

# ESCOM Journal

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

January/February 2025



*At Sunrise, Harvey Abernathey*

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

***IN THIS ISSUE: Old Love, Winter Light, Election Grief, Hope Discovered in Homelessness, Gratitude Practiced in Marin.***

**Meet Ada Limón, U.S. Poet Laureate**



ESCOM is *filled* with poets, and if you are reading the Journal, you're even more likely than the average ESCOM member to be drawn to iambic pentameter, enjambment, and onomatopoeia. So, if you love poetry, the COM English Department and Library have good news for you: Ada Limón, the United States Poet Laureate, is coming to College of Marin in the spring of 2025! Though raised in Sonoma County, she lives in Kentucky, and she travels around the country encouraging poets everywhere. Mark your calendar!

**Thursday, March 13, 2025**  
**5 pm to 8 pm**  
**James Dunn Theater**  
**College of Marin**  
**835 College Avenue, Kentfield**

Are you thinking that our library might have her books? Of course: you are spot on! And, if you imagine that we might even offer six different Ada Limón bookmarks, each with a (skinny!) poem on the back, you would, of course, be correct. And if you ponder, "What might be the favorite poem of a librarian at College of Marin?" you might be directed to this one: "[How to Triumph Like a Girl](#)". Finally, since ESCOM members often enjoy live theater, you might even wish to attend a play inspired by her poetry. You are in luck: the play will run February 28 to March 16 in the James Dunn Theatre.

Join us also in the coming months for related events: COMmon Read 2024-2025 [libguides.marin.edu/ada](http://libguides.marin.edu/ada)

-- Dave Patterson, Librarian



Harvey Abemathey

**Winter Light**

*Everything that falls has wings*  
 -Anselm Kiefer

When snow falls things get quiet  
 Every flake a universe unto itself

Bare poplar still stand proud  
 Despite their leaves on the ground

Even in broad daylight  
 Stars blink and talk

About the moon and her shadow  
 And her sadness in sun's absence

In this late December light  
 Seen through a gauzy scrim

Angels are called on duty  
 While Spring sleeps in

They hold our spinning world  
 Caught in infinite balance

Until a lone leaf suddenly drops  
 Still green and breaks the trance

Indecipherable chit-chit  
 Of sparrow in a bush, dance

Hear the light before it dims  
 As winter fast begins

Marcia Taylor Smith

**Gratitude**

*January 1, 2025*

savoring softies on the grass

across from Parkside

sharing holiday turkey

with my ever-growing family

lunch in Sacramento with

forever friends

dining at Sol Taco Joe's

with my grandchildren

cheering on Steph

in the final five seconds

KDFC's Mozart

each morning at 9

Saturday's hour plus chat

with Pat or Jane

Joan Brown Frida

Serra Kentridge



*Winter in Tahoe, Marilyn Bagshaw*

The Kohl Concert

Philip Glass Leonard

the Marsh Stinson

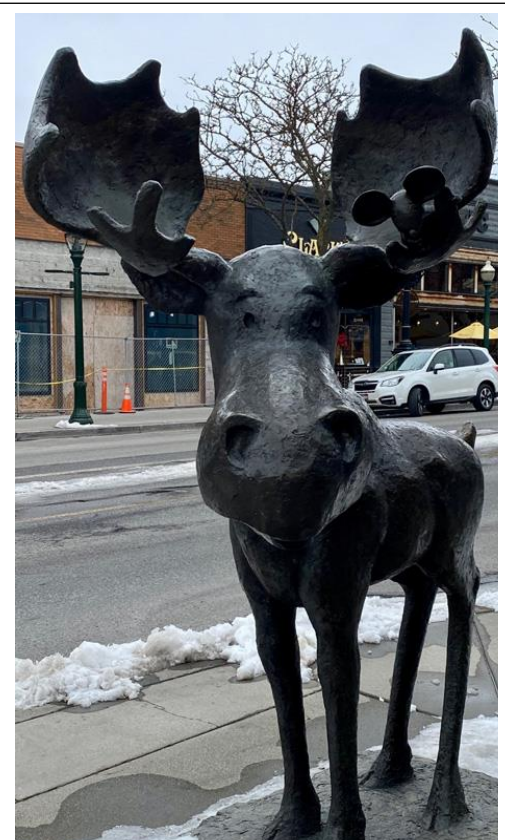
family friends

new year

new hope

for these I am grateful

Barbara McDonald



*Nancy Outenreath*



*Nancy Outenreath*

### The Five Stages of Election Grief

- 1 Dread.** "He's Baaaaaaack"
- 2 Confusion.** "How can this happen?"
- 3 Anger.** "Now, I'm not very happy, but what can I do?"
- 4 Organize.** "Some of us still have our sanity"
- 5 Mobilize, Resist, and Fight.** "Stand up and be counted"

Jeff LeMont

### Poetic License

Last week I went to the DMV (Department of Metaphoric Vehicles) to get my poetic license. I am told that without this license one cannot properly conduct a metaphoric vehicle on the printed paper of this nation.

As I expected, I filled out a form with the usual items -- name, date of birth, address and phone number. I was surprised to see a question about languages – did I speak Ancient Greek or Latin? A follow-up question referred to a proficiency in French, if I had any.

After this, a pleasant young lady took my picture and told me to wait for an examiner who would take me on a road test. This puzzled me greatly because I was interested in a poetic license, that is – permission to write poems that very few can understand and with references and allusions that come from Ancient Greek and other undecipherable languages.

When I alerted the incongruity to the manager, she counseled that it was best to take the road test, and it would be "sorted out later." She added that passing the road test would be in my favor because that would mean that I had become qualified to drive a car in California. Then I said that I already had a driver's license. We'll sort it out later," she said and added that I should take a seat.

I did take a seat – though there were few to be had. I sat down next to an interesting fellow with a full beard who was clenching of teeth. Teeth issue aside, I figured I could start a conversation and who knows, I might understand my situation better. So, it turns out that the nice bearded young man was waiting for an examiner to speak to about his poetic license, which he was about to lose, due to misuse. I became alarmed because I wasn't looking forward to being examined again. And why were all these employees called "examiners?" And how can one misuse a poetic license?

I got up quickly, said goodbye to my acquaintance and ran outside. I then noticed somebody running after me, waving my blue chapbook, and yelling "You left your book!"

I waved him off and said "That's not mine. I don't have a license."  
-- Julio Burroughs

## Sketches of Annie

*for MaryBeth*

Annie remembered the last time Claire had drawn her. Standing on Claire's deck she'd pulled her shirt off. "I actually like them gone. I feel clean, like a young boy."

Annie had watched her friend's face for shock or revulsion, but Claire had only looked at the scars crossing Annie's chest with her usual interest, really studying them, and then said, "I'll get our tea." She'd poured smoky tea into eggshell thin cups from Annie's favorite tea pot, the color of lichen with raised acorns and leaves on its side and a hinged pewter top. Then ducking back inside she returned with a Masai spear, its steel gleaming and sharp, and the largest of her sketch pads.

She handed the spear to Annie. "Stand here, I want the mountain behind you."

Claire had been drawing Annie since the seventies. They'd been North Beach rats, seeing each other at Moony's Irish bar on Friday nights, smiling to each other as they passed on the steep streets and often finding themselves seated next to each other at small tables listening to opera at cafe Trieste. They began talking, they became friends.

In those days she had been blade thin, but Claire had seen beyond her body and drawn her lean, not light of being, but hungry for life. When Annie married and became pregnant Claire had drawn her in her first months, softly rounded, Rubenesque. Later when Annie decided to hell with it, if she was going to be heavy, she might as well eat all the things she normally denied herself, Claire had posed her nude and captured the heavy slabs of her thighs and massive behind, it was one painting she found too revealing to hang, reluctant of the glimpse it gave into her brief period of gluttony.

And then in the hospital Claire had shown up with watercolors and painted her with her baby Seth suckling her breast, her belly still full and round, the red slash of the cesarean a battle scar of Seth's birth.

"You remind me of one of Picasso's Demoiselles d'Avignon," Claire told her.

It was after her lumpectomy and radiation that Annie felt so out of symmetry -- one breast higher and harder than the other -- that Claire posed her with arms raised and bent at the elbows with hands resting on the back of her neck. Then with an economy of lines Claire had drawn the planes of her chest and uneven breasts into beautiful contours.

On the day of the last sketch when Claire had said, "OK, you can look now." Annie stared in amazement. Mt. Tam was a snow topped Mt. Kilimanjaro, the oak trees had become thorn trees and Claire's loving dog lying by her feet was a slain lion. But what had taken her breath was herself, a young warrior, having proved himself, his chest scarred and bloody with claw marks, just as hers felt.

Today Annie had felt strong enough to drive across the Golden Gate to Claire's. And after the cold and rain, the day had turned mild as it often did after New Years, so again they were on Claire's deck. For once Annie had no desire to show her latest scar, the detested bag at her side, her insides now protruding out. The lovely celadon tea pot appeared and so did Claire's sketch book. Annie gave a quick negative shake of her head. She was too fragile to look at herself.

It will be OK," Claire gave Annie a reassuring hug, "Just sit there and soak up the sun."

Annie gazed at her trusted friend, took a deep breath and nodded.

Claire drew rapidly the charcoal making harsh sounds on the paper. Annie took the finished sketch, tears welled in her eyes. She saw herself, not bald, a crown of oak rose about her head with a mourning dove perched on one strong branch eyeing the day, and her chest had become the mountain behind, full and curved.

Susan Connelly

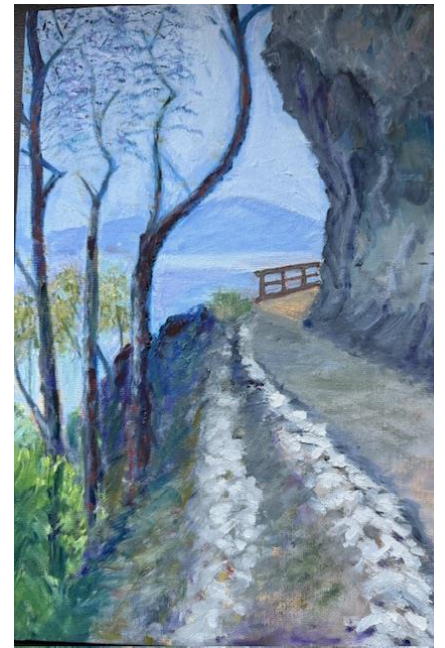
*This story is also dedicated to my friends Katherine, Marybeth, Lynn, Elizabeth, my sister Kristin and stepdaughter, Alexis, who survived breast cancer, as well as Annette, Penny and Jenny who did not survive their long courageous battles.*

**Rain**

a different country  
 alien  
 dangerous  
     wind-whipped torrents  
 in sideways assaults  
 jarring  
 single-pane windows  
 spawning  
  
 three a.m. imaginings:  
     street gutters rising  
  
 hillsides oozing  
 our house slipping  
 onto the street below.  
  
     Yet, above the gunmetal sky,  
  
 its bloated nimbostratus  
  
 laden with sodden cargo,  
  
 from which we huddle  
  
 this one horrific night—  
  
     drought lurks.  
  
         lynn arias bornstein



*Sharon Fusco*



*Verna Dunshee Trail, Jeff Ross*



*Tami Tsark*



*Marilyn Bagshaw*

LOVE

What the world needs now.....

not the sugary sweet pie in the sky romantic love  
that's OK when you're young and silly and full of  
feelings you can't quite manage.

The kind that you can be quiet with  
and just sit watching the sun setting  
hearing volumes in the  
silence.

The kind that is respectful of people  
smiles and says please and thank you  
enjoys conversation  
meaning listening as well as talking.

The kind that doesn't mind slowing down and waiting  
while a dad crosses the street holding his toddler's hand  
or an elder shuffles steering their walker gingerly  
over any bumps or cracks  
in the sidewalk.

The kind that offers help if you are tired  
because you had a long day



Nancy Pappas

and just can't do one more thing  
until you rest awhile.

The kind that gives comfort in the hard times  
by being present as tears are shed  
in grief or pain  
letting it happen.

There might be too little of that love  
Just now  
but we can do better.

Anne Mulvaney



*Nancy Outenreath*

**Love Poem: If This Be**

If this be my last breath  
 how much can I take in?  
 One inhale, one exhale,  
 Some say my whole life,  
 I say only this moment,  
 the sound of this trickling stream,  
 the feel of the wind on my cheek,  
 the sight of our sheltering oak,  
 the smell of petrichor after the rain.

If this be my last breath--  
 sadness I feel to leave  
 all of this behind.  
 But sadder still I'd be,  
 leaving you, my friend,  
 my lover for 62 years.  
 From the time I was fifteen  
 you have been my life.

If this be my last breath  
 I will take with me  
 our first kiss under the streetlight  
 on that cold autumnal night,  
 and leave you with the wonder  
 I felt when your lips touched mine.  
 This alone will be our bridge,  
 until you can move on.

Carol Allen



*Harvey Abernathey*



**Blended Bodies**

We smile and laugh at silly things said  
 During these times we are acceptable to be led  
 We hug and kiss innocently enough  
 Better than a low punch that is hurtful and tough  
 We have separate hobbies worth doing each day  
 Should we enjoy them together the reward is double pay  
 We live out fantasies from childhood dreams  
 In them we play at life in cyclical scenes  
 With your hand in mine time somehow stands still  
 Is it your heartbeat I reach for to slow God’s will?  
 Through lessons learned together walls are collapsed  
 It is no problem to us as we have tackled our past  
 So let’s remember every day our phenomenal list



Laura Milholland

You and I together getting older and wiser without being  
 pissed  
 And in our folly the monumental laughter will ring out  
 Much better than angry words that topple tears about  
 Yes indeed you and I together can do all this and more  
 So Happy Valentine’s Day, I love u to the core

Cynthia Rovero

**The Doctor Will See You Now**

Glancing up impatiently from his Patek Philippe, the doctor’s icy gaze scans past the shivering patient’s anxious face to focus on the backlit image of her guts. “The prognosis,” he reassures, “is good. First thing, of course, is surgery.” They always expect that. “We’ll lop off that vexing bump, and then, for caution’s sake, give you a little zap of radiation. Yes, we’ll make certain of remission with half a year of chemo. And opioids if it hurts.” A.T. Lynne

### Finger Computational

The glide across my scalp

Massage of my fingers through

Wet and moist

Stimulating skin layering

Into cognition

And creativity

Becoming recognition

Of processing

To productivity

Refreshing and keeping

The lord's worship

Intact.

Presentable, green with rebirth

Considerate, timely

Character.

The clock speaks with AI

Not cuckoo like the sound of dumb music.

If good feeling from massaging fingers

Leads to better feeling

Not bad.

I recall being told to do the best I can.

Anything I want if I apply integrity.

Fondness and aggravation

Remain as a long time coming

Long time gone.

Top power snaps

Like a spark growing into a star/sun

To become

A creative new sign

A new wave

Quite like the old.

Do we separate the new wave from the old?

Is one silver is the other gold?

Brain waving, fingers directing our flow

Flicking off disturbance

A night light surrounded by tunes

Merrily tuning

Brain waves sweeping with response

While some fingers leave the brain

Slide up and across ivory keys melodic with harmony

Or vary as far as picking as a fiddler on the roof.

Karen Arnold

**My Journey**

***Feeling Less Hopeless About Homelessness***

When biking through San Rafael I watched the evolution of the homeless encampment along the Cal Park Hill bike path. Being a nerd, I became fascinated by the slow “hardening” of individual campsites. Many began with tarps tied to a fence then evolved to tents. Next some found discarded wooden pallets and cannibalized these materials to make walls. At the final stage some added makeshift doors with welcome mats and plants in pots. It reminded me of homesteading wherein folk got to keep small lots of land they were able to make productive.

This fall the encampment got scrapped. Campsites were replaced with boulders to prevent their return. Identical blue tents are being deployed along the bike path, but their habitation appears to be delayed. I applaud how San Rafael and other communities are trying to help the homeless, but this type of homelessness makes me feel overwhelmed.

Closer to home I taught in K-8 schools and volunteered in high schools in Marin. I slowly discovered that up to 10% of the kids may have housing insecurity. A technical term for periodic homelessness. They hide this fact out of shame and fear of being found to be living illegally. These kids were a far cry from the dismissible oddballs sleeping along the bike path, but they still struggled to fit in. They had little sleep, not enough food and no “home” to which to bring other kids to make friends.

I felt helpless and did little more than temporary things to help the characters along the bike path. But I don’t want to feel helpless towards the kids trying to pass as “homed.” So, I joined a team of zealous volunteers who work with these families. The genesis for kids’ homelessness is usually a single mom fleeing domestic violence. Often these moms are employed. One woman, who the other volunteers describe as “the blonde soccer mom,” faked it. She lived in her minivan for 2 years before finding housing. No one ever knew.

More typical are brown or Black mothers with two or three kids. These are the lucky ones. The County or Marin’s social services network finds them housing.



Laura Milholland

Surprisingly “normal” housing in multi-unit complexes scattered throughout the North Bay. But if you look in the window, you’ll see mattresses on the floor. Or a beat-up couch rescued from a curbside. 40 lucky families a year are referred to our crazy volunteer organization ([welcominghome.org](http://welcominghome.org)), which fixes all that.

I have gotten to help in a half dozen homecomings where we descend on a virtually empty home and install new beds and used everything else. I work under the guidance of one of our half-dozen leads; generally professional decorators or stagers, who have cajoled the rich cast offs of Marin into a coherent, attractive, but worn looking home. I video the “homecoming” where a crying mom and her excited kids return to discover their new lives.

When I retired and researched the heck out of aging, I found that most experts advise “purpose.” For me, these Saturdays creating new lives that kids won’t need to be ashamed of having friends over beats the heck out of golf. I highly recommend it.

Brian Durwood



# ESCOM

Emeritus Students  
College of Marin

## ESCOM Journal

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## WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE JOURNAL?

**NEXT DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 15**

Please send your **FINAL** draft to

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## 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.**

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