



Connections

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND

SPRING 2017 Literary Magazine

Featuring an interview with Novelist Sunil Yapa
and winners of the Young Writers Award

Connections

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND
Spring 2017 Literary Magazine

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Mom's Helper by Lena Hancock

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Connections

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The Woman in the Nipa Hut

(an excerpt from a forthcoming novel)

Emelda Tabao Driscoll

“No...please...stop...Lord, deliver me...please...Mama Mary...St. Jude...St. Rita...St. Teresa...Please help me...,” the woman cried faintly, incoherently, as yet another man, sweaty and foul as the first, with just as much stench from tobacco and beer in his breath, mercilessly smashed himself inside her...over and over again.

“A shot to the head or a knife pierced through my heart would be more bearable,” she thought weakly. She begged for death to come at every surge of pain. But all she felt was her blood oozing down her thighs as the deafening roar of wild laughter and bestial shrieks accompanied the mocking rhythm of the crucifix swinging like a pendulum over her breasts, jolting her back to the worst nightmare of her 22 years on earth. These men, she sadly reminded herself, who razed entire villages and slashed the necks of old men and nursing mothers in front of their babies were her countrymen. Like her, they were Filipinos, born and raised Catholic. They had wives, sisters, mothers, aunts, nieces, and grandmothers. They were men in uniform, who took oaths to uphold the law and the safety of everyone.

But this was 1975, she realized, only three years after President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law. The Philippines was in turmoil. Poverty, injustice, censorship, and corruption reigned. Fear and mistrust gripped the land—from the most sophisticated people in Metro Manila to the simple impoverished folks in the mountains of Samar. Women, especially the poor, were vulnerable. When they fell prey to the whims and evil desires of these men they

were dismissed as mere collateral damage by a military that behaved like a private army working only at the orders of one man. Disobedience was not tolerated. The arrogance of these men was second only to the power their leader wielded with absolute impunity.

Her thoughts went to her older brother, Mano Carlo. She willed for him to come. He always made things right. As a child she worshipped him, following him around whenever and wherever she could. She hated every girl he brought home to have dinner with the family. Then he went away to join the military.

Doubt and confusion zipped through her weary mind. “My brother, is he one with these men? Does he do what they do? No...no...he is not like them. These men have nothing but cruelty in their hearts. No, my brother is not evil. But he is one of them. No he can't be. She had known him to be God-fearing, and a gentleman. God, where are you? I need you now. Have you forgotten me? Why? Is there a God? Dear Lord, have mercy. Mano Carlo where are you?”

After what seemed like eternity she felt her whole being slowly drifting into the shadows. She prayed for death to come, for the “sleep of death” that Hamlet invoked, for the peace that would come with oblivion. But respite even with death was not to be. Cold, muddy swamp water mixed with saliva and beer splattered over her face cruelly bringing her back as her body stiffened, defenseless against another brutal carnal onslaught.

Hours afterwards with only the dying glow of a kerosene lamp seeping through the darkness, she awoke to an eerie silence. Except for a tiny gecko staring at her from its perch by the base of the lamp, the nipa hut was deserted. She was alone.

Cringing at the cruel images that would forever be etched in her memory, she tried to move only to find her wrists

shackled to the bamboo floor with ropes that dug into her skin. The slightest movement pushed the sharp threads into her flesh. Helpless, she stayed motionless as the night wind blew cold ripples across her naked skin. Through the fading glow of the kerosene lamp she could barely make out her clothes—torn reminders of how they were ripped off her body by her attackers. She had heard and read about gang rapes and had wondered how women could survive the trauma that came with it. But to be the victim yourself—no one can fully understand your anguish, your pain, your feelings of shame and self-doubt.

Although thankful for the darkness that enveloped her body, she cringed in revulsion at the sticky and smelly reminder of her night in hell. Numbness swept over her. There was no denying the surge of anger and shame that pierced the depths of her being. She felt raw, dirty, and devoid of any dignity. How did I allow this to happen? What have I done? How can she face the world again? They had violated her body. They had desecrated her soul.

Unsure of what to do next and wary of making any movement lest someone came back, she turned to look for something that would cut the ropes around her wrists. She had barely resigned herself to her utter helplessness when she smelled burning leaves. Chills ran through her spine. Smoke was seeping through the slits in the bamboo floor. Fire was raging outside the hut. The silence was shattered by the crackling sound of burning bamboo. “They have set fire to the bamboo grove,” she realized in horror. “Now all they will find would be my ashes.”

Yet a fiery peace was not to be. Another sound permeated the crackling leaves—the thump of boots rushing up the bamboo steps. Terror gripped her once again as a shadow loomed in the doorway. Panic took control. She tried to get up but her bones and muscles deserted her. Every movement

she made dug the ropes deeper into her flesh. She wanted to scream but only a faint inaudible moan left her parched throat. Faced with the futility of flight, she fell back onto the hard bamboo strips. Barely breathing she fainted, oblivious to the gentleness of the hands that hastily but gingerly cut the ropes around her wrists. She did not see the compassion in the eyes that tried to give her limp body some privacy nor feel the warmth of the arms that covered her with a jacket and hurriedly but carefully carried her through the inferno to the dark safety of the rainforest.

The worry tree

Margo Fitch

I loved every ring
of worry and doubt
you held coiled in your belly
and when the branches crept up
your throat and out
your mouth I trimmed the hedges
in hopes that my butchering
would keep them from growing
but you could never choke
them down—when the thorns grew
between your gnarled teeth
I knew I couldn't fight
the monster in you with hedge
clippers carved from the inside
of my chest and when
the pestilence told me
to go I could have sworn
in the rustling of your leaves
I heard you begging
me to stay.

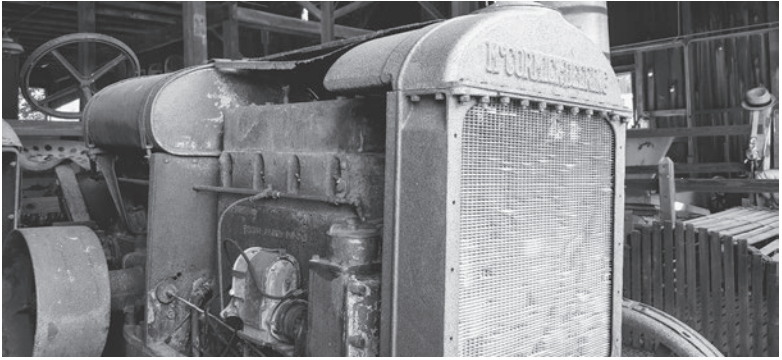


Out of Africa and Not Happy by Ginette Krantz

Helianthus

Rachel Newman

He has sunflowers
In his eyes
Music
In his heart.
A brave sense of self
And an immense love
for art.
For the beauty
The pain
The reward.
Delicate yet promising.
And his voice is
Perennial
Spreading rapidly
Through my soul
Those sunflowers
In his eyes
Never seem to get old.



Tractor by Judy Angelheart

The Blue Tractor

Eric W. Shoemaker

“...It’s gone,” I thought.

The tractor was gone, just gone. It had been parked nearly in the same spot of a small field we drove by each day to and from home.

My wife and I noticed the tractor in the field in both summer and winter for the past couple of years. It was obviously an expensive piece of equipment but sat in all weather conditions right there, uncovered and alone.

The parcel of land it sat on once hosted an old frame house located near the road intersection from where we observed this ongoing mystery. The parcel was mixed field and woods, and at the wood-line were two or three decaying timber out-buildings. The house had sat derelict for a long time. After the mystery began to unfold we learned from friends who knew something of the old families in the county, the owners had died long before, and the property was now owned by their elderly niece who lived out of state.

Last fall the house was torn done, but the tractor remained. Adding to the mystery was an old man in a well-used white truck parked on the property nearly each day we drove by. Sometimes we would see him sitting in the truck, just sitting there. Once or twice we would see him standing with his hands in his jacket pockets looking into the field. Sometimes we caught him driving in or out from where he parked his truck near the tractor or out buildings. Why was he there? Was he a distant relative of the people that owned the house? Was he the son of the present owner?

Or, more interesting was he paying homage to a memory of maybe his grandparents? Was he mourning his youth, a place he and his grandfather would farm the field? Was he

trying to fill a hole in his soul in a place he had been truly happy, a place filled with joy and love...a place that, if left empty, would allow even his memories to dim and be forgotten.

The tractor was now gone, so was the white truck. What happened? Did the old man die and his estate dispose of the tractor? Did someone steal it?

Showing my age, this reminded me of the sad ballad released in 1962 by Walter Brennan about an old man called "Old Rivers." Old Rivers was an elderly farmer, a friend of the song's main protagonist during his childhood. The protagonist recalled he didn't remember when Old Rivers wasn't around. When not in school the boy would walk behind the old man and the mule-drawn plow while Old Rivers' cultivated his small field. Sometimes the old man would take the boy aside and tell of a place he one day was going when he would "climb that mountain" to the sky. The place is not specifically named, but the lyrics "... *Walk up there among them clouds/ Where the cotton's high and the corn's a-growin'/ And there ain't no fields to plow*" imply that Old Rivers was speaking of heaven.

The ballad concluded when the boy grew to manhood and left home and learned from a letter that Old Rivers had died... the old man finally walked up the mountain he had looked forward to at his passing. The parallel between the ballad and our own mystery posed more questions than answers.

For years when recalling the ballad I wondered whether the boy ever returned to the field he and Old Rivers cultivated together. Did he seek out to be in the presence of the joy he experienced with his old friend?

Of my own mystery, I wondered whether the old man in the white truck and his blue tractor were real life versions of Brennan's ballad. Were there special memories made in

that field? Was this one man's holy place, sitting unnoticed, surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the world passing by?

The luckiest among us have special places, some, even, holy places we go to contemplate, pray or be in the presence of the memories of joy, love, or of people long gone.

The mystery continues about the blue tractor and the old man. It may be part of the greater mystery of what it means to be connected to something or someone and how we choose to observe those sorts of connections. My wife or I never had the courage to approach the old man and solve our mystery before he disappeared. However, at a distance, we felt connected to him despite not knowing or, maybe, because, we didn't know why he sat there in his truck hour after hour.

We keep hoping to see the blue tractor, white truck and the old man again. No matter how strange it may sound, we miss him.

Blinding Reflection

Alexander Corbin

Silvered guidelines of spider's web
glint quietly in the light of dawn,
their iridescence draws the eye through
window panes, where evergreen and dogwood
crowd the gentle hills, partially
obscuring, but never concealing,
the breeze-blown waters teeming with cattail,
where dabbling geese congregate,
sail, until the blinding reflection of the rising sun illuminates
even the scintilla of the glass.



Spring Rain by Richard Taylor

Personal Ad

Jennifer Polhemus

EOI* seeking same, who understands that making and sharing a cup of tea, alone or with others, is a sacred rite. That planting a garden behind your house in the suburbs is an act of defiance. That the only mundane activities are ones engaged in without a conscious mind.

*Existentially Oriented Individual

Connections Special Feature

Below are excerpts from a recent College of Southern Maryland (CSM) newspaper article where Novelist Sunil Yapa was interviewed prior to reading from his works at the College of Southern Maryland in March 2017 as part of the Connections Literary Series.

CSM's Connections Series to Feature Author Sunil Yapa, His Debut Novel

Carrie Lovejoy

When College of Southern Maryland Associate Professor Krista Keyes heard Sunil Yapa present at a conference in 2016, she knew the author would be the perfect addition to CSM's Connections Literary Reading Series. The annual series highlights artists who exemplify the purpose of Connections —to bring art and literature to life for the people of Southern Maryland.

Yapa is the author of *Your Heart Is a Muscle the Size of a Fist*, a debut novel about protest and civil unrest that has arrived on the market to critical acclaim. It's been called one of *Time* magazine's Best Books of the Year, one of Amazon's Best Books of the Year, a Barnes & Noble Great New Writers Pick, and an Indies Next Pick.

The book is about the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, Washington in 1999. For Keyes, the book is the perfect addition to the Connections Literary Series because it deals with a timely topic—protest and civil unrest. Keyes said she tries to present to her students an accurate and full picture of how literature reflects current events and how it can affect their perception of the world. She has been using Yapa’s novel in her class “Introduction to the Novel,” because its theme is so topical.

“This novel is exactly what the Connections Literary Series is all about because it allows us to make vital connections between American history and current events,” Keyes said. “The novel reminds us of two important things: the history and impact of nonviolent protest, and the fact that underneath our political ideologies, we’re all just humans who want to be loved and accepted.”

The timeliness of the novel, in fact, is a bit of an anomaly. Yapa, speaking over the telephone from Pennsylvania, said he started writing in 2009, long before protests like Occupy Wall Street; Ferguson, Missouri; and Baltimore ever happened. By 2014, he had begun the long process of editing the book with his agent, and the novel ended up hitting the market at the most serendipitous time possible when it comes to current events, as protest, and civil unrest become a part of Americans’ daily lives.

“If you try to write a relevant novel, that’s not really the purpose of a novel. It just takes too long. There’s no way to respond to current events,” he said. “A novel is about expressing what it feels like to be human in this moment.”

Yapa chose to write about protest because, as he sees it, joining a protest is a way of joining a family. In his novel, seven people from very different places are all searching for something, and they all collide in Seattle.

“When I look at protest, it’s something that may not even change things politically, but the people who participate feel a powerful connection to each other,” he said. “In that moment, they feel less lonely, less disconnected, less alienated.”

Keyes considers literature a tool that can bring people together, if used correctly. She says that we cannot always travel to different places and see things through the eyes of other people, but with literature, anyone—whether they have a passport or not—can understand the experiences of people on the other side of the world.

“I try to show my students how literature can increase their sense of empathy, and Sunil’s book does that,” she said.

Yapa said his novel is about emotion, and it goes beyond the initial anger and grief that his characters feel. “When we get angry, our anger burns out. So what can we find beyond that anger? Can love and listening overcome the divisions between us?”

Before the spring reading, Yapa said he was hoping to convey a message to the Connections audience that even though we live in a cynical time, it’s OK for us to care. “Yes we should question everything, but don’t be afraid to care about things,” he said.

Visit

[http://news.csmd.edu/news/archive/2017/
b3a0f122e680eae74536906c00c5fdc8fcf802f5.html](http://news.csmd.edu/news/archive/2017/b3a0f122e680eae74536906c00c5fdc8fcf802f5.html)
for the full story.

My Addiction

Noah Reeves

I

I've been tattooed for over 48 hours.
Over 48 hours.
For those hours nothing else exists,
creating a masterpiece on flesh.

The combination of a dentist's office
Mixed with tattoo ink.
That smell is my home,
Each visit brings memories back.
I remember every line,
Every shade of color
the dull ache by the wrist
hitting nerves
That I can feel all the way up my arm
To the sharp burn in the "pit"
More or less likened to
Setting fire to the skin
With knives being scraped across.

This is the necessary sacrifice
You learn to live in the pain,
Letting it wash over you
Rather than fight it.
Sink into its searing embrace
Let it burn away the stress

II

To the older woman who stopped me
At 8 am to tell me my mistake,
That tattoos will cost me my future.
My “mistake” is my crowning achievement.

To my mother who insists I must be mad
Truthfully I might be mad
Mad with the desire of creation
Painting scenes of unparalleled beauty upon skin
Bringing color to the plain

III

The drive home is the culmination
The high after the pain
The calm after the storm
The reflection
On what I just did to myself
What I put myself through.

Like a prisoner being released
I can't resist but go back.
This is the escape I crave
An escape from the deafening noise
of everyday life
Into the buzz of the gun.
Into the burn of the needle.
This is my escape.
Let the ink flow
Watch my walls go
Fire up the gun, Tyler.

Arch Walker

Kate Lassman

The young Millennial seems
an ordinary hiker
in a t-shirt, ball cap,
cargo shorts and sunglasses,
but then he climbs on top of Mesa Arch,
stands perched where the rocky earth,
a thin bridge under his feet,
meets the air filling the canyoncape,
open and daring and free.
Something in me also yearns for flight
as he upraises his arms
like wings.



Crackled Stone by Mary Prather

Red Herring

James Burd Brewster

Alicia, the youngest of the fatherless family, eyed her father's gun above the mantle.

To her knowledge, it had never been fired.

She only knew her father through retold stories and aging photographs.

“What happened to Daddy?” she had asked.

“He had to go away,” Mom said. Her brothers and sister stared at her.

“What was Daddy like?” she had asked.

“He was nice,” Mom said. Her brothers and sister pursed their lips.

When will Daddy come back?” she had asked.

“Not for a while,” Mom said. Her brothers and sister looked at the ground and kept silent.

“Now go out and play,” Mom said.

She did.



Old House by Merideth Taylor

Interesting things I learned today

—through the convergence of your secrets
and a *National Geographic* magazine

Joanne Van Wie

Ok, I will not talk about those things
you or I did when we were fourteen
because they are our things:

our regrets,
our retracted hands,
our need for what wasn't there,

but do you recognize us in nature's mystery when I tell you:

octopus fossils are rarely found in nature
because animals with soft bodies generally leave no trace.
They disappear.

Listen, while I stare into your eyes.
Can you hear my cornea, my irises, my pupils—

because Superior Canal Dehiscence Syndrome thins our
temporal bones,
forces us to hear our own interior functions, even our own
eyeballs moving.

I never knew that hearing your own blood rushing,
your joints bending, your skin creasing could drive you insane,
but I believe it. Because what would your heart breaking
sound like under that nocturnal thunderstorm?
What does it sound like when the octopus is threatened—
when that ink is released from the inside like a dense,
poetic cloud?

I realize now that even though you tell me those things
[of yours] even though you share those
parts of yourself with me and hold my eye still
with the beauty of your chromatophored skin,
you are always in the process of escaping—
keeping that crevice in sight.

And you will completely disappear one day.
I will search in earnest for proof of your existence,
the reflection of your hand symmetrically placed in mine,
but I will come up empty.
Because animals with soft bodies like ours
generally leave no trace.



Oblivious Girl by William "Ed" Moroney

Maryland Young Writers

High School Student Winner: Non-Fiction Category

The Next Four Years

Justin Cortez

Two days after Election Day, I was told by a complete stranger whom I had never seen before at La Plata—his camouflage getup did little in helping either—to “go back to [my] [expletive deleted] country.” I was on my way to class, not saying a word. He had been talking to his friend (about the election, I presume) when my invasive immigrant face caught his eye and was apparently enough of a stimulus for him to deliver his Judgment. At the very least, for future reference, I am from the Philippines, which mind you, has already seen its fair share of unemployment, corruption, and shady leaders, so I assure you that your oh-so righteous command for me to suddenly pack up my bags is rather futile.

It’s safe to say that tensions have been running high following the events of November 8th: Donald J. Trump has been chosen by the Electoral College as the 45th Chief Executive in U.S. history.

I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t disappointed, but I was, but not without good reason.

I remember staying up until 2 A.M. on Election Night, hoping for some sort of miracle to happen. When I heard the final results, my heart immediately ached, but not because I was a fervid Clinton supporter. It ached for the immigrants, for the LGBT+ community, for women out there, who may

be facing a radical change in the years to come. Although it's not a guarantee and some Republican backers may be already lining up to lampoon me, let me, at the very least, give some explanations behind why the results have given me cause to worry.

The United States was and still is a country powered by immigrants, so much so that the government recognizes no official language. As many are aware, we have been branded as a “beacon of opportunity” and a “cultural melting pot” where people of different nationalities, creeds, and backgrounds can come together and unite, holding steadfastly to the country's name and principles.

We forget that historically, the waves of Irish and Germans who moved to the United States were once counted among immigrant groups and also received the same xenophobic backlash that many modern-day immigrants have had to confront. We forget the economic impact that each wide-eyed hopeful adds when they get off the airplane, ready to start a new life here. According to the Economic Policy Institute, “immigrants comprise 16% of the labor force” despite making up only 13% of the population. Annually, the presence of immigrants, both legal and illegal, has increased the GDP by an estimated 11%. These statistics do not come close in underscoring the progress that they have catalyzed with their advancements in science and technology—Einstein, Fermi, and Brin being notable examples. No matter how you slice it, time and time again, immigrants get the job done.

However, with President-Elect Trump condemning undocumented Mexican immigrants as “rapists” and “bringing drugs and crime” (which is statistically incorrect) as well as putting a stop to a program that gives economic

work opportunities to those who were brought into the U.S. illegally as children, these Dreamers—“[undocumented immigrants] given protection under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program”—will unfortunately have to keep dreaming. Part of Trump’s “Ten Point Plan to Put America First” calls for the “end of sanctuary cities” and the forced return of refugees to the same countries that were unstable and dangerous enough to provoke their exodus to the oft-considered safe haven that is the United States. For a country brought up by the painstaking challenges and the endless contributions of immigrants, it would be hypocritical for the stars and stripes to endorse telling immigrants to “go back to [their] [expletive deleted] [countries]” and refusing to grant them life-changing financial opportunities.

Immigrants are not the only people subject to change within the Trump Administration. Just last year, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a landmark court case, had granted that same-sex couples had the fundamental right to marry in the entire United States. A step in the right direction towards acceptance, the LGBT+ community was ecstatic at the results, but the 45th soon-to-be Chief Executive remarks that “same-sex marriage is an issue that should have been decided by the states,” hinting at his lukewarm backing and indirect disagreement at the blanket Supreme Court decision last June. This hypothetically proposed decision by the states would still have parts of the United States denying basic civil liberties to residents of the United States, a populace whose interests he has prioritized first.

He may have supported the community in his speech—although anyone can wave a rainbow flag and back it up with little to no substance—but that does not undermine his capricious viewpoint, changing only to pander to the largest demographic available. It also does not forgive the harsh reality that Mike Pence, his running mate, actively advocates

for many anti-LGBT+ programs and laws, which includes, but is not limited to opposing the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell and diverting funds for HIV prevention to conversion therapy, the modern-day equivalent of privately funded torture; several associations have condemned the practice of the commonly euphemized "reparation therapy" (implying there was something wrong with them to begin with) such as the American Psychological Association and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. On November 8th, America chose to elect somebody willing to actively codify discrimination.

Pence is sadly not the only one. There has already been talk of newly elected delegates in Congress supporting Trump's future "First Amendment Defense Act," which allegedly "protects the deeply held religious beliefs of Catholics and the beliefs of Americans of all faiths." This sugarcoated legislation hides a more chilling message: that institutions can deny services and opportunities to members of the LGBT+ community solely on the basis of protecting their religion. How utterly terrifying.

In the judicial branch, although the five Supreme Court justices that ruled in support of marriage equality are still on the court, there is currently a vacant spot, and two of the aforementioned justices, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Anthony Kennedy, are around the retirement age. As Trump's potentially long-lasting effect as President, his appointment of justices on the Supreme Court, should they need more than the sole vacant spot, could redefine the sociopolitical reforms of the upcoming generation.

This change in the Supreme Court would also negatively impact a demographic that Trump has previously degraded with his lewd comments: women. Seeing as *Obergefell v. Hodges* was only recently passed, it is a much harder target to tear down, but the Trump Administration has its sights

on *Roe v. Wade*, a court case from the 1970s that ensured a woman's right to have an abortion. An extremely divisive topic, abortion is often a talking point in a candidate's campaign, and Trump has indicated his pro-life stance. The President-Elect has reinforced his statement that he will "name a Supreme Court justice who [opposes] abortion rights" and will readily attack the twentieth-century court case. Under his administration, rape and declining health are one of the few requirements for women to apply for abortion nationally. Many women (and men) are enraged by and condemn Trump's prospective decision: women would then have to go to another state that allows abortion should their state outlaw the practice.

Trump's behavior leading up to the election does little to help in the fight for women's equality. His sexist comments—insults to Carly Fiorina and crass sexually charged comments about women, for example—sets a disgusting and disturbing example for the nation. His win does not overlook the numerous degrading comments that he has amassed over the years. If the very President is hard-pressed in respecting half our country, why is it even remotely surprising that people have questioned his character?

Obviously, we cannot judge a candidate by solely on his/her proposed social policies, but in my opinion, they provide the most fundamental framework to any political and economic propositions. Furthermore, they establish priorities: what the candidate values and does not value. The individual is the most rudimentary aspect of an entire society, so it seems natural and pragmatic to ensure the aforementioned groups' basic liberties and their equality in order for them to more effectively contribute to the whole; anything otherwise,

to me, is counterproductive to the nation's growth. Brushing that aside, treating everybody with respect regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation and identity, and other characteristics is just the mark of a decent human being.

But this is only the beginning. We still have to wait for the year to pass and for January to rear its head. Whether you are waiting with open arms or with terrified eyes does not change the results, but we should not let the results change us. Sure, you can become more well-versed in politics and be an informed voter the next time any election or referendum, be it local, state, or national, comes around, but that shouldn't give us an excuse to turn on each other based on for whom people voted.

In just the last week alone, there have been several instances of hate crimes and violence that were born out of the clash of political ideologies. In Chicago, a video was taken of a 49-year-old man being attacked by a group for showing his support for the Republican nominee. Meanwhile, across the country, there have been threats against minority groups such as Muslims that claim that they do not belong in "Trump's America". The war between partisan ideals has instilled in America a sentiment of hatred within its inhabitants, leaving us even more fractured than we were.

Ignorance is one hell of a drug, and from my diagnosis, Uncle Sam will keel over from an overdose.

I'm worried. I'm worried about Donald Trump's mercurial nature and lack of experience. I'm worried that we might be ushering in an era of the "Not-So United States" given our recent treatment of one another. I'm worried that some groups in America might face even more discrimination in the

coming years. I'm worried that acceptance and understanding will soon become little more than a pipe dream.

However, this is not some clarion call to arms for Democrats to stampede and steal the White House, quite the contrary. This is the hand that America has dealt, and we need to play this game with the cards that we have. Rather, this is a challenge to the Trump administration: prove me wrong. Prove to those “damn liberals” and “stupid Democrats” that we are moving forward rather than doing the opposite, for if you truly feel affronted by the countless protests to the results, take the high road and show humility. Put my fears to rest. Live up to the name of the very nation you are now leading. Right now, the world has its eyes on you. Prove me—and the country—wrong.

Maryland Young Writers

High School Student Winner: Fiction Category

It Will Always Come Back Around

Jordan Homan

It was a cold night in Seattle, the kind that makes your skin feel tight and the tip of your nose go numb. The wind howled as he slowly advanced down the cracked sidewalk. He had thought about this night for months. No, years. He would get her back for all the things she said, all the things she did, and how poorly she treated him. He looked down and saw the bulky black boots that protected his feet from the frigid, inflexible concrete. A smile crept onto his nearly frostbitten face as he heard her future tortured screams in his head. He sped up, worried that he would be late.

He approached the house, her house. He knew it well due to the many, many hours that he had spent there. He stood and took in the sight of the yellow painted house. Just looking at the dull shade of yellow that reminded him of rotten squash sent harsh chills down his back. He knew that he had to do this in order to achieve his ultimate goal. He advanced toward the three steps that separated him from her. One by one, he raised his leg, which felt like it was full of lead, and placed it on the next stair. When he had accomplished this small milestone he realized what was next. He would see her for the first time in over two decades. He raised his hand and latched it onto the cold, metal knocker.

Before his brain had even noticed, he was mindlessly banging the piece of icy metal against the door.

There she was. Standing there before him was the one person that he held the most hatred for in the entire world. He knew that she was thrilled to see him, but even after seeing her aging face he could not forget what she had put him through. All he was able to see was the evil in her sparkling blue eyes.

He had found her number in a decrepit phone book two weeks before and called to inform her that he would be coming into town and would love to see her. Knowing exactly what her answer would be, as she had tried to gain back their relationship many times before, she unknowingly accepted the invitation to dinner.

They exchanged a long, drawn out hug and the tears shed from her ocean blue eyes wet his shirt. After their embrace, she reached out and held her arm there. He was lost at first. What was she doing? He then noticed that her small, delicate hand was clenched into a fist, as if it enclosed an object. He stretched out his hand to accept the mysterious item. This was one of the smallest gestures that he would soon largely regret. She placed the small item in his large, muscular hand and he immediately knew what he held. Just the feeling of the object brought back memories and feelings that he had repressed for over twenty years. None of that would matter anymore. Tonight was the night it would all be resolved and he would be even with her.

Dinner had ended. What was actually an hour of awkward, uncomfortable conversation had felt like years to him. It was as if the cold outside had caused the hands on his tattered leather wristwatch to freeze in their place. No matter how hard they tried to advance on their endless path to nowhere, they could not succeed.

He had invited her back to the hotel he was staying in so they had more time to catch up. The thrill in her bright crystal eyes was extremely evident as she accepted the offer. He still possessed the small object that she had given him in his pocket. His hands endured the almost arctic conditions as they swayed by his sides while the pair walked. Despite the discomfort his fingers felt, he refused to place them in his pockets. This would require him to come in contact with the item, which was the last thing he desired to do.

As they arrived at the hotel, the same smile that always crept on his face when he thought of this day appeared again. This was not your nice five star hotel. It was an old, dirty, unkempt, and practically uninhabited place. Although she possessed a worried look once they were in the parking lot, she continued to gush about how happy she was that they had reconnected.

There was no man behind the counter in the lobby. There were no maids wandering in and out of rooms. There were no guests at the ice machines or in the still pool. There were also no elevators. The entire building seemed to creak with every step they took. He informed her that his room was on the top floor. They journeyed flight after flight of stairs until they reached the top level, floor six. He strolled down the hallway toward his room. He was so filled with enthusiasm that he could not contain himself much longer. He stopped in front of his door and turned the key to Room 666.

The entire room reeked of mold. She sat down in the dusty desk chair. This was his moment. All the traumatic memories would be gone after this. This was it. He grabbed the hidden rope from underneath the creaking bed frame. He snuck up behind her. Yes, this was it. In one quick motion he was able to restrict her and tie the tightest knot he could. A look of confusion now overtook her blue eyes. She was now exactly where he wanted her. Yes, this would all come to an end. He

went into the bathroom with almost a skip in his step and grabbed the rough, cream-colored washcloth, now hearing her cries from the other room as the reality of the situation sank in for her. He then placed it in her mouth to shield the rest of the world from her screams.

The next thing on his agenda was to let her know exactly what was on his mind. He spoke of the undeserved mental and physical abuse. He told stories of times that he felt unloved. He blamed her for everything that she ever did to him. He accused her of all the cruel, harsh, and inhumane wrongs that she had committed. He then took the cold metal locket out of his wool-lined pocket and threw it on the molding wooden floorboards. In result of this it opened, which revealed a picture of him sitting on her lap when he was about three years old. She began to cry violently, wishing that he was again that little boy that so willingly sat on her lap. He approached the coat closet to the right of the bathroom. He opened the small door and retrieved the shovel he had hidden there the day before. He again moved toward her as she shuddered with fear. He flipped the shovel blade side up and smashed the locket with the wooden handle. It came crashing down on top of the metal, causing it to immediately snap in two and send one half flying to the other side of the mold-covered room.

“That was for my childhood self,” he said as he raised the shovel again.

“And this one’s for me.”

Maryland Young Writers
College of Southern Maryland
Winner:
Poetry Category

Life Hurts

Ashley Groves

Life Hurts
Life hurts sometimes,
But you must pretend you're fine.
The guy you love leaves,
It's becoming harder to breathe. Family begins to die,
But everyone else is making up lies.
They make up lies to bring sorrow,
Your pain begins to grow.
You don't deserve this at all,
But you refuse to let them break you and make you fall.
You are as strong as you can ever be,
I would know because that was me.

M a r y l a n d Y o u n g W r i t e r s

C o l l e g e o f S o u t h e r n M a r y l a n d

W i n n e r :

F i c t i o n C a t e g o r y

M Y S . U . I . C . I . D . E .

(an excerpt)

Kaliah Thomas

My name is Bobby Turner and March 4, 2012 was the day I couldn't take life anymore. I lived in Boxville with my mother Olivia, my sister Becky, and my father Brock. Boxville is one of the "ghetto" towns in Alabama. Drugs were easy to get, gangs were everywhere, and there were a couple deaths every month. My mother and father raised me and my sister in a godly home. To be a part of gangs or do drugs was forbidden, we were to be leaders not followers.

My life before high school was perfect except the occasional teasing from my little sister. But then life started to suck, well everything at home was good but I always dreaded going to school. So, let me just say that I wasn't the smartest or coolest boy in the ninth grade and I got bullied every day because of it. It wasn't the entire school that bullied me; it was mainly a clique of boys called the Blue Dragons. The leader of the Blue Dragons was Matthew and his side boys were Johnny and David. These boys were the "it boys." They had the best clothes, were tall, and had muscular bodies.

The Blue Dragons were very consistent at bullying me and their favorite time was at lunch, they would take my food and tell me that I could afford to miss a meal or two. My best friend Billy would laugh and agree to whatever they said. I couldn't blame him because my mom had always told me not

to let the people picking on me see that it affects me because it would make them want to bully me even more. One day Billy and I were eating lunch outside in the court yard and Matthew came and kicked my tray out my hand. I got up and told them to stop messing with me. I shouldn't have done that because that is the day I found out that my mom is always right.

Matthew started beating me and then David and Johnny jumped in. That is the day that I found out that my best friend wasn't who I thought he was. He ran, not for help but for his own safety. When I went to the nurse she told me that my nose was broken and I had a black eye. When the nurse called and told my mother it all went downhill from there. My mother came up to the school and talked to the principal about what would happen to the Blue Dragons. Mr. Johnson told her that he couldn't do anything because there were no witnesses.

I was shocked my supposedly best friend wouldn't even say anything to help me. My mom took me home and told me that I didn't have to go to school for a week or until I was feeling a hundred percent better. On my third day out of school Billy came to see me, he said he was sorry and that he didn't know that the bullying me was getting to me because I never said anything to him. I forgave him and said that he needed to help me figure out how to lose weight and fast.

Billy said that his sister Jessica was trying to lose weight for her prom so she just stopped eating. Billy said that Jessica lost three dress sizes in a month by just drinking water and exercising. I had heard a lot about people who did that and they lost weight but got really sick but the risk was worth it. So for the next two weeks I didn't eat and exercised every morning and night. I soon learned that wasn't the best idea. One afternoon in gym class we were playing volleyball and as I was running to get the ball I passed out.

At one point all I remember is someone saying, "We need to get food in him fast and hydrate him." When I finally woke up and came to my senses my mother started yelling at me and

asking questions. “Why didn’t you eat? Did you know that you could’ve killed yourself? What were you thinking?” All I said was I didn’t want to talk about it. The next day I called Billy over to think of new ways to get the Blue Dragons to leave me alone. With four hours of thinking, eating, and video games we came up with nothing.

When Billy left I told my mom I was ready to go back to school, she didn’t like it but said okay. The next day at school I was the laughing topic of the school, all day people were imitating how I passed out. Then came lunch and that meant time to be bullied. That day Johnny didn’t go to school so I thought they would be less harsh but I was wrong; they took it to the next level. As I was walking to the courtyard David picked me up and put me in a trash can, rolled me to the lunch room, and put me in the freezer.

I screamed for about ten minutes until I just figured that no one could hear me, so I decided to stop and do some thinking. This time did me some justice. I had just thought of the best idea. I had remember that my dad heard a noise one night so he got his gun and walking down the stairs he saw a robber. All my dad did was show the robber the gun, he ran and we haven’t had a problem since. So my plan was to show the Blue Dragons the gun and they would leave me alone for good. Twenty minutes later the lunch lady opened the door and discovered me.

That night in the shower I planned how I was going to get the gun out my parent’s room without them seeing me. I got out the shower and before dinner when everyone was downstairs I went to my parent’s room to make sure that I knew exactly where the gun was hidden. After dinner I went to my room as always but this time I stayed up and waited for my parents to fall into a deep sleep. When I say deep sleep I mean snoring and drooling all over the pillow. I peeked my head in about a quarter to twelve and they were knocked out. I walked silently through the door into the bathroom and into the

closet. In the closet I moved the plastic dog and there it was. I put the plastic dog back, as though it was never moved, and walked out the bathroom when I noticed my dad turning over.

I slammed to the floor making even more noise and that's when my dad woke up. I quietly crawled back to the closet and waited for my dad to go back to sleep. I was there for like thirty minutes before my dad went back to sleep. Then I went back to my room and put the gun in my back pack and went to sleep. That morning I woke up excited for my day. When I got to school Billy was at his locker I grabbed him and ran to the bathroom.

Slowly I checked each stall to make sure no one was with us then I quickly flashed the gun and put it away. Billy screamed like a dog getting run over making a nearby teacher run into the bathroom. I ran into a stall as Billy just stood there and made up a story telling the teacher he saw a big spider. When the coast was clear I walked out the bathroom as if nothing ever happened.

On my way to class I saw the Blue Dragons pointing and yelling at me, I wanted to do it right then and there but if the teacher would've saw the gun I would've been expelled and maybe even arrested. The way my parents raised me they wouldn't like to hear that and if I couldn't survive at school I know I couldn't survive in jail. The entire class all I could think about was how scared those boys would be when they saw a gun. I couldn't even focus on my class work knowing that I would be known for bringing down the cool boys.

I finally started paying attention when my teacher started telling the class about the assembly that we would be having after lunch. That made a light bulb go off in my head, I would show the Dragons my dad's gun during the transition from lunch to the assembly. The bell rang for lunch and from that point forward all I could do was count down the minutes until I got to see the breathless look on the Blue Dragons face.

Maryland Young Writers
College of Southern Maryland
Winner:
Poetry Category

She's a nice girl

Cayla Riddick

"Give me a pencil."
"Give me your homework."
"Give me your time."
"She's a nice girl."

"Always to class on time."
"Future leader."
"Always counted on."
"Never called upon."

Alienanted, isolated, naive to life.
Standing on the outside, with a cheshire smile.
Screaming on the inside, unbeknownst to all.
Never to hear:

"Give me your advice."
"Give me your friendship."
"Give me your all."
"Give me your love."

"She's a nice girl."

The Living

John Timothy Robinson

Weathered brick taken with grass
fade into ground, work lost to earth,
stalks of Ironweed.

At the porch, only a ghostly border,
eighty years of landmark stone.

A propped door against the left wall,
just over threshold's slat.

Evening sun fills the room.
Slight wind stirs musty scents;
water stains, dry-rot.
A wood-borer drones
deep in a beam.
Filaments drift down through the light.

That was my solace,
in cob-webs or sifting
murky atmospheres of dust and mold.
to see what was and is
in molecules of every living thing,
of all that's made and suffered.

Wind draws over the porch
through apple leaves and orchard grass.
I walk fields where there is no path to follow.

Shine

Karinne Dimeglio

Looking up from keyboard and display
My shine so intelligent, almost complete.

Distant banging sounds, ratcheting of wrench
Thread machine and burnt oil spent.
Tighten the joints the Dad would work
Grunting, twisting, and turning.

Bucket of copper dumped on the floor
Tees and elbows, reducers and caps.
Shine 'em up he'd say,
Shine 'em up good, plenty of paste.

Wood wheel, rough ride on the bumps
Apple cart slow, firmly on course.
Sunny day glistening the frutta
Nonno huffs the wagon down.

Yellow lemons, red apples, oranges and bananas.
Light pressing a finger to Son
Shine 'em up he'd say,
Shine 'em up good, colorful to please.

Compilation of code complete.
My fittings and fruit shined artificially.

Get Dressed

Desiree St. Clair Glass

They are lined up,
shoulder to shoulder,
noses pointing forward,
excited as college students for what awaits.

But they don't know they're naked,
not outfitted for the cruise.
Do they even know where to find their clothes?
Do they know where they are going?

There are slews of clues all around them.
Don't they see those strong dock pillars,
sporting pointed party caps,
and the sturdy oak standing on the shore?

Its arms extend upward.
Its leaves bob like confetti in the breeze.
Don't they hear? The flagpole sounds an alarm—
its empty hooks clang in the wind.

Haven't they noticed
the heavy rope wrapped securely at its base,
like fingers interlaced
with the hand of God?

Have they not read the glaring signs
on the garage with the gable roof?
No parking!
Lift up your eyes!

See the patch of blue break through
the blanket of thick clouds.
Find the opening to your purpose.
Can you see it now, Little Boats?

The river is ready to carry you—
it shimmies with excitement.
Get ready! Get dressed!
And sail in the direction of the Spirit.

Sparks Fly Upward

Katie Spivey Brewster

Vertical shooting stars
zigzag into a darkening sky

Faces glowing, eyes sparkling
follow as they soar high

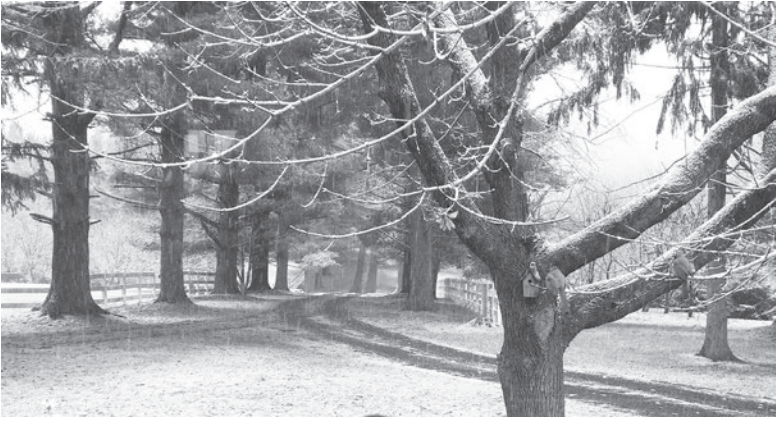
Bonfire popping and crackling
sends grains of light up

To dance on the evening breeze
swirling and twirling above

Craning our necks
we follow their flight

Disappearing over tree tops
Well out of sight—

but not out of mind.



Cardinals Enjoying the Snow Shower by Brenda Jones

Love for the Dandelion, Please. She's Due Some.

Stephen Berberich

They shine like no other, those bright yellow beams of sunlight peeking from the earth.

And for me, the dandelion is the truest sign of spring's arrival. No, it's not the robin foraging for worms, not the tiny frogs peeping in the woods, not even the first run of rockfish up the Chesapeake Bay. The true arrival of spring is that unwavering dandelion popping up boldly and assuredly. There seems a resolute confidence in the "heart" of every dandelion. They cannot be stopped.

I'm told that this true harbinger of spring sets its course early with unopened, fully formed and colorless flower buds just underground. It is true. I've peeked. There they were, nestled tightly atop sturdy, thick roots. With that first warm "magic" rain at the end of winter, those pent-up buds push up. They lack only daylight to shine.

Dandelions are my favorite flowers. Simply by reputation, a dandelion is the brightest sun-yellow of all spring blooms, is botanically evolved to survive magnificently, has served humans since antiquity as food, high-quality nutrients, and medication, is fun for children. Yet, the dandelion is unfairly maligned today as a suburban menace by frustrated perfect lawn seeking fanatics, spraying and cursing the little yellow beauties.

Phooey I say, to those polluting maniacs.

If you love plants as I do, you know that the dandelion plant is one of nature's "engineering" wonders.

When the flower wilts and drops its petals, the flower head's brackets curve backwards into that familiar puff ball

of delicate parachutes—like an origami trick—feathery parachute each attached to one of as many as 200 seeds that can blow off to travel long distances.

This trick serves us well, too. For adults camping or hiking, the puff ball serves as a humble meteorologist. It folds up before it rains and opens when skies clear. And for kids, well, grownups have always handed off puff-ball folklore to their children, such as, “If you blow three times, the seeds left tell you how many kids you will have?” Remember that one? Or, “Seeds left there tell you how many years left before you get married.” My favorite was to catch a wayward seed parachute and make a wish.” Funny, they always came true if I shared with my folks.

I also love the dandelion flower because it is a beautiful composite, not one flower but dozens packed together as one on top of the paper-like hollow stalk flexible enough to withstand hurricane force winds. Again, ingenious.

Medicinal uses of dandelions by civilizations past—just a quick Google click away—are not for me to list. But, I can attest to the better known nutritional values when I get a lift from eating the young leaves fresh in salad, or steamed, boiled, or sautéed.

Add a sip of brandy like dandelion wine or my tangy dandelion root coffee, and you know why my favorite flower and true harbinger of spring is the dandelion. Now, if you will excuse me, I must tend to my pet dandelion. She grows huge in the limestone rich soil next to my house. I give my Great Dane of dandelions organic fertilizer to stretch its large, lion’s teeth leaves (French roughly translated: dent- de-lion). The center flower stalk is also taller and sturdier than normal because I trim the side ones. And its 2-inch wide flower makes a puff-ball the size of a tennis ball.

Try saving one sometime for your pet plant, but not near the neighbor’s yard.

As the Year Greys into Fall

Christopher Wilkins

As the year greys into fall,
raisins freeze to honey on the vine.
Love bemuses us to leave it all

behind. Our wild innocent, for all
her song in flight, has this in mind,
as the year greys into fall,

*Go or stay, it's up to you; all's
fair in love for thee and thine.*
Love induces us to leave it all

behind. She's proud to stand up tall
so you can stand one step behind
as the year greys into fall;

yet, if not, she's perfectly all
set to walk away from me and mine.
Love reduces us to leave it all,

leave it all to her then, all
her innocence, her song not mine.
Love, amuse us: leave it all
as the year graces to fall.



Big Bus by Jim McDonald

The Blue Collar Troubadour

William Poe

With beer on his breath
He sings her a lullaby
The dried mud still clinging to his Red Wing work boots
Leaving a trail from the front door
Up the stairs and down the hall to her room
Where he sits his can of beer on the nightstand next to her bed
Then reads from a book in his best scary voice
She pulls the blanket up tight to her neck just below her chin
He breaks for a moment to wash the dirt down his throat
Then lowers his voice, the words becoming raspier
From too many cigarettes and just as much cheap bourbon
And when the last word is read
Her eyes now fully closed
He leans over and kisses the fore of her head
Then closes the door to her room
Until a tiny crack of light still shines on her bed
Then lightly stumbles down the darkened hallway



Pier by Diane Payne



Cityscape by Paul Toscano

tinder girl

Sherbie Carson

how many eyes have seen these pictures, dear girl?
black laced curves pressed—
against the doorframe.
where you allow them
to enter you, over and over—
until they're done
and gone—
an on
to the next—
who surrenders
her image
in a text—
who believes
her value is bound—
to the exchange
of this sexual currency.
scattering your dollars
to the breeze, on your knees—
crawling the length of this bed
with vacant eyes, a zoo bound cougar—
stalking her hunting grounds. hungry for love
and blind to the iron bars of her own willful captivity.

Contributors

JUDY ANGELHEART is a resident of Southern Maryland who shares her home with her husband, Dimitrios, and dog, Pudge. She is a self-taught artist; her media has primarily been the wonderful expressive form known as poetry. She has a poet's view of the world, always looking for and noticing the beauty and wonder all around her. She says that "a poet's job is to notice the details and tell about them in a way that speaks from the artist's heart. Finding that path of expression is both thrilling and frightening because it exposes both one's self and the world around you to appreciation and criticism. Yet, it also opens a place within our souls that allows us to speak to each other at a very deep and spiritual level." This is what Judy hopes that her words and images do—speak to your heart and soul, and connect us together. Judy's work has been published in anthologies and magazines.

STEPHEN BERBERICH is a writer in the community with ties to the CSM through the Maryland Writers Association.

JAMES BURD BREWSTER is a musician, actor, writer, Christian, father, and husband. He authored the "Uncle Rocky, Fireman, Officer Jack and EMT Morales" series of children's story books. Jim's first publishing success was in 2012 when "The Start" was chosen for the *Connections* fall issue. Jim learned to walk in Albany, sail on Lake Champlain, and navigate a polar icebreaker in the Coast Guard. He and Katie raised five children and are taking dancing lessons at CSM.

KATIE SPIVEY BREWSTER is a mother of five grown children, grandmother of five, and wife of Jim Brewster for 36 years. She was once a Creative Writing student in Professor 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.

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

ALEXANDER CORBIN is a student at the College of Southern Maryland, whose interests include painting, poetry, and appearing in silhouette.

JUSTIN CORTEZ is a senior at La Plata High School. He intends to study chemistry following graduation.

KARINNE DIMEGLIO is currently pursuing a General Studies degree at CSM. He has always had an interest in writing poems and short stories in his free time. His poem “Shine” is inspired by Seamus Heaney’s poem “Digging.” Heaney’s poem is about three generations: grandfather, father, and son. In “Shine,” the main idea is about his father, who is a software engineer, and the memories he had of his father and grandfather. Both poems follow a similar pattern of relating the different generations of the past to more recent times.

EMELDA TABAO DRISCOLL is a Filipino who migrated to the United States for her graduate studies, earning a PhD in sociology from Syracuse University. She lived in the Philippines during the Marcos dictatorship and saw first-hand the effects of martial law on the Filipino people and their social institutions. She lives in Waldorf, teaches sociology at the College of Southern Maryland, creates oil paintings and Japanese woodblocks in her studio, and writes poetry and prose. She is currently working on a historical novel about the Philippines.

MARGO FITCH is currently twenty-four and a student at Seton Hill University pursuing an MFA in Writing Popular Fiction. She earned her bachelor’s in English at Towson University where she has been featured in Towson’s literary journal, *Grub Street*. She also teaches freshman composition at the College of Southern Maryland and moonlights as a crazy cat lady in her spare time.

DESIREE ST. CLAIR GLASS is currently a public high school teacher. Desiree has 30 years of experience, teaching all ages from infant to adult. Her writing has appeared in *Guideposts*, *Christian Devotions*, *A Joy-Full Season*, and other newspapers and magazines, including previous issues of *Connections*. Desiree earned her MA at Notre Dame of Maryland University and her BS at Salisbury University. She is the mother of three children and grandmother of five.

ASHLEY GROVES is a CSM student whose poem is about an average teen going through struggles of losing the people he or she loves.

JORDAN HOMAN is a freshman at La Plata High School. Her gothic story imitates Edgar Allan Poe's writing style using symbolism, irony, and suspense.

BRENDA JONES is the production specialist for the Marketing Department at CSM. She has been with the college for almost 30 years and has enjoyed working with the Languages and Literature Division for most of those years assisting with the production of the *Connections* literary magazine twice each year. She enjoys scenic photography and has been published in two previous issues of *Connections*.

GINETTE KRANTZ is an adjunct professor at the College of Southern Maryland.

KATE LASSMAN is an adjunct instructor teaching English composition at CSM at the La Plata Campus. Kate holds an MFA in poetry from George Mason University and lives in Waldorf with her husband and two spoiled rotten cats.

CARRIE LOVEJOY is a Newburg resident and 2017 graduate of College of Southern Maryland. After a 15-year career in print journalism, the last five of which were spent as editor of *The Calvert Recorder*, she is now studying to become an educator. During her time at CSM, Carrie has worked for the Community Relations, Marketing, and Wellness, Fitness, and

Aquatics departments. She has a variety of interests; she is a triathlete, photographer, black belt in taekwondo, and author of several books, to name a few. During her last semester at CSM, she played on the college's women's lacrosse team as goalie. A goal she obtained while working in newspaper, where she spent every day reading and editing obituaries, was to leave the most interesting obituary she possibly could, so she rarely says no to a new adventure. She is married to Michael and is the mother of Darady and Lauren.

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.

RACHEL NEWMAN is a student at CSM with plans to attend the University of Maryland in fall 2017 to pursue her degree in journalism. She enjoys reading, writing, and staying active in her spare time.

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.

WILLIAM POE has been published several times in *Connections*.

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 CSM’s *Connections* literary magazine, was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2014.

MARY PRATHER is currently finishing her BA in English.

NOAH REEVES is an English major at CSM currently, with hopes to transfer to the University of Maryland next spring. Noah has been writing poetry for a little over three years and has never looked back since.

CAYLA RIDDICK is an 18-year-old senior at Lackey High School. She is in the top ten among her graduating class while participating in almost 20 extracurricular activities, including president of the drama club and a member of three different honor societies. She likes to write but plans to be a musician.

JOHN TIMOTHY ROBINSON is a graduate of the Marshall University Creative Writing program in Huntington, West Virginia with a Regent’s Degree. He has an interest in critical theory of poetry and American Formalism. John is also a twelve-year educator for Mason County Schools in Mason County, West Virginia. He strives for a poetics similar to Donald Hall, Maxine Kumin, James Wright, Louis Simpson, Gallway Kinnell, and Robert Bly, though enjoys learning from intrinsic poets and their theories in the critical writings of Denise Levertov, Robert Creeley, Louis Zukofsky, William Carlos Williams, and Richard Kostelanetz. John is currently working on a creative dissertation in contemporary poetry, though outside the university environment.

ERIC W. SHOEMAKER is a member of the Charles County Chapter of the Maryland Writer’s Association.

MERIDETH TAYLOR is professor emerita of theater and dance in the department of theater, film, and media studies at St. Mary’s College of Maryland at historic St. Mary’s City. She has a broad and eclectic theatre and dance background as

a performer, director, choreographer, and teacher. As a writer, she has received many awards in playwriting, screenwriting, and historical documentation. Her plays have been produced in venues in Washington, DC and New York and selected for readings as far afield as Valdez, Alaska. In 2010, she received a Historic Preservation Service Award from the St. Mary's County Historic Preservation Committee and County Commissioners for the documentary, *With All Deliberate Speed: One High School's Story*, and, in 2011, a Communicators International Award for her short film, *Historic Sotterley: A Tidewater Legacy*. These films were selected for inclusion and awards in the 2016 and 2017 Southern Maryland Film Festivals and honored by the St. Mary's County Branch NAACP with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her use of the performing arts to produce positive social change. She shares a homestead in Park Hall, Maryland with her partner, Bob, two cats, and a small flock of chickens.

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

KALIAH THOMAS is in the last semester of the sophomore year at the College of Southern Maryland, studying to be an English major in hopes to open an after-school English tutoring center. Creative writing has always been a passion of Kaliah's and this is Kaliah's first writing competition.

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

JOANNE VAN WIE has been a resident of Southern Maryland for the last twenty-one years. In addition to writing, she enjoys jogging and relaxing in severely warm weather, as well as complaining about the cold weather during the off-season.

CHRISTOPHER WILKINS is a poet, novelist, avid hiker, and violist who teaches English at CSM and serves as an Episcopal priest. He is married, has two grown sons, and lives in California, Maryland.



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