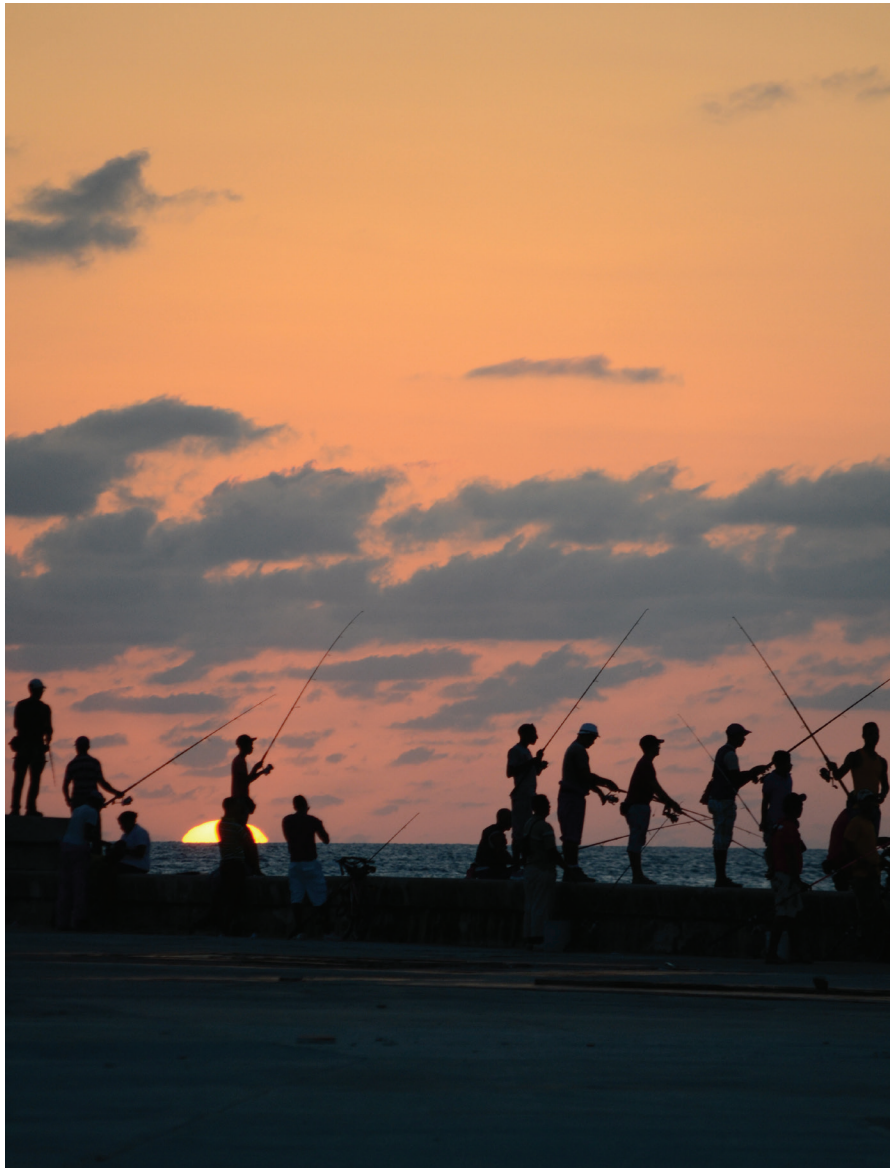


Idiom & Image



The Arts Magazine of Sussex County Community College



A Collection of Student Work

2015

With special thanks to Professor James Rawlins, who began
this literary magazine for students of SCCC in 1990.

Thank you for inspiring us always.

Jean LeBlanc *Managing Editor*
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Cover photo by Lauren Bell
“Havana Malecón at Sunset”

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An Empty Lot

by Tyler Depko

Blank sheet of paper
Your wildest dreams may never fill
Imagining what could have been
What will it become
A few little kids playing in the mud
With high grass that seems it will
Never stop growing





Along Jerusalem's Walls

by William Toner



■ Finally Forgiven

■ By Alexa Starr Barboe
■

I have to admit that I never really got bored. What we had was interesting to say the very least. Watching Glenn repeatedly do no wrong while I lagged behind, older, smaller and much less important...that stayed with me. Even after (long after) I was gone, I still got so discouraged when I attempted some big thing and failed. Then the depression came. This looming sadness was inundating me as it slid over my whole life in waves, rocking me like a broken baby. It felt like years but only a few months were dragging, scraping by. It happened more than once. I almost never had a vice. Usually I just sat there, drowned in a melancholy I couldn't explain or do anything about.

But whatever.

What's important really (at least for me) is that when Mom was still here in an obvious, physical way, she was fully here. Some think she only left her memory. But I know the veracity. She left behind her legacy. She always left me with solace about every situation when I had all but lost hope. No matter how much I was hurting, or how painfully confused I was about what I had done wrong, or just how worthless and pitiful you made me feel, she was always there to reassure me of your love. That was before I knew I was unplanned...an accident. Before I knew you two weren't soul mates or even in love really. I watched your marriage unravel; never knowing that the knot wasn't tied quite tight enough.





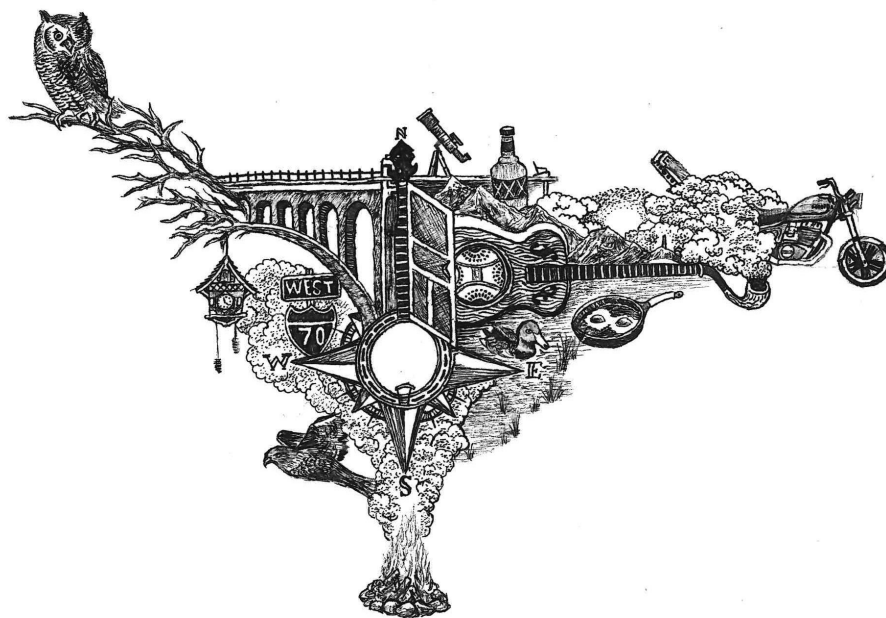
But whatever.

I guess what I'm really getting at Dad, is that you suck, but I forgive you. I know you are a grudge-holder and you despised my mother for getting pregnant the first night you were together; and you despised me for granting you with some kind of responsibility. You were blessed with someone to finally live for; Someone who could make it all better and you never even knew. You suck so hard, but I forgive you even harder. Even in my (still) somewhat confused state, I love you and I'm not mad at you anymore.

You may never know that I get it, but I don't care. What's important here is that we're different. I'm no grudge-holder and I believe in justice. That's what you always try to claim, but it's clearly just not true for you.

What's important is that I finally release this rage on this page, breathing the red-hot, dense anger out. What's the very most important is that I forgive myself for letting your hatred fill me with despair. I forgive, and I'm finally free.





Neal's Portrait

by Stephen Sabia

Shadows of the Past

by Jo Fekete

The field was muddied
from the spring rain.
Warmth radiated in the
afternoon sun.

Our Shadows moved across
the open field together,
side by side, arms and hands
as One.

My shadow was laughing,
running and jumping,
through the maze
of amber broken stalks.

Deer emerged on the edge
of the forest,
watched in wonder of us.
Song birds seemed to sing
our names.
Even the shy fox openly posed
by the fallen tree.

All things were alive than
in that afternoon sun—
and there in the past the
Shadows will dwell.





Kid at the Kotel

by William Toner



The Guarded Heart

by Brittany Jacob

Trusting above to direct the next steps,
Not too wise with just our own eyes.
Stretching out my hand and trying to understand.

Affirming emotions at the pace of a snail,
And fighting the fidgeting nerves.
For long feelings as they continually brighten into a full moon.

Harvesting the present and barring the past.
He puts courage into my fears, butterflies into my nightmares.
Heaven knows all of the reasons, why be scared of life's seasons?

The overflow of hope is found in the kingdom above,
If only I could understand,
Where does the shooting star land?



The Trees Speak

by Loretta Visconti

The trees speak
Did you hear that floor panel creak?
That's their voice, trapped below your feet
The trees,
They speak
They weep, laugh, whisper
Perhaps even louder in the winter
when no human is around to hear
they kiss, they hug
they meditate and they love,
They hold the secrets of the forest
Forever holding true
to you
and me
and we
The trees speak



Tree I

by Lauren Bell



Disillusions and Disappointments

by Jaime Coffman

If you were to go up to my parents individually (because divorce is a messy thing) and ask them each this question: What is the greatest disappointment your eldest daughter has caused you? You would get two different answers. My mother would most likely say that it was due to my lack of trust in her, the fact I hid from her an entire spectrum of emotions about nearly everything that had happened in a year. My father would probably answer with the fact that I didn't actually become a black belt in karate, as I had promised him. I made that promise when I was seven, and he still refuses to let it go. But I guess from these two answers you can understand my parents a little better.

The hiding my emotions incident, I want to say was an isolated event. That it all just happened because I tend to bottle things up, which is partly the truth. The other part of it is that my mother had me on anti-depressants since I was fourteen. By the time I was sixteen I thought I was this stone-cold loner. Nothing could make me cry, most days were hazy, and I was generally terrified. One day I decided that since I was so invincible I could take about eight times my normal pill dosage. Part of me did hope that I would just slip away into some void and never wake up. Not die necessarily, just stop being. Another part of me was scared. After a few hours I realized why. It wasn't going to work.

Just three hours after taking the twenty-three pills, rooms wouldn't stop spinning, I felt as if everything that I had ever eaten was trying to sabotage every organ, vessel, and cell in my body. With some hesitation, I waited for my mother to come home from work to tell her what I had done. She walked in the door with her normal peeved face. So she was in a good mood. At first, I tried to stay as calm as possible, to hold back my frightened tears. Why? Because I was stupid and terrified about what was going to come. That act lasted two seconds before I broke down and hurriedly rushed out my story: that I had taken pills and I was scared I was going to die. My mother studied me for a minute. I was terrified to look into her cold, brown eyes. After an obscenely long allotment of time, she put on her coat and told me to get in the car.



The drive was hellish because my mother spent it yelling at me or breaking down over how she somehow failed me. It was hell because I was nauseous, everything in my vision was spinning, and being in a car didn't help that at all. I willed myself not to vomit right there; something told me that would get a not-so-good rise out of her. She called my father, who was at karate class with my younger sister, Stefanie. He said they were leaving now and would meet us there. I thought that was a pretty respectable reaction, no anger and no guilt, just action. At some point we arrived at the hospital and were told to wait until a nurse came to get me. I went over to the chairs and curled up on two of them. It wasn't the most comfortable but it was better than riding in that bumpy car. I closed my eyes to calm my nausea and tried to rest.

My mind had been reeling since I started having side effects, but a horrible thought had finally struck me. What was I going to tell the doctors? Do I openly just confess to wanting to kill myself or do I play it off as a curious teen move? I wondered if I actually wanted to die or if I just wanted to show my mother that I was breakable. For years since the divorce, I had been like an adult friend of hers. I listened to all her complaints of my dad, how he never paid attention to her, stuff like that. I was nine when I saw my mother crying on her birthday because my dad didn't want to go out. She was in her office; the chair wasn't facing the door but I heard the sniffing and could see her body shaking with suppressed sobs. I had gone over to her and hugged her. I wished her a happy birthday and tried to squeeze her as tightly as a child can. Then I told her to leave him. It's not as if she was good at hiding her unhappiness. She fought with him, yelled at him for not being more. It seemed like the most logical solution, even to a child. Since that moment I was on this weird confidant level for my mom, she would tell me the counseling didn't work, then dad refused to move out. We moved to a new house just a block away so we would not have to switch school districts.


My dad got there, at the hospital, with my sister. Who was only ten at the time. She sat next to him across from me. They just stared at me, trying to wrap their heads around what was happening. My mother came over and sat with them; no one talked to me. I opened my eyes and watched them for a little while. They looked like a good family. My dad was a tall silent type, my mother was the short out-spoken type, and my sister was thin little thing. They looked better without me. The nurse came over and had me go with her to check vitals and see if I actu-

ally needed to be admitted. Shockingly, since I had yet to vomit, I was in the right place. A doctor would come look at me once I was in the emergency room. The nurse took me to the room and then went to retrieve my family. I laid on the gurney bed and tried thinking of what I was going to say to him. My mother and dad sat in chairs while my sister started complaining about how tired she was. Once she mentioned it, I started feeling how tired I was. I had cried on and off since I realized what could happen to me. Whether it was me dying, or having to live with the consequences of not.

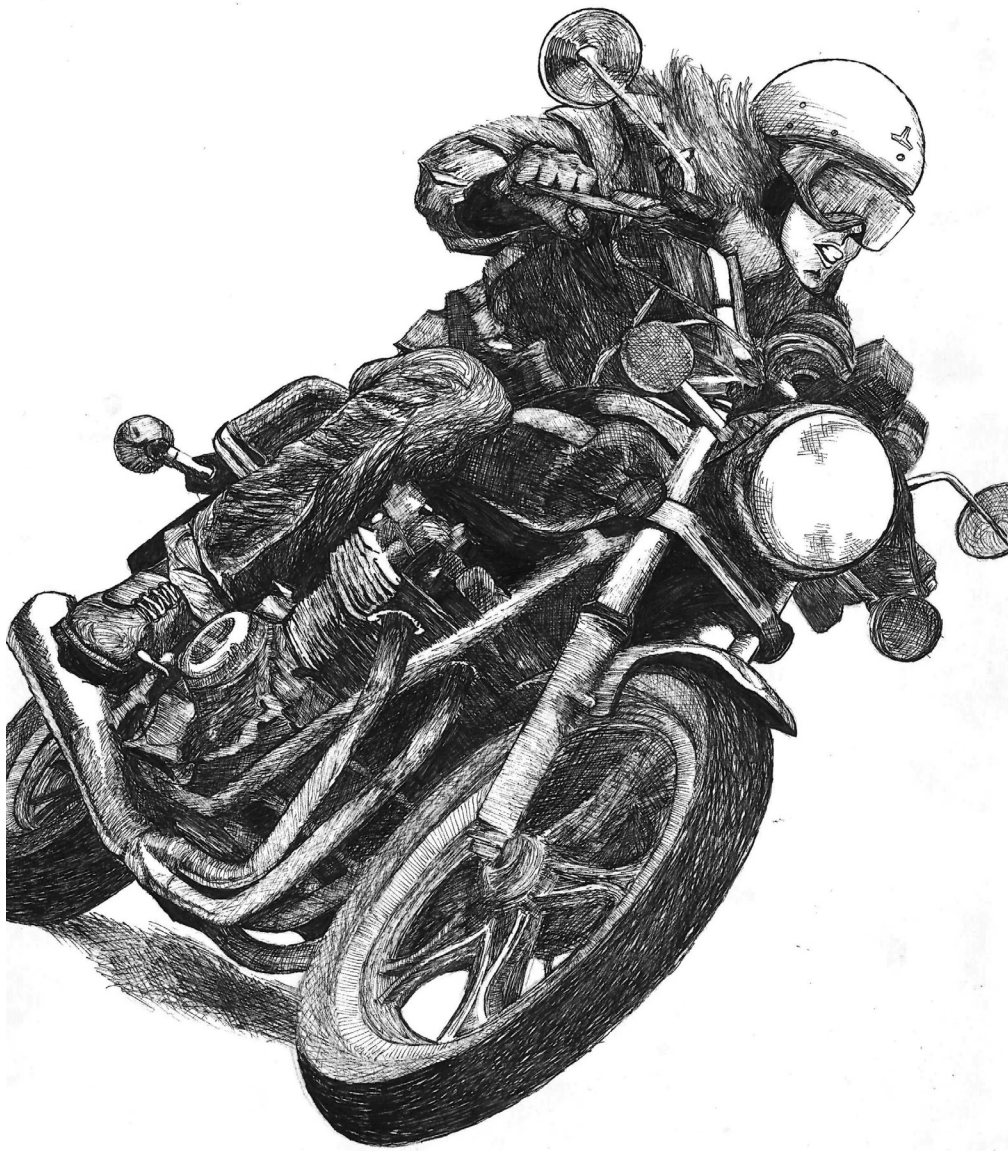
The doctor came in and mostly talked to my parents. I was a minor so it's not like he should have talked to me. The only time he looked at me was to ask the dreaded question; "Why did I do it?" I looked at him and croaked out my response. "I wanted to die." After speaking, he gave me this look. It was worse than any disappointing glare I had ever gotten from my mother; it was a gaze full of pity. It felt as if he was actually seeing me, not some act I had perfected for my family, but the broken and anxiety ridden girl I've always been. The girl who tried to hold the world on her shoulders. He looked at my parents and shared some low words with them. Then he was gone and I finally started vomiting. The rest of the night was filled with flying bodily fluids, hallucinations, and paranoia that people from school were going to see me.

The next three days passed both quickly and slowly. I slept more than I could ever remember. Family members came and went while I slept in my room. The intensive care unit was quiet and dull. The room was painted a tranquil blue color, with flower trimmings on the tops of the walls. It was actually a nice room. My parents came and went in shifts, since my sister wasn't allowed to visit me. All the attention made me feel worse about the situation. I just wanted to go home and pretend that I had never done this. I had viewed death as a solution to a short-term problem.

One the second day, a man came in and asked me questions. Why had I done it? Did I still feel as if I wanted to die? Would I do it again? I answered all of them with what I thought were the appropriate responses and then tried my best to positive; I knew if I wasn't convincing enough I wouldn't be going home. He left and my parents came in; my mother looked angry. I figured she was finally going to yell at me! The moment I had waited for was finally coming, the anger and disappointment would finally come pouring out.



“They want to send you to a mental hospital.” Those were not the words I was expecting, so I just stared at her, digesting her short sentence. This was not happening. I had barely survived a week at summer camp by myself. How was going to survive a place with people who were in worse shape than I? I looked at my mom and nodded as a response. I knew then that we weren’t going to actually talk about this anytime soon. That would be just another incident that we won’t deal with and hope goes away. So I accepted the sentence that the doctors gave me and prepared to be transferred to a psychiatric hospital.



Self Portrait

by Stephen Sabia



Sunning Heron by the Tree

by Neal Punsal

Oh lonesome worshiper of the sun
I envy you.

As you engage in your silence.
I envy you.

And your spear, molded, tested and perfected
by the steady hands of time
then granted to you

by life itself
I long for such a treasure
I could call my own.

Then on your whim
you take your wings
and conquer the passive air.

And you,
no longer the heron by the tree
but an ever shrinking memory.



BRL

by Allison Van Etten

There is no need for sight
No reason to gaze downward
When your fingers glide over the page

The small dots under their tips
Shall tell you all you need to know
As long as you let go of all that surrounds you

Although they are small
Like ants, when they combine
They create something no one had thought possible

Whoever could have imagined
That this little thing
Would change so many lives
In such a huge manner





At first it was rejected
Thought of as useless and unnecessary
That it would do no one any good

But I know they were just scared
Terrified of what would happen
If the dependent gained strength

However thanks to one of our own
We have gained what we so craved
What we needed so desperately

The ability to express
To write how we feel
To show the world
What we are capable of





Appalachian Born

by Neal Punsal

Sleeping mountain,
shed your leaves

the sound of your rustling leaves
sways me
as its hidden behind
the sound of my laughing banjo.

Can you feel it?

The rhythm of my taping foot
upon your granite skin.

Let this bluegrass be a gift to you.

A gift for what you have
done for me.

Water my thirst,
harden my bones,
fill my belly
and lighten my heart.

And as I follow my wandering feet
through your endless spine,
know your mineral body and watered blood
flow through mine.





Camel Convoy in the Negev

by William Toner





John Lee Hooker

by Stephen Sabia



The Keeper

by Annie Craigie

I can see him in my mind's eye
The white the black and the grey,
But mostly the white
And how it glows like the stars in the absence of light.

He poses on a tall rock in a shaft of darkness on the wooded hill.
A soldier,
A warrior valiant.

Destined to never lose a fierce battle
He contemplates his destiny and next course of action,
While silently observing his surroundings.

Never questioning the purpose of his nature,
He instinctively fulfills his needful desire to live in that space between the
Known the unknown, between what is safe and what is unpredictable.

Adorning his sleek attire with pride arresting,
My attention settles on his regal Majesty,
And for a fleeting moment I realize,
There might come a time when I shall never witness his beauty again.





Clownfish

by Tyler Depko

Maybe I want the one swimming beside me, rainbow fish glistening from the sunrise. When I am beside her, it feels as if I am always swimming against the current. All the while, she is gliding through the water as if the current is carrying her. Uplifting as a dolphin. So unique I could pick her out of any school. How that fish right beside me, how it makes this clownfish feel. Leagues ahead of me and yet she is kind enough to care for this clownfish. Rainbow fish catch eyes. This fish beside me catches hearts. If we could be like sea turtles with many more years ahead. To a clownfish like me, those years beside her would feel like the whole ocean was mine!





Lily Collecting

by Lauren Bell



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