

# ESCOM Journal

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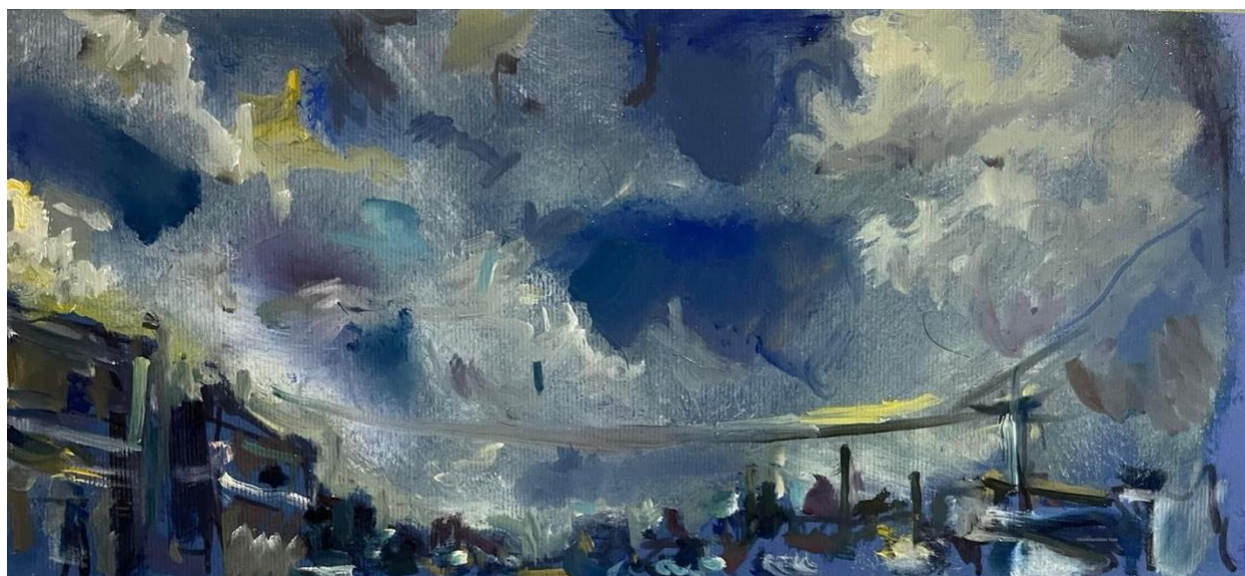
*The Literary and Visual Arts Publication of Emeritus Students College of Marin*

*March/April 2024*



*Reflection, Marilyn Bagshaw*

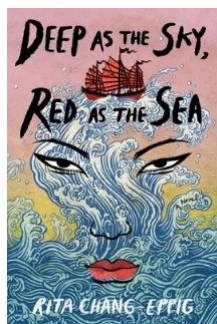
*INSIDE: Maslow's Hierarchy, Guppo's makeup box, atmospheric rivers, bulky eyesores, a horror show, spring flooding, spring cleaning, a path to the future and many other images and odes to spring.*



Atmospheric River, Tami Tsark

### ESCOM AUTHOR READING SERIES RETURNS!

Meet author Rita Chang-Eppig who will read from *Deep as the Sky, Red as the Sea*.



A dazzling historical novel about a legendary Chinese pirate queen, her fight to save her fleet from the forces allied against them, and the dangerous price of power.

**Friday, April 19, 1:00 to 2:30 pm, Academic Center Building (at College and Sir France Drake), Room 255, College of Marin's Kentfield Campus**

Can't get there? [Livestream by clicking here!](#)

Coming up on May 17: Author Brian Copeland with *Outraged: A Topher Davis Thriller*, more info in the next issue.



Steve Lovette



### For Carolyn

Spring comes early to Sausalito  
sweet scent of yellow forsythia  
plum and magnolia already blooming

The last time I saw Carolyn  
my next-door neighbor  
she was wheeled out on a stretcher  
one sunny afternoon

I knew it would be the last time  
her face pale as dawn, wild hair & long

she used to come by  
with the *Sunday Times*  
as I sat on my patio

under our lemon tree

I'd offer a lemon in exchange  
for recycling that mountain of paper

she worried the news  
would depress *the sun goddess*  
as she called me  
I assured her I would only read  
the leisure section and toss the rest

When she began to lose her memory  
she didn't get out of her pajamas  
and her slippers were worn & full of holes

I'd ask her to sit with me awhile  
it didn't matter if she couldn't remember  
what she had for breakfast I'd tell her—  
let's talk about the trip to Acapulco instead  
when she took a detour before college with friends

Her face lit up and the shadows  
under her eyes disappeared  
I can still hear her giggle like a little kid  
now the house sits empty & forlorn  
while birds in her yard  
sing their cheerful & unintelligible song

Marcia Smith



Patty Young

### Awakening

Stop now, wake and listen

There is lightness in the air.

A deep awakening from beyond

is prompting reach and care.

As Mother Nature beckons,

now is time to seek the soul

of life and growth and wonderment

and reach beyond - enfold.

Spring has sprung within us,

may we recognize the urge:

of joy in life and living

and embrace Spring: reemerge.

deidre silverman

### The Plight of Flaco the Eurasian Eagle Owl

surreptitiously released  
from Central Park Zoo  
he roams the skies of the city  
peers in windows  
perches outside the Plaza  
roosts at night in the park  
seeks adventures round the city  
adjusts quickly to the peaks  
ledges valleys of Manhattan  
beds in a compost heap  
despite efforts to lure him back  
with baits of dead rats  
prefers to hunt his own  
spots the herky-jerky  
movements of rodents  
dives in for the kill  
alas come breeding time  
poor Flaco can't find a mate  
is his the fate of Lonesome George  
the Galapagos Pinto's only tortoise

Barbara McDonald



Tom Gannon

### Pump Up Your Prose!

ESCOM Journal Editor Denize Springer is leading an online class on prose writing and revision starting March 28. Get the details at:

[https://marincommunityed.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int\\_class\\_id=6148&int\\_category\\_id=2&int\\_sub\\_category\\_id=10&int\\_catalog\\_id=0](https://marincommunityed.augusoft.net/index.cfm?method=ClassInfo.ClassInformation&int_class_id=6148&int_category_id=2&int_sub_category_id=10&int_catalog_id=0).


Scholarships of \$40 to \$50 a class per semester will be available for the SPRING semester on a first come, first served basis. For more info visit:

<https://marincommunityed.augusoft.net//info/landing/scholarshipsgrants>

Pain Inventory

Surgeons fracture my bones,  
  
Rip through my muscles,  
  
fusing them into immovable  
  
scar tissue.  
  
I wake with hot flashes shooting down  
  
my bones, muscles cramping.  
  
I can't walk; my leg is in spasms.  
  
injections, nerve blocks, acupuncture,  
  
physical therapy, Pilates, cupping,  
  
Rolfing, herbal patches:  
  
Nothing relieves this pain.  
  
Doctor says: "Your surgeries are perfect.  
  
The pain is in your brain. You need reprocessing therapy.  
  
Meditate. Notice changes in intensity, duration  
  
colors and location."  
  
My brain is on fire.  
  
Did my pain change and walk or run away?  
  
Minute by minute, second by second,  
  
I meditate and watch it dance. ray fay

Susan Richard



Her First Job

He saw his shirts, orange banners floating on hangers, Liz held high above the spring grass as she ran, dark braids flying to catch the school bus. Her dog Fritz racing next to her, waited, watching her board the bus before turning to trot back through the field.

She'd been ironing his shirts, saving money for an Easter trip to Palo Alto with her best friend, Carol, to Carol's aunt's house. She would need bus fare and spending money.

He could easily imagine her standing in the kitchen, the ironing board dropped from its slot in the wall, biting at her lip, trying to get the sleeves right. He'd been there to the house for P.T.A. meetings, his son was two years ahead, and had seen her iron dampened handkerchiefs for her father, pillowcases for her mother.

He'd driven her school bus since she started first grade, had bought wild blackberries she'd picked and sold to the corner store, knew she and Carol had a fort hidden in the wild azaleas by the creek. He'd watched both drop back to the ground off unlocked trucks left in the empty lot next to the store, with packages of Pall Malls stolen from the cabs, stolen to smoke secretly in their fort. Regularly on his way home he'd seen her on the store's cement deck, wrapping papers with her brother and other paper boys, and once had seen her, bike laden, delivering papers when her brother was sick.

For the past month he'd given her on Friday, five work-worn shirts. On Monday she'd return them, starched, ironed painfully perfect, smelling sweet from being hung on the line outside to dry, and he handed her an envelope in which he placed two dollars, forty cents a shirt, a fortune.

Today, stammering, red-cheeked, tears welling, she confessed her brother's new orange sweatshirt had stuck unnoticed by her to the sides of the washing machine. She refused the envelope until he convinced her he'd always preferred orange to khaki.

Susan Connelly

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**Interlude\***

In an interlude

heavy theater curtains have fallen between acts.

Everyone gets up and moves around

getting drinks and chitchatting about whether

they like what they just saw or not.

Does it matter?

The fallen drape between what just happened

and what is still to come.

I hear myself mumble

to no one in particular

except to my darkness partner.

In an interlude

where I spend my time after act I or II,

squeezing through the narrow aisles

of tattered chairs needing refurbishing

and paper programs scattered on the floor

with no consciousness of words misplaced

and needing recycling.

Its where I spend my time

like a bee returning

to its old hive once full of juicy honey

remembering to go home

and finding it worn out and messy.

In an interlude

is where I spend my time.

circling towards my distant

place of longing.

Sending off the remaining

secrets too old and unforgiving.

The dust of what is left behind

twirling

like Whirling Dervishes

in prayer.

Words matter.

Waking up to my own Interlude

knowing the stage is being prepared

in the hidden spaces

I can't yet see.

Finally, I do know where I am.

Marcia Jaffe

*\*Often used to describe the pauses between acts of a*

*play or during an intermission*





Laura Milholland



Libby Smith



Jeff True

Approved by Maslow's Hierarchy

Those that disagree

With vitamins aren't me

Are blank to a tree.

We all grow favouring security.

You can take your CBD

And turn it to pee

With your crack and ecstasy

Drugs aren't for us healthy.

Vitamins as we see

Chosen from A-Z

Keeping me finely

No need to get well, thankfully.

Maslow' hierarchy

Is mistakenly

Replaced by medical society

In favour of unnecessary.

Karen Arnold

# Calling

When I was lost and wandering,

Grandfather called out to me

From the Other Side

Deep in Dark Valley

Where he still talks

to Bird People

For long nights I sat

On a limb of Guardian Oak

In the curve of her arm

I called out to Owl for

Grandfather taught me

And Owl came

He lived high above our meadow

With his hubris, Curiosity

Darkness hid my form

And Owl flew to our oak

Neon yellow rings

Inside a spinning head

Stared and dared me

“Speak my People’s tongue!”

So I gently called again

Angry yellow hoops grew larger

Seduced!

Not by Elder Hunter of Feathers

Only humiliated by a fool in a tree

Betrayed by Curiosity

He turned his square back to me

I felt the gift of his wing breath

Sweep across my face

With the scent of Night

Owl returned to his throne

Older and wiser

Few of us now know what

Bird People say or what

River sings and Fire screams

Brent MacKinnon



Marilyn Bagshaw



Eloise Rivera



Elaine Thornton



## Personal Effects

My father's make-up kit  
perhaps an old tool  
or tackle box, gun metal  
grey, two steel latches  
like sleepy robot  
eyes until his seasoned  
fingertips flicked open  
their hidden treasures  
of magical metamorphosis,  
as its lid yawned awake  
a middle tray elevated  
to mezzanine level as skinny  
hinged arms held up  
the tri level display  
of how to become Guppo,  
tubes and tins of Steins  
greasepaint, white, red,  
black liner pencils, tiny  
glass pots of silver glitter  
an old sock filled with  
baby powder knotted

at the ankle, a soft bristle  
brush, Q-tips, a bottle  
of mineral oil and well  
worn wash rag with  
the smeared essence  
of another performance  
come and gone, a hand  
mirror for the true face  
of a painted gem, ready  
for season 68...

*THE SHOW MUST GO ON!*

Margie Heckelman

Read more of Margie's poems  
about her life in a circus family in  
*Blue Skies & Grassy Lots: a  
Childhood of Circus Magic*,  
available on Amazon. [Way to go,  
Margie!](#)



Laura Harrison



Nancy Outenreath



Path to the Future, Tami Tsark

### Horror Show

I was alone with Gramma in her kitchen. She was rolling dough, and the flour flew around us like the snow making circles in the wind outside. We were both looking forward to my third birthday and counting down the days.

I clung to her apron with one chubby hand and sucked the thumb of my other while my head rested on her pillowy hip. I could hardly see over the table, but like most days I was content to just enjoy her company, occasionally looking up to get her to smile.

Beads of sweat formed on Gramma's forehead and ran down her cheeks. She swiped it away with her sleeve, then reached into her pocket. Gramma's apron pockets were always a wonder. Something good always came out of them and, sure enough, out came two sticks of gum. I smiled.

She gripped my chin with a flour-dusted hand as I opened my mouth. "Don't swallow it this time, okay?"

I hadn't even the time to nod before she suddenly dropped the gum and rolling pin and flew back against the wall with such force that vomit and blood seemed to explode out of her mouth. She slid to the floor and came to rest on her behind. Her head drooped over one shoulder. Her legs were spread wide open, her dress and apron were hiked above the garters of her girdle.

"Gramma?"

Her eyes were slightly open, but she wasn't looking at me. I got down on my hands and knees and tried to look into them, but they seemed to be focused on the floor. I rolled my head upside down on the black and white linoleum trying in vain to catch her gaze. "Gramma?" I shook her shoulder. "Gramma, wake up...wake up!"

My cries drew my cousin Pam into the kitchen. She was old enough to know how to phone her mother at work. When she hung up she looked at me and said, "we got to stay with Gramma until the *ambulance* comes and she gets home."

Gramma stayed asleep and didn't wake, even when the two men placed her on a rolling bed and buckled straps around her. "So she won't fall off," one of the men said with a wink.

I watched from the outer hallway stairs – on the one with the drop of dried white paint on it. It was called "two" whenever we were counting steps.

Pam followed the men as they wheeled Gramma out of her apartment and into the back of a big red car. I stopped at the door. It was snowing harder now. But I could still see the red car go all the way to the end of the block where it paused at the stop sign. Then Gramma disappeared behind a curtain of snow. I had no idea it would be forever.

Everyone at that time thought me too young to attend the funeral or wake, much less understand any explanation of death. Instead, I kept vigil outside mom's bedroom door behind which she cried herself to sleep every night.

I was about five when Dad dropped my ten-year-old brother, Jimmy, and me off at a movie theater for *a* kids' matinee. I bounced around on the velvet seats, and the smell of popcorn was warm and comforting. It was a new, brighter world that wasn't colored by mom's sadness and my own ballooning anxiety about the world.

As I focused on Bambi and his mother in the forest, I was reminded of the lessons I learned at Gramma's side: *Bees were not something to try to catch, and, more importantly, there were places I should never go alone.*

When Bambi ran into an open meadow, his mother ran after him, and as soon as I heard the hunter's shot, I'm sure I was the first kid in that theater to realize that Bambi would never know his mother's warmth again. I howled with grief and couldn't stop.

As all the little forest animals led Bambi away from the grim scene an usher escorted my bewildered brother and I up the aisle and out of the theater. I was still wailing, and it started to rain. Jimmy tried to cover his head with his Cracker Jacks box. "What's the matter with you," he demanded.

"I don't know," I howled because I didn't. I wouldn't for a long, long time.

Denize Springer

### Passing Along

"Your life is cluttered with things from the past that you no longer use or need," says my wife. "You must clear out the old, make room for the new—

plus giving old things to others that for them are new gives back full measure and more to you."

So, I agree to finally see my old workhorse Mac SE 30 as the bulky eyesore it's become, my most important tool, technically, my best friend back then in the early 1990 years of my life—

I must admit I was gladdened when the recycle computer clerk said a new owner, a collector, would enjoy having it now. "See," said my wife.

I pushed on. In a hall closet, the small Jack and Jill dollhouse

with pet dog and accessories, consecrated by our granddaughter's

hours of play, too soon a child's toy she outgrew—

then gave us permission to pass along so some other little girl could have her cherished moments with it, too.



Marilyn Bagshaw

Next all my books from ceiling to floor stretching back to my 1960s college days, books I'll never read again that shaped what I believe, how I perceive who I am. May their donation to Goodwill ripple out, just a little, into staff salaries and workshop trainee skills—

grant the next readers access to worlds through their pages that opened my younger life's eyes, worlds that stay with me still, as I live a new life some boorishly call over the hill.

One by one, passed along, these physical things of mine, artifacts of identity formed, metaphorical pieces of me, that I gathered in life passing through—

bit by bit, passed along to some several someones who with the passing of time will themselves, yet again, pass them through to another someone new.

Larry C. Tolbert





# ESCOM

Emeritus Students  
College of Marin

## ESCOM Journal

**Editor,** Denize Springer

**Web Content Manager,** Richard Jensen

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### WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE JOURNAL?

**NEXT DEADLINE IS APRIL 15**

Please send your **FINAL** draft to [denizespringer@gmail.com](mailto:denizespringer@gmail.com)

### PLEASE ADHERE TO THESE SPECIFICATIONS

Submit only one piece of final, proofed work. Changes, unless necessary, will not be accepted after submission.

Include your name in the file name and on the page of your document. **You must be an ESCOM member. Membership is free but is no longer automatic with class registration. To join, go to: <http://escom.marin.edu/join-escom>**

**WRITTEN WORK (750 words MAX):** must be single spaced, left margin oriented, and ATTACHED as a Word doc. Do not submit PDFs of written work (as these cannot be properly transferred or edited). **Please submit only one piece per issue.**

**ART and PHOTOGRAPHY:** Borderless images only in file size no larger than 300 kb and attached to the email in the .pdf or jpeg format (not imbedded in email message). **Images larger than 300 kb or saved as a tif file cannot be considered.**

**POEMS: (50 lines MAX including the spaces between stanzas)** If your poem must be centered, please note this.

Misspellings, grammatical errors and erroneous line breaks could be mistaken as the author's intent and not corrected. **Proof your copy before sending it in.**

Information for "In Memoriam" must be verified with an obituary that appears in an official resource such as a