief pumping the Auxiliary Power Engine, then running forward to his gun, black and white at the opposite ports, the subtle impact of the scene: no racism in foxholes, by God.

The sun sinks as the helicopter rises. The gunner looks at its fall and feels powerful and full of height. In its wake, the sun begins sucking the colors out of the ground, and the earth seems insignificant to him. The crew talks on the intercom, the cords on their helmets and their voices linking them in the darkness. They are flying towards Dong Ha. Hastily to Hastings, the gunner thinks. Operation Hastings. Where did they get the names? He is trying to slide his sight through the darkness, looking for flashes, for tracers, for anything. For today's trick we will clear the DMZ with Norman cavalymen. They must be catching shit, he thinks, to be calling for planes on secondary alert. Means the choppers already at Dong Ha are very full, and the crews will be cleaning out the insides with hoses, washing away any spare bleeding parts left sticking on the helicopters' decks.

The trap door of a gallows suddenly opens, right at the moment when he is counting on more time. A drop and a wait for the

noose to snap his neck. The helicopter falls, then seems to catch itself, and circle down more lazily. Leaning out of his port, he can see the flashes of the strobe the grunts are using to mark the landing zone, but the light doesn't illuminate the terrain. The aircraft drops into darkness. The noose never tightens.

The helicopter lands hard and the rear ramp drops heavily. The gunner stays at his gun while the crew chief runs back to help with the wounded. Looking over the barrel, he can just make out part of the circle of infantrymen around the Zone. Their green backs look tense and they are mud-spattered and somehow fragile-looking in their hardness. They don't look as if they'd stepped off a tapestry. Backs and saggy asses and legs and boots. Too normal for Normans. The wounded come through the open hatch, touching the sides of the helicopter with gentle, bloody hands. They are already a race apart, consecrated in the eyes of the unwounded, receivers of blows meant for the unhurt. Some intact marines are carrying in those unable to walk and laying them out on the deck. The helicopter is filling up and its blades beat the air insistently as if feeling the danger and straining to go. The wounded are twisted into one another, holding onto each other, softly bleeding into each other's wounds. The gunner strains for comparisons, sees a pile of soiled laundry, cloth arms and legs locked into impossible positions. Or pudding. Bleeding pudding. Hastings pudding.

The ramp closes and the helicopter lifts. A corpsman moves among the marines, shooting morphine into them. Many haven't been treated at all yet. We must have landed right in the middle of something, the gunner thinks.

A marine, his torn trousers showing shredded meat, is trying to stand up next to the gunner, leaving more room for the worse wounded. He puts his hand on the gunner's shoulder to steady himself, then looks at him apologetically. The gunner turns away for a second, and notices the black man lying near his feet. The





man seems to have a red gelatinous mass growing from the side of his neck, twisting his head and strangling him. His eyes bulge. All this in a second, a split second, for he is dutifully looking out of the port and doesn't miss the flashes below and the green tracers flying up at the helicopter. He fires his guilt down at the flashes and feels it leave him in violent spurts through the machine gun barrel. Just shooting at our noise, he thinks; they're too far. His own tracers flash red. Maybe I hit some NVA, he thinks, and he's being dragged off on a hook by his buddy. Who's feeling guilty the hook ain't in his own pudding neck. Fucking fool. The firing stops. Then they are dropping towards Dong Ha, and are down, and the ramp drops again.

The corpsmen come in with some service troops who have volunteered to carry stretchers. See what they've been missing. The bearers are in respectful awe of the wounded, but try to act as nonchalant as the corpsmen. The walking wounded begin walking and the gunner helps the man who had been leaning next to him walk out, then turns back inside.

The corpsmen are going through the men lying on the deck, quickly, competently, placing two enchanted fingers on wrists, bestowing life or death. The stretcher bearers begin lifting one man; the corpsman is still touching his wrist. Save it, the corpsman advises, he's bought it. The dead man is a big blond boy. "Save it," the economical corpsman says, and gestures impatiently at the volunteers. "Get'm out quick; he can't feel nothin'." One of the bearers grabs the man's ankles and drags the body out. The head bounces up and down on the ramp, as the body slides, then thuds dully on the ground. Save what? The gunner thinks.

He goes out and walks away from the fuel lines and tries to catch a quick smoke before they take off again.

The Poem I Can't Yet Name

Reprinted with permission of the author from *The Secret of Hoa Sen: Poems*
by Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai, Boa Editions, Ltd. 2014.

For my grandmother

My hands lift high a bowl of rice, the seeds harvested
in the field where my grandmother was laid to rest.
Each rice seed tastes sweet as the sound of lullaby
from the grandmother I never knew.
I imagine her soft face as they laid her down into the earth,
her clothes battered, her skin stuck to her bones;
in the great hunger of 1945, my village
was starved for graves to bury all the dead.
Nobody could find my grandmother's grave,
so my father tasted bitter rice for sixty-five years.

After sixty-five years of searching,
spirits of my ancestors led my father and me
to my grandmother's grave.
I heard my father call "Mom," for the first time;
the rice field behind his back trembled.

My feet clung to the mud.
I listened in the burning incense how my grandmother's soul
spread, joining the earth, taking root in the field, where she
quietly sings lullabies, calling rice plants to blossom.

Lifting the bowl of rice in my hands, I count every seed,
each one glistening with the sweat of my ancestors,
their backs bent in the rice fields,
the fragrance of my grandmother's lullaby alive on each one.

The Vietnamese famine of 1945 occurred during the Japanese occupation of Viet Nam in World War II. Between 400,000 and 2 million people are estimated to have starved to death during this time.

Contributors

MORGAN CARDER was born and raised in Calvert County, Maryland. She is a first-year student at CSM currently majoring in English. She has had a passion for writing since she was quite young, and is grateful to finally be able to share her writing.

ANGIE CORADO is a student in the Early College program at CSM and thought this was a great opportunity to share her poems with anyone willing to read them. She recently turned 18 and is excited to continue expressing herself through poetry in this new stage of her life.

BRIANA GARCIA is a second-year student at CSM who plans to transfer to a four-year institution to attain a bachelor's degree. Her women writer's course at CSM really inspired her to produce her sketch and enlightened her understanding of feminism and women's struggles. She is part of the Campus Association, Multicultural Student Alliance Club, and Intervarsity Christian Fellowship at CSM.

BRIENNA HARKNESS is a full-time college student who shares her most cherished memories through poems.

JEN HOUCHIN is the administrative assistant for sciences in the School of Science and Health at CSM.

KAREN SMITH HUPP is an avid photographer and writer, lives in Southern Maryland, works at the College of Southern Maryland, and finds the awesome in the ordinary of each day's journey.

WAYNE KARLIN is the author of eight novels and three non-fiction books. He was awarded two fellowships from The National Endowment for the Arts, the Paterson Prize in Fiction,

the Juniper Prize in Fiction and the Vietnam Veterans of America Excellence in the Arts Award.

BREANNA (BREE) KEKESI is a soon to be CSM graduate who will hold a pre-professional health degree. She loves to read all sorts of books and has written since she was a little girl. Perfection was about just what it would seem to be, how it feels to be under the unattainable pressure of success. Kekesi has previously been published in *Connections* and is grateful to have been chosen to share her work again.

JOHN KUCERA is a poet based in Arizona. His previous work has appeared in *New Reader Magazine* and *Philadelphia Stories*, and in the online journal *Selcouth Station*.


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, Maryland, with her husband and four spoiled rotten cats named Hope, Joy, Grace, and Zany.

DR. NGUYỄN PHAN QUẾ MAI is award-winning author of twelve books of poetry and fiction, including the international best-sellers "The Mountains Sing" and "Dust Child." Among many other honors, she was the runner-up for the 2022 Dayton Peace Prize.

DIANE PAYNE is a full-time electronic support technician for the Marketing, Admissions, and Recruitment Department at CSM.

JENNIFER POLHEMUS is an alum of the College of Southern Maryland. She has been publishing her work in *Connections Literary Magazine* for 30 years. She currently resides in Central Pennsylvania.





CRAIG POWELL is a U.S. Navy veteran who lives in St. Mary's County with his two canine companions. He enjoys traveling, fishing, kayaking, and scuba diving.

LILY RIDGELL is a recent CSM graduate and current wildlife biology major at Frostburg State University. She is a poet, dog mom, and avid bird watcher.

DONNA SPERRY is in her 25th year of teaching mathematics at CSM.

MONA WEBER feels that one should never stop taking a moment to look at nature to appreciate and enjoy its beauty.

ELIZABETH WOLFE is a freshman at the College of Southern Maryland where she is studying social sciences and plans on transferring to VCU to pursue anthropology and archeology. She's a multi-medium artist who focuses on graphite, sculpture, painting, and digital art. In her spare time she enjoys writing poetry, short stories, and fossil hunting.

Connections

SUPPORT Connections Literary Series

For two decades, the Connections Literary Series has featured writers such as National Book Award winners Tim O'Brien and Robert Stone; Pulitzer Prize-winning poets Yusef Komunyakaa and Henry Taylor; and Poets Laureate Lucille Clifton, Michael Glaser, and Kay Ryan.

Connections readings offer the Southern Maryland community a chance to hear and meet established and emerging local writers. The Connections Literary Magazine is a regional literary journal published twice a year that features poems, stories, artwork, and photography of Southern Maryland. Also featured, from time to time, is material from visiting writers.

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

*To make your donation today, visit
www.csm.edu/Foundation
(direct your funds to the Connections Literary Series)
Thank you for your support!*



Connections

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

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

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

www.csmd.edu/Connections

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



01010111 0111

0111010



Connections

www.csmd.edu/Connections