

Spring 2009 Literary Magazine  
College of Southern Maryland

# Connections



*Featuring works from:  
Poet Michael S. Glaser and Novelist Wayne Karlin*

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# Connections

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college of southern maryland

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**Dio Sorride**, *cover photo by Paul Toscano*

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**EDITOR**

Neal Dwyer

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS**

Sonia Fernandez

David Phalen

Paul Toscano

**EDITING ASSISTANCE**

Brenda Jones

**PRODUCTION AND DESIGN**

Brenda Jones

Carol Wade

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# Bedtime Stories

*Josef K. Strosche*

Even before I tap on the door I know I am being watched with one eye. My footsteps have surely given me away. A swift tug on it reveals her to me—half of her, that is, and I slink past the threshold, to her. From her eyes I see that she has cried.

“Did anyone see you?” she asks me.

“No. No one saw me. I took a cab.”

She says she can smell December on me when I shed my brown leather jacket and drape it over the chair before her desk on the far side of the room.

“Why didn’t you wear a heavier coat? That’s not warm enough,” she says, fondling my chest and arms.

I ignore her question and instead take her face in both hands and kiss her. “Let’s have a drink,” I tell her and slide my palms down the side of her to her waist, thick now on account of the heavy robe.

She walks to the closet next to the door:

“All I have is this.” She announces it more as a warning. In her hand she rattles a droll little bottle, cyan and opalescent. I shrug with optimistic eyes, though I’m sure I’ve failed to disguise my dread. Stationed atop her dusty *Lehr- und Übungsbuch der Deutschen Grammatik* I find two coffee mugs, stand to rinse them out at the basin that is wedged between the door and her bed, but am halted. She takes them from me with a smile, goes and cleans them, returns and pours us two equal measures of the clear spirit.

“Ach,” I groan. “Tsiporo.”

“Tsipuro,” she says, correcting me from the corner of the bed across the way. She sips and smiles, and then lights a cigarette. “You say it like an American.”

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“I am an American,” I say. She smiles. “Okay—what time is it anyway?”

“Four.”

“Okay. What happened?”

“I sent him that message.” Damn.

“Which message?” I light my own cigarette, lean back in the small chair and fold one leg over the other to feign some disinterest.

“The same message I sent you.”

*Of course I want to see you / come over / you can come right now / I missed you / see you soon.*

“I knew that was going to happen sooner or later.”

“What exactly did it say again?” I ask.

“Read it for yourself.”

I rescue my phone from my pocket and double-check it.

“It’s harmless enough,” I lie. “It could be to one of your friends. He can’t read German anyway.”

“He called.” Damn.

“What did he say?”

“Well, of course he wanted to know why I’d sent him a text message in German, and at three in the morning.” Smoke whistles out from between her lips while she slides a hand through the length of her hair.

“What did you—?”

“I just told him I’m drunk and was thinking in German so it came out in German.”

“Good.”

“I knew this would happen sooner or later. I knew it.”

I finish my cigarette and push it out in the ashtray we share on the cold tile floor between our feet. When she rises to refill our mugs I swivel from my chair into her seat on the bed.

She hands me the poison, which I sip once before setting it on the ground. She too takes a drink but leaves the mug on the desk. Now that she stands in front of me, I notice that her robe

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has come undone at the waist to reveal a caramel midriff. In my head I can hear her *ach ach oeé mov ach* and I am reckless, so I slip two fingers behind the elastic band of the satin pajama bottoms and pull her toward me, where skin meets lips. She bends down, kisses me, and positions herself on her back next to me, propped up on her elbows.

“I hope he forgets about it,” she says, halting her approaching predator before he can pounce. I sigh and depart from the bed. “Hey. Hey, what’s wrong?” she asks.

I turn and show her my cigarette pack and raised eyebrows.

“Oh.” I gesture to hers on the desk. “Sure,” she says and nods. “I just hope he forgets about it before.”

“Before,” I repeat loudly, lighting her cigarette and then my own. I accomplish another drink by pivoting my arm on the elbow that digs into the mattress.

“Before.”

“Before he gets here?”

“Yes,” she says and ashes.

“That’s true. It’s only two more—.” She shoots me a look and I take a drink. “He’ll forget about it, love. Don’t worry about it.”

The audible jet stream from her mouth glides past my face, a part of it into my left nostril on its way by. I stare at her, fixing on her eyes the way I do when I try to talk to her without speaking. She looks away, off into the tiny void that is the center of the room.

“I still can’t believe she isn’t here yet,” she says.

“When exactly was she supposed to arrive?”

“Over a week ago now.”

“Has she ever been late?”

“Yes. A couple of times. Never this late though.”

“What do you think?”

“What can I think? What do you think?”

“I shouldn’t tell you what I think.”



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“Why not?”

“I just shouldn’t.”

“You don’t have to. I know what you think.”

“You do, huh?”

“Yes. I do. You want me to be,” she says. “Come on. You want me to be, don’t you?”

“Maybe,” I say, unable to hold back that damned grin.

She doesn’t smile, does not look at me. “What would we name him?”

“I don’t know.” I notice the plastic lighter rotating in my web of fingers. “We’d need something neutral, I suppose. Or something that applies to both, rather.”

“We’re crazy. Do you know that? That we’re crazy?”

“It could be fate.”

“We’re crazy.”

“Yes,” I say and ash. I miss and it falls onto her bedspread.

She looks at my face, scolds me with her eyes and licks her fingertip. With her moist digit she picks up the ball of black and gray ash, as if with a magnet to a BB, and deposits it in the dish where it belongs.

I lean in and kiss her lips and get up from the bed. From the inner breast pocket of my jacket I retrieve sheets of photocopy paper that have been stapled and folded lengthwise. For a minute I stand in front of her desk, flattening the pages and glancing over and through them. When I can nearly hear her brain tell her tongue to interrogate me I return to her:

“Read to me.”

“What?”

“Read to me,” I tell her. “It’s a story, written by a Greek immigrant in Germany, in the seventies I think. He wrote in German and translated it a decade later into Greek. It’s about his childhood. He tells about his visit to a monastery with his father and grandfather. You know, to the ones on the mountain, on that peninsula. Mount.”

---

“Mount Athos.”

“Yes. I already read it in German. Now I want to hear it in Greek.”

“You won’t understand it.”

“I know that. You know that,” I say. “But I want to hear it anyway.” She stares at me. I know I’ve confused her. But she smiles and kisses me, takes the papers and flops down onto her stomach. I rest on my side, watching her while a hand rubs her bare back beneath shirt and robe. I follow her mouth as it maneuvers and negotiates the words and the lines and the sentences, producing the sounds that I adore and that thrill me. She reads well, I conclude, her intonation and pacing perfect.

At the end of the first paragraph she stops and looks over at me. I needn’t say anything to let her know that she should go on, and she does.



*A Pier by Robin Karis*

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# Language

*Christine Redman-Waldeyer*

I find her in the corner of the room;  
She is in a wheelchair

holding onto her scotch.  
When I go to kiss her at the baby shower,

she asks me to turn around,  
strokes the loose hair across my back.

*I should remember you, she says,  
you're a pretty one, such pretty*

*long hair.* She is 93 and we share  
a birthday. On her 90th, I gave mine up

to celebrate her life. A young cousin  
put black and white photos to PowerPoint,

a slide presentation of her life  
that we watched while we cried and ate cake.

Today she reaches  
for my face, feels my grooves,

strokes my skin as if she is a blind woman  
reading Braille, trying to find the language.

---

# Maybe His Name Was Raheem

*Rachel Heinhorst*

It would have been easier not to see  
the little boy lying dead  
covered in blood—he wasn't four yet  
He would never learn to touch the pedals of a bike  
or kick a soccer ball into a goal

It would have been easier not to see his mother  
crying asking Americans why  
her son was dead without reason  
Without a green flourishing land to bury him  
Soldiers telling her the enemy had to be found

It would have been easier not to see  
My backyard where my boys get to play  
Learn to ride a bike to play soccer  
To fly a kite under a sky with no bombs  
Falling destroying their playground

If I knew his name, I would add it to this poem  
I would write it with chalk on the road  
In front of the White House  
where the wind would carry it up  
each time our flag waves free

---

# Fading Youth

*Christina Tyner*

My warm washcloth hanging,  
ready to cleanse my frowning face.  
It removes my make-up,  
cleansing completely without a trace.

Fine frown lines around my mouth,  
my life has picked up the pace.  
I remember yesterday's youth,  
but it has escaped me as if we were in a race.

I am not in the dawn of life nor the evening.  
I am in a dead end place.  
Where acceptance and agony wrestle this evening,  
these thoughts I must readily replace.

Accepting my age is of the essence.  
Let the light beam into my bathroom space,  
and I will acknowledge and accept my age  
I will prevail as a person who I will embrace.

---

## Mrs. Davies' Mittens

*Judith Allen-Leventhal*

Each year she would knit them  
in soft woolen yarns of  
white and bright red,  
white and deep navy blue:  
predictable Norwegian folk-  
patterned mittens in sizes  
small, medium, and large,  
a pair gifted to each set of hands in the house.

Over the winter  
Mrs. Davies' mittens  
would separate, be lost—  
sometimes one,  
sometimes the pair—  
despite clips to the cuffs and coat sleeves  
or string through the coat-back attached at each wrist.

Over the winter  
the odd ones remaining  
went to the mittenscarfandhat box for the grabbing  
—to sled, skate, snowman make,  
snow angel-wing spread, and snowball fight.

Even mixed and matched, colors and sizes,  
those mittens protected and warmed  
through childhood's winters,

before betrayal  
before bitterness.



*Along the Horse Pasture by Emma Grimes*



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## CONNECTIONS FEATURE

Excerpt from

### MARBLE MOUNTAIN

*by Wayne Karlin*



On March 6, 2009,  
at the College of Southern Maryland,  
award-winning novelist and  
CSM professor Wayne Karlin  
read from his latest novel,  
*Marble Mountain*  
as part of the  
Connections literary series.

The following is a chapter from the novel.

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## WATERMEN'S DUES

Wayne Karlin

The *Louise* pulled off from the dock at five the next morning, making her way slowly through the water with what Alex liked to think of as ponderous dignity. She was a six-ton wooden work boat, solid built in Crisfield by Evans Boats in the mid-1950's; he kept her expensively in shape, getting her dry-docked, scraped and painted earlier in the year, though he had not crabbed much this summer. That he kept the *Louise* at all was out of a need, he supposed, to keep some Hallam presence on these sustaining waters.

He baited and dropped off a line of crab pots, each marked by an orange float. The surface of the creek was flat calm, though a breeze crinkled it into a sparkling foil here and there. The men worked easily together, four friends in their late middle age acting out a dream of their youth when coming back to this water had meant still being alive. Brian Schulman's thinning strands of silver hair waving like tentacles in the breeze, Russell, Baxter, and his own close-cropped hair graying, but all of them in shape, moving with quick grace and competence, a rhythm that he had realized recently had passed into Kiet's own dance, as if she had absorbed that from his blood—did time and love create some estuarine, genetic shift within each other? A portable radio was bungee-tied near the wheel; Alex kept it on the oldies station, Sloopie still hanging on as Alex steered the boat to an orange marker float, Russell hauled up a dripping trap, Brian shook the catch out into the trough in front of Baxter, who—amazingly, for a blind man—culled the crabs, reaching into the basket, quickly pulling out one at a time by their back fins, throwing the smaller ones back into the river, the larger ones into different baskets according to their sizes. The other three stopped, looked at him, then each other, and grinned and then went back to work. Russell hauled up

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another trap, dripping with jelly fish. He winced as a stinger got his arm.

“Son of a bitch.”

Alex looked at him thoughtfully. “I remember how your dad’s eyes would swell up, he’d catch a jellyfish in the face.”

“He’d come home, my ma would smear meat tenderizer on him, get the rash on her own self. Waterman’s dues, he called the jellyfish. Got to pay back the pain.”

“Before the war, I always figured you’d follow him onto the water.”

“Thank God for the war.”

He gave the trap he was holding a last shake to get the last crab out. It fell on the deck, scurried backwards, its claws raised. A speedboat went by, its wake rocking the *Louise* violently. The three weekend boaters in it hooted raucously at the *Louise* and threw empty beer cans in the workboat’s direction.

“Ain’t enough they want to stick McMansions and Starbucks every inch a farm land,” Russell said.

*Put on your red dress, baby, a voice sang from the radio, ‘cause we goin’ out tonight...*

“We bonding yet, Russ,” Alex asked.

*And wear some boxin’ gloves, case some fool might want to fight.*

“Beg your pardon?”

“Louise call you?”

Russell didn’t answer, baited a trap, and then another, threw them into the water.

“That why you’re here?”

“Excuse me?”

“You hate fishing.”

Russell shrugged. “You got me mistaken with someone who gives a shit about you. Me, I’m just someone worked with you for twenty years.” An edge of anger came into his voice. “Who’s your blood.”

---

Brian waved around, encompassing the creek, the world.

“Hey buddy, we’re all in the same boat, right?”

Alex baited another crab pot.

*In Fallujah, nine American Marines were killed today in heavy fighting...* the radio announced suddenly, as if on cue. The men laughed grimly, at the joke on time each of them had heard buried subliminally in the announcer’s words. Alex switched the radio off.

Brian nodded at the set. “Welcome aboard, kids.” He started restacking the empty traps, shaking his head. “I can’t even watch the TV news these days.”

“Me neither,” Baxter said.

They laughed. Alex also, though he looked at his friend, wondering at Baxter’s need to do the blind man jokes, present the feisty cripple to the world. Wondering at his own feeling of being somehow reproached whenever Baxter did, how long it would go on.

“Well, I don’t watch the news either,” Russell said. “Know why? Cause all the commercials are for adult diapers, don’t-piss prostate medication, Viagra, gas, and heart-burn. For all the old farts who are the only ones who watch the news anymore.”

“Not this old fart,” Alex said.

Russell baited another trap. “Hell, it’s not the same war, whatever they say.”

“I can’t look at those kids’ faces,” Brian said. “They tear out my heart. They piss me off. I want to kill somebody—and not an Iraqi.”

“Hell, we lost more people in a month, they do in a year,” Russell said.

Brian held up an alewife, a bait fish. “They send you out into Indian Country until you get hit. You die, they know where the enemy is. Bait on a fucking hook. Bait in a fucking cage.” He put the fish in the crab pot, threw the pot into the water.

---

“Samey-same. For nothing. So some old fart can feel like he has their balls.”

Alex said. “Kid’s thinking of going over there.”

Brian looked shocked. “Iraq? Fuck that.”

“Viet Nam. Look for her roots, all that crap. Gets a letter. One name, one address. Do you believe that?”

Russell shrugged. “Why’s it bother you?”

“Thing is, I should go with her. She wants me to.”

“Then go,” Baxter said.

“Thing is, I can’t.”

“Then don’t. Vets going over there,” Russell said in disgust. “She’s a grown woman. What’s eating you?”

“Her path’s opened a path in my mind, is all.” He touched Baxter’s arm. Baxter shook his head, as if responding to a question only he and Alex had heard. He rose, walked away from Alex to the other side of the boat.

“Son of a bitch!” Alex yelled. Russell and Brian gaped at him, but then saw where he was staring. Off the bow, ahead of them, the speedboat had stopped and the weekend boaters had pulled up one of Alex’s crab pots and were emptying the contents into a fiberglass cooler. Another empty pot was already on deck. One of them, florid-faced, his toothy smile a white gash in his face, looked up, pointed out the *Louise*. The two men hooted and the driver put the boat into gear and shot right towards the work boat, swerving at the last minute, the florid faced man, throwing an empty beer can at them. As the wake hit the *Louise*, the boat pitched, and Baxter, standing, trying to figure what was happening, pitched into the water. Russell and Brian shouted at the speedboat. Neither heard the splash, saw Baxter fall. Alex did.

He rushed over to the port side, and then stood, rooted, staring at Baxter as the water closed over his face, his blind eyes staring back at Alex. Alex didn’t move. Baxter seemed to smile up at him, his lips barely under the sheen of water. Suddenly Brian

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was there, next to him; he cursed, jumped into the water, got Baxter under his armpits and frog-kicked him back to the boat.

Russell and Alex hauled him aboard, Alex turning away from Brian's stare.

The speedboat was heading back towards them, the two men hurling more beer cans. Russell climbed onto the bow and flashed his badge, pointing at them, motioning at them to stop.

Alex went into the cabin and came out with a .30 caliber rifle. He cocked it.

Russell turned. "What the hell, Alex?"

Alex aimed below the water line. He fired two rounds. Fiberglass splintered. Panicking, the driver spun the wheel, turning the boat. As soon as the stern was towards Alex, he put two more rounds into the motor. They hit with a clanging sound. The motor whined into a high-pitched scream and the speedboat stopped dead, the motor sputtering, dying, smoking. Brian, who had gone to the wheel, took in the sight of the boat and whistled, a broad grin breaking his face.

"Get me alongside," Alex said to him, his voice strained..

"Alex, I'm the sheriff...." Russell said.

"Fuck it," Brian said. "Go with the flow, Russ." He took the wheel, shouted as the boats came parallel. "*Dung lai*, motherfucker! Steal another man's crabpots, will yah?"

"For Christ's sake," Russell said disgustedly.

Alex put on his rubber gloves, Brian still looking at him curiously. He roped the two boats together and jumped on board the speedboat, facing the two men. The speedboat was listing, taking water. Russell shrugged and went into the cabin, so as not to see what would happen.

The first boater had a square face with a flap of skin hanging below it like a fringe. His sun-burned face looked mottled now, beet red with anger. "You fucking maniac!"

---

“Best not let your alligator mouth overload your lizard ass, old hoss,” Brian shouted happily. “Know what it means, down here, you mess with another man’s crab pots?”

“I’ll have your . . .” the other boater, a pear-shaped man in madras shorts, a lemon-colored shirt and a captain’s hat, started to say.

“You missed one,” Alex said calmly.

Brian’s grin widened. The Alex Hallam legend. He began humming some bars from the *Deliverance* “Dueling Banjos” medley. “Da dah dah dah dah, di da dum dum dum.”

“What the hell are you . . .?” the man in the captain’s hat started to say.

Alex pointed to a float marker. “You missed one of my pots. Pull it up.”

“We’re sinking, you maniac!”

“Right,” Alex said. With one hand, he untied the mooring line, tossed the rope back onto the deck of the *Louise*. “Best hurry then.”

The two men looked at Alex. Alex aware of how he would look to them. A sixty year old man with a bull neck and barrel chest and flat belly and roped arms that haven’t changed in thirty years, except to somehow take on, not the sag of gravity, but of the gravitas of those years. His blunt, stone carver’s hands, his thick forefinger taking up the slack on the trigger. Machine gunner’s eyes. He knew it, used it, had had to use his physical presence during his tenure as sheriff. Used it now.

Cursing, pale, the man grabbed the line and pulled the trap from the water. It was dripping with jellyfish. Alex scooped one up, pushed it into the man’s face. The boater clawed at his eyes, screaming. Alex scooped up another handful of jellyfish, turned to the man in the captain’s hat. Waterman’s dues, he might have said. Something like that.

---

## CONNECTIONS FEATURE

*Former Maryland Poet Laureate  
Michael S. Glaser*



On April 3, 2009,  
Michael Glaser,  
former Poet Laureate  
of the State of Maryland,  
read from his poems  
at the  
College of Southern Maryland,  
as part of the  
Connections literary series.

On the pages that follow,  
poetry by Michael Glaser  
can be found.



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## CONNECTIONS FEATURE

### NEVER FINISHED

*Michael S. Glaser*

*“a poem is never finished, it is merely abandoned”  
... variously attributed to Mallarme, Valery, Pound,  
William Carlos Williams, C.S. Lewis,  
and as “an old saying among poets.”*

And what is ever finished? Until the end,  
isn't it all part of an unseen whole, an exploration  
of those small corners of curiosity that bring us  
ever closer to that final leap?

Each beginning embraces the pulls and confusions  
that define one's unfolding—  
like a flower, say, letting go of a seed  
or the ocean, being pulled by the moon.

I'm not so sure *abandoned* is what I'd call it—  
imagining as I do, that the tides will turn,  
that seeds cling fiercely to the soil.

When it's over, it's over, but until then  
I want to embrace the unstoppable  
invitations that call in every moment

---

I want to explore the great hollow of my failures  
and the contours of my human longing.

I want to know courage,  
the passions that stir deep within,  
the storied intimacy of those who chase rainbows,

their artists hearts  
stalking as they do  
the incorrigible dark.

---

## CONNECTIONS FEATURE

### TO DISRUPT THE CONSENSUS

a Kaiu\* retrieved from the lecture notes of Professor K. Sand

*Michael S. Glaser*

Pay attention.

Discover something new.

Follow curiosities

To silence.

Live with the paradoxes

That language sparks when

it cleanses us of slogans,

soundbites and spin.

If we are lucky

we will open a space for otherness to

move through us

until it becomes familiar, amplified

like a tickle

laughing

Until finally it sighs,

whimpering softly, “ahhhhhhh!”

\*A KAIU is written by using the following form:

2 LINES -- each with a full stop sentence	Then:
2 LINES -- as one combined full stop sentence.	Then:
4 LINES as a single sentence comprised of two two line phrases enjambed,	Then:
Repeat the last 4 line enjambment pattern, end with two fragmented two line stanzas grammatically connected and not enjambed.	And:

---

# Baltimore Morning

*Kate Richardson*

Today there is a razor in the newspaper.  
The small box brags “New and Improved!” above the  
Photo of a Schick. Both are forest green.  
The newspaper is wrapped in bright orange plastic.  
Is the news on code alert?  
Will the razor ease my fears?

I don't know; I just moved here.  
So far, I know to lock my doors,  
Keep a light on, sit on my front steps,  
And nod to people on the street.

This morning, slivers of broken glass  
On the sidewalk glitter like diamonds,  
And the autumn sun slices through the shadows.

The razor in the Baltimore Sun will keep me sharp,  
Watchful to get an edge on the news,  
Ready for anything else Baltimore has to give.  
I, too, may be a free blade in this city.

---

# Baltimore Afternoon

*Kate Richardson*

In the square of sky above the back patio  
The sky is blue and full of possibilities.  
A bird chatters on a wire between rowhouses;  
Breeze stirs the wind chimes and ruffles red geraniums.

The sun slices across the screen door,  
Shadow and light sharply divided, then  
Clouds shift and shadows melt into shade.  
From somewhere east, a siren sounds

The wind grows stronger, the chimes clatter  
Like excited children given permission to shout.  
A police helicopter swirls

Overhead, its blades' rhythm  
Pulsing under the siren's crescendo.  
Birds make rough skirring chirps,  
Scattering into the sky, into the siren's higher wail.

Another gust of wind, and the siren stops.  
Red petals settle back against green stems,  
Chimes sprinkle clear tones over the patio  
The sky is again seamless, unruffled  
Still, full, possible.

---

# Thoughts

*Joanne Van Wie*

..and with that the bottle green breath of the trees was gone

exhaled into cold

gray mist tired *stomata* giving up for now

then a thick acrylic sigh

a rugged sky slapped and dragged over memories in layers

where are those painted days when leaves

and their thin wasted skeletons fell more slowly

alongside the road I traveled and I could pick them up wondering

one by one



**Mendenhall Glacier, AK** by *Derrill E. Thompson*

---

# A Flustered American Girl in a Paris Métro Station

*Alison Devine*

I am trapped.

A Métro gate stands between me and my grandmother. The mechanical guard screams at me: *Denied! You cannot pass!* Only moments before, I had pushed through the same turnstile with ease, but my premature exit angered the foreign gatekeeper; now, re-entry is prohibited.

I am embittered by the irony of my predicament. I returned from the safety of the other side to assist my grandmother who was embroiled in a battle of wits with the automated sentry. Its wrath was appeased by the offering of a valid Métro ticket, but its benevolence faded before I too could prosper from it.

I try to negotiate a peace settlement with my enemy, relinquishing every ticket I have. The Defender of Saint-Sulpice refuses my gifts and steadfastly prevents any further progress. I am resoundingly defeated. I am locked in purgatory—I can neither leave the station nor board a train.

My heart beats out a cadence of fear, and I remember my initial distrust of Paris. Tales of aloof natives and filthy alleys had prejudiced me against the City of Lights. I was convinced that the world operated upon a delicate balance of social mores that could not be disrupted. This was my ultimate fear: that I would throw this equilibrium with my American clumsiness. Yet, the past few days quickly obliterated these preconceptions. I am no longer just an American in Paris—I am an integral component of the vibrant social network that keeps the city alive. Will this single moment revert my newfound trust back to skepticism?



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A battery of strange syllables averts my attention to a fellow traveler, a young Parisian gentleman bedecked in the customary office uniform of a suit and tie. Huzzah! An anonymous ally! Although his foreign words mean nothing to my untrained ears, I sense that he is there to aid me in my moment of distress. Still, I balk at his interest in me. Have my fears been realized; have I upset the balance?

I desperately wish that I could respond. But alas, my English is useless and my uneasiness incommunicable. I expend the little French I know: “*Pardon, je ne parle pas français.*”

“Do you speak English?” he asks. I nod vigorously in response, relieved by his bilingualism.

“Do you need help?”

“I’m sorry, I can’t get through,” I say, my voice stretched thin with anxiety and embarrassment.

“Use mine,” he says, brandishing my key to freedom: an unlimited Métro pass.

“Oh, thank you!” I gush. As I relinquish the ticket to the gate, I immediately regret that I have hindered his daily progress. As the metal gate swings shut, separating us, I turn to him and say, “I am so, so sorry.”

“Don’t be.” With those precious words and a genuine smile, he recedes into the stream of people flowing through the station. His tall form is swept into the realm of anonymity, an alien land that I can never enter.

I reunite with my grandmother and swim to the train through a veil of tears. I am filled with love: love for the nameless man who just helped me, love for Paris, and love for the universal connection that inconspicuously ties every person together. I realize that I did not trouble this man—he was thrilled to aid a flustered American girl in a Paris Métro station.

The incident lasted no longer than thirty seconds, yet my mind is still reverberating with its impact. It is these transient moments that define my life. Mere seconds can radically alter

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my world perspective; a few words, one furtive glance, a brief interaction are earthquakes that bring unexplored emotions and ideas to the surface of my mind.

A passing encounter has brought a new clarity to my thoughts. I can only hope that I will wander into such places, into such moments, in the future. Even in an unfamiliar land, the spirit of human compassion leapt over cultural barriers to carry me to emotional safety.

This man, whose name I can only dream of knowing and whose face is already a blurred memory, briefly emerged from the obscure tapestry of my life to provide me with invaluable insight. The world is not as forbidding as I once believed nor is it as inflexible as I once assumed; rather, the world is meant to be explored and experienced. I now realize that the gentlemen in the Paris Métro did give me my key to freedom, but it was not an unlimited Métro pass: it was the courage to go forth and meet the world.

I am liberated.

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# Feedback

*Ben Rasnic*

This thing remembered—

tendrilled wisps of amber  
groomed from sweaty plough blades  
of Nebraska soil, waves breaking  
the black earth into gold flames  
ripening in air, rich with mirrors.

“It’s only wheat,”  
she said,  
“Just big dumb fields  
of nothing but wheat,”  
said

this harvest from my  
loins, tawny fingers weaving  
strands of sun-bleached  
tasseled hair, face  
flecked with straw  
glistening

her bright smile,  
her star rising.

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# Untitled

*Sarah Landmann*

When I  
exhausted, weary beyond endurance  
fell into my bed, and my head hit the pillow,  
I dreamed of a dark-haired babe  
with eyes like hazelnuts  
and dimples like the dips in chocolate candy  
who laughed when she saw me, that laughter  
reserved for the one called “mother.”  
And I took her in my arms,  
my heart warm,  
and kissed the downy head  
and felt the softness of her skin against my own.  
Then I awoke, suddenly, confused,  
wondering at the ache in my empty arms.



**Out Yonder** by *Cara Adcock*

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# Porcelain Wings

*Kathryn J. Yoder*

Ah! Sometimes I feel  
Like a mariposa  
Yes, a butterfly  
Made: porcelain china

My beauty lures  
They touch my wings  
They know not better  
For hurt—it stings

Yes! I should be a mariposa  
Flutter up  
Now down  
No straight path  
Yet painted like a clown

Ha! I could be a mariposa  
In a cocoon  
Finding who I am  
Weaved in a loom

Ah! I am a mariposa  
For though confronted  
With many things  
Once a time misled  
I still have my wings

Free to fly  
Up in the sky  
Yes, a butterfly

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## Contributor Notes

**CARA ADCOCK** is a native Texan. She was raised as a child of the U.S. Air Force so has grown up all over the world, which is one of the reasons she enjoys taking pictures. She is currently attending CSM and plans to transfer to pursue her degree in Library Sciences.

**JUDITH ALLEN-LEVENTHAL** teaches English at the College of Southern Maryland and lives with her family in Accokeek, Maryland.

**ALISON DEVINE** is currently a senior at Leonardtown High School. She will be graduating from LHS in May 2009. She will also be graduating from the College of Southern Maryland with an A.A. in English in May 2009. She will be attending Swarthmore College in the fall where she plans to double major in English and History. She hopes to become a Professor of English Literature.

**MICHAEL S. GLASER** is a Professor Emeritus at St. Mary's College of Maryland where he served as a teacher and administrator from 1970 until his retirement in June of 2008. A recipient of the Homer Dodge Endowed Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Columbia Merit Award for service to poetry, Glaser is widely sought as a speaker and workshop leader. His most recent collections of poetry are *Being a Father*, and the chapbooks, *Fire Before the Hands*, and *Remembering Eden*. Glaser served as Poet Laureate of Maryland from August 2004 until 2009.

**EMMA GRIMES** is a journalism student at CSM.

**RACHEL HEINHORST** is currently an adjunct instructor for the English department at CSM. Poetry has always managed to keep her focused and grounded. Her inspirations are her children, students, and life.

**ROBIN KARIS** has lived in Charles County since 1982 and enjoys photography, writing and *Andy Griffith Show* re-runs.

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**WAYNE KARLIN** is a professor for the Languages and Literature Division at the College of Southern Maryland as well as the author of various novels and memoirs. He was the American editor of the Curbstone Press *Voices From Viet Nam* series of translated fiction by Vietnamese authors. He is a recipient of the Paterson Prize in Fiction and two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts.

**SARAH LANDMANN** is an English major at the College of Southern Maryland and will receive her A.A. degree in May of 2009. She writes like she breathes—constantly, and because she has to.

**BEN RASNIC** has lived in Maryland since 1991. His work has previously been published by *The Mountain Review*, *Jimson Weed* and *The National Library of Poetry*.

**CHRISTINE REDMAN-WALDEYER** is the author of *Frame by Frame* (Muse-Pie Press, 2007) and is a full-time English Instructor at Passaic County Community College. Her poetry has appeared in *Exit 13*, *Lips*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Seventh Quarry* (UK), *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *The Carriage House Poetry Series Tenth Anniversary Anthology*, and others. She was a Pushcart nominee for her poem “Waves That Knock You Down” and was a finalist in the 2008 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Awards. Her chapbook, *Gravel*, is scheduled for publication in 2009.

**KATE RICHARDSON** is a poet living in Baltimore. Her work has appeared in previous issues of *Connections*.

**JOSEF K. STROSCHE** earned an M.A. in German from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he focused on twentieth-century German literature, and studied in Vienna and Regensburg. Following the completion of a Fulbright scholarship in July 2005 he was awarded an internship at the German National Literary Archives in Marbach, where he analyzed and archived W.G. Sebald’s documents and correspondences. His story “A Bear Hunt in Riga” was recently selected as a top-25 finalist in *Glimmer Train’s* Short Story Award for New Writers. He is currently living and working in Illinois.



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**DERRILL E. THOMPSON** has been published in *Connections* before.

**PAUL TOSCANO** has been with CSM since 1980, working first as a counselor, then as distance learning coordinator.

**CHRISTINA TYNER** is a student at CSM.

**JOANNE VAN WIE** lives in Mechanicsville with her six children and husband of thirteen years.

**KATHRYN J. YODER** is a second-year student attending the College of Southern Maryland. She is currently majoring in Arts and Sciences. In addition to participating in college committees, Kathryn is a Black Belt in Taekwondo, an ice skater, a singer, a blogger, and a photographer.



