

ESCOM Journal

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

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Harvey Abernathey

In This Issue: A Holiday Recipe, Boxing Revelation, Mother's

*Admonitions, Dental Destiny and more. **Happy Holidays!***

Blood Orange Marmalade

My favorite orange grower at the Farmers Market just made my day.

“The cold snap two weeks ago worked its magic, and I’ll have blood oranges for you next week.” she said.

I’d haunted her stand the last few weeks, my heart set on making blood orange marmalade for this Christmas’s Gifts in Glass, envisioning the jewel-colored marmalade in cut glass bowls, adorning the holiday tables of family and friends.

So, my wooden cutting board is now stained a lovely rose red. I’ve just sliced two dozen blood oranges on it and wonder if laying these cool half-moon slivers, these beginnings of marmalade on my cheeks will turn them rosy too? Blood oranges are mysterious. Just looking at their skins you know they have traveled far. Their tops, protected by leaves are of an ordinary orange, but their lower skins carry the coppery red of desert dwellers. Each one I slice startles me with its deep wine-colored flesh.

In Morocco, orange groves near Erfoud are the only color besides the river, in an endless terra cotta landscape. They share the river’s winding path, a swath of glossy green leaves. Erfoud is an oasis town near Merzouga where the Sahara sands and its drifting dunes meet Moroccan soil. At Merzouga the ground stops and the sand starts. Huge golden dunes like ocean waves follow one after another. My Aunt Lois wished for years to see and walk in the Sahara’s sand. That is why I’m here, with her, my mother, and our friend Dottie. We four spent a morning scrambling over and among these dunes pretending to be lost in the desert. Later, while my dear ladies were resting, I sat alone in the garden of our hotel and ordered orange juice. It arrived dark red, cool and piquant, a desert taste for a desert thirst. Closing my eyes I listened to the wind combing through the palm fronds sounding like a rain shower. The same breeze carried the incomparable sweet scent of orange blossoms.

One of the joys of cooking something new is the alchemy that occurs. Cutting into a blood orange sent me back to Morocco and while my mind drifted there among sand dunes my kitchen lay under another spell. The oranges, so intensely dark before I simmered them and left them to rest now look a bit anemic but after adding sugar and bringing them to boil, they turn a glistening deep garnet. The peel gleams, swirling like eels when I stir the marmalade. What takes me most by surprise is the sudden scent given up by the kettle. My kitchen, smelling wonderfully of oranges since the marmalade began to boil takes on the scent of pines on a hot summer day. How did these evergreens get into my kitchen? These blood oranges with their disturbing name, they send me.



Susan Connelly

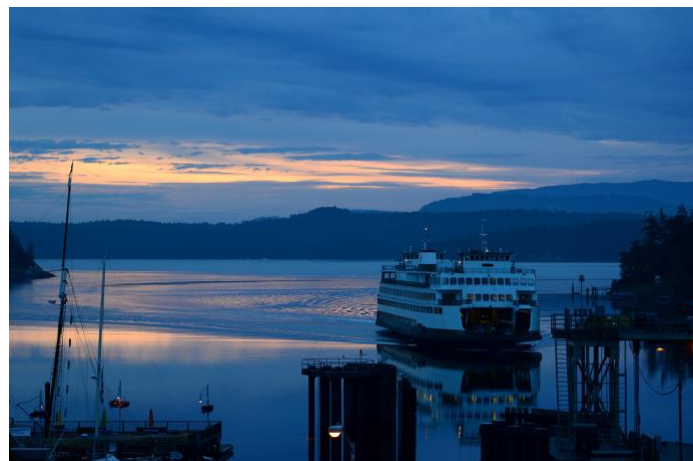
RECIPE

For a batch of blood orange marmalade, you’ll need 6 medium oranges, 2 lemons, 6 cups water and about 10 cups sugar. Slice the oranges and lemons in half-length wise, cut out their pithy white cores and remove any seeds, then slice them into thin half-moons. Put the oranges, lemons and water in a stainless or enamel kettle and bring it to a boil, lower heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Let cool then cover kettle and leave in a cool place for 12 to 18 hours. When you are in the mood, measure the fruit and water and add sugar, cup for cup. Boil the mixture rapidly to the jelling point. This will take 15 to 30 minutes depending on how ripe your oranges are. The marmalade is done when it sheets off a spoon, the drops running together before falling from the spoon. If you are using a jelly thermometer the jelling point is 8 degrees above the boiling point of water. Remove from heat, skim off any white foam, and if you like, add 3 tablespoons of orange liqueur, stirring it in gently. Let stand for 5 minutes, stirring several times and then ladle into hot jars, seal and process in a hot water bath for 15 minutes. Makes about 12 half pints.

Susan Connelly



Laura Harrison



Laura Milholland

Winter

Leaves drift down like falling snow

bare branches etched

against the darkening sky

as night falls suddenly

lights appear

to dispel the gathering gloom.

Winter begins

time to rest and hibernate

time to reflect and celebrate

make resolutions and review

say goodbye to the old

welcome the new.

Holidays celebrate light

candles and colored bulbs twinkle

brightening the long chilly nights

and each time the sun goes away

it comes back to stay longer each day.

People come together

whatever the weather

to share food stories and cheer

enjoying the present

remembering the past

preparing for a New Year.

Anne Mulvaney

Mother's Admonitions

Mother said, "We came to this land so you could get an education.

Learn to speak, read, and write in English.

Find your way through the sea of new words, make friends

with the different faces you see. Find your place in this vibrant nation."

I learned to write by copying newspaper articles,
by listening to TV jingles and talking with my school friends.

I learned to sing and dance under bright lights,
moving to "Rock Around the Clock" and "Blue Suede Shoes."

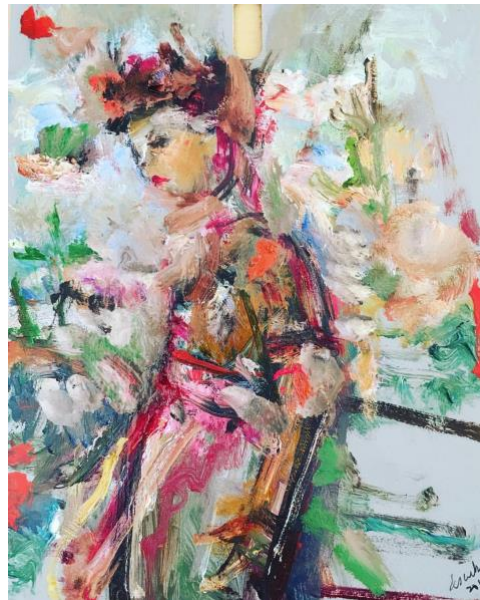
Soon, I looked and spoke like an American,
fitting into this loud, beautiful, love-filled land.

But even though I followed all of my mother's advice,
I never quite learned to write properly.

My hands couldn't make straight lines with the pencil.
My letters were a mix of neat and messy.

They didn't stay in the line; they went their own way.
"Ts" eaned sideways, and "o" and "u" looked the same.

Making my writing bigger or smaller didn't help.
it only made my messy writing shorter or taller.
Teachers told me to read my writing out loud,
but even I couldn't understand what I had written.



Holiday Celebration, Tami Tsark



Jeff True

Learning to type in high school set me free,
and personal computers made it easier.
In my seventies, I started writing my life story
and even learned to write musicals.

In my eighties, words and lyrics started to flow,
and finally, I began to write poetry!

Ray Fay

Bupkis

With no imagery, no metaphors, no words at all

coming my way

I invoke my Muse, "Please give me something,

anything, I might say."

"I'm sorry, my poet friend," she said, "I have only bupkis

for you today."

"What in the world is bupkis," I ask? The word

instantly had me enthralled.

My Muse said, "it's Yiddish and Slavic for beans and goat droppings..."

(I think that's what she said, as I recall).

"...it's good to know a word's history, but for your work now,

bupkis simply means 'nothing at all'."

She further explained the reason this time that she had

only bupkis for me

was disordered randomness in the known universe that

scientists call entropy.

When she offered to explain the concept more; I said, "No,

let's just let it be."

"I can't work entropy into a poem; I'd sound like a

stuffed-shirt know-it-all.

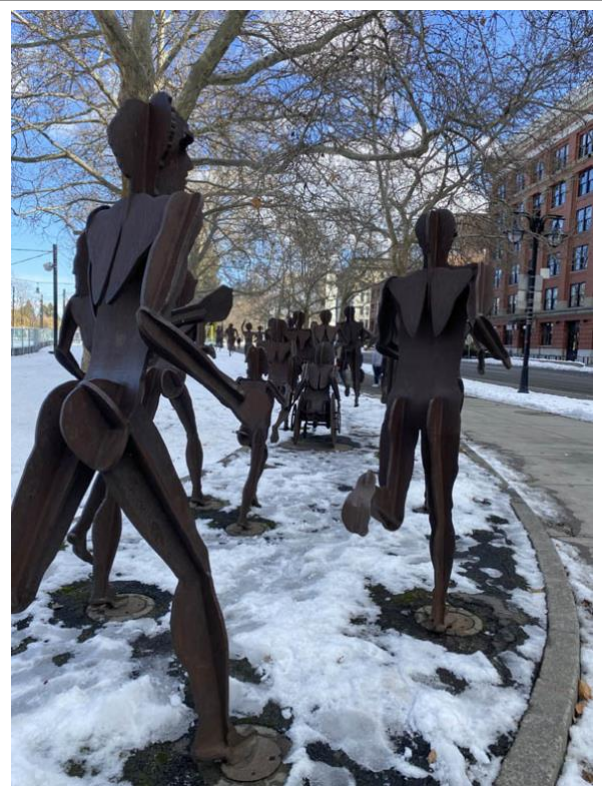
"But I thank you for giving me 'bupkis', my Muse. I can work

with nothing at all."

-- Larry C. Tolbert



Nancy Pappas



Nancy Outenreath

Mirror

Last time she looked

She saw her mother's face in hers

Forever young
But she died old in March

She loved cracked crab
Pulled from yesterday's Bay
Wine the color of desire
Empty crab claws cling
To the sides of an icy bowl
The lemon's life squeezed out
A way into a secret
Seen through the heart of starlight

Everything is framed
Black eventually turns white

We put up the Christmas tree
Early this year, as if to keep time from leaving
Colored lights holding back
The darkness with cheerful blinks

Lilacs are blooming in November again
Instead of spring this year
Nature seems as confused as we are

The world winks, as we wobble

I hear the song of dust and wind
A cowboy singing at Candy Rock
Where tiny white flowers bloom on the banks
Of the mighty Stanislaus
Stops your heart
A white lace dress falling
Sun drenched giddy; rosebud yellow
And the taste of salt
What the mirror reflects back
Is still a mystery, dear mother

Marcia Taylor Smith



Nancy Outenreath



Laura Milholland

The Boxing Class

I'm 77 now and have never been a good fighter. The one fight I had in high school, which was prefaced by, "Oh yeah? See you down the alley after school!" turned out to be so boring that my friends who'd come to watch, just wandered away after a while.

I stayed out of trouble all my life. Later, in succession, I had a stroke, then a complete atrioventricular block requiring a pacemaker, last, a diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease in 2020. Having dodged death from the stroke and the heart, I'm happy to fight the Parkie's, which is done by promoting dopamine production. Exercise, exercise. I found The Black Eye Society.

Class is supposed to be about Parkinson's Disease and dopamine production, and it is, but it's more. When Erik our coach sends us through drills punching the heavy, water or pillar bags, he says, "Imagine you're hitting that guy you just hate." I'm always demure about that because I'm a good Buddhist, "Oh I don't want to carry around resentment," and really, I don't want to drag crap around all the time. But. I do allow myself to imagine standing innocently, passively somewhere and having a bad guy take a swing at me. Or grab one of my kids. *Then* it would be ok to come out of nowhere with my best Mike Tyson hook or Canelo Alvarez uppercut combo and knock the son of a bitch out cold!

That's what keeps my enthusiasm up: trying for sharp punches even when I'm tired or my arm hurts. When I'm so spent I ceased having any strength in my straight punches minutes ago and there are still minutes on the clock; when Erik says, "Nice snap, Mike," I keep on punching. I don't think I ever had that kind of encouragement before in sports. Erik's got my back.

When I started several of us met in a tiny gym where we'd do drills: face each other in a mirror stance. Touch left gloves, then right, then harder and harder and faster for three-minute rounds. New to me, it was the first time I connected with my classmates. One, Gil, set a standard. He'd hit fast and hard, so I had to pay attention to not get hurt. But he did the oddest thing: After the bell, he'd reach out to the other guy and touch gloves, and he always had a smile. It really set a standard for who we are.

A story about Gil: he'd joined a local boxing club. Found a sparring partner who he paid one day to spend all morning hitting him, shooting for the head. I was shocked but he said the story was true. I requested a version where my coach passed out dodge balls to the five other people in class. Put me back-to-the-wall. Those guys threw the balls at my head. Rule was, no blocking with hands and gloves. Slip only, head moving side to side.

Eighteen months ago, I didn't even really know what an uppercut was. Now I have a jab, a cross, two serviceable hooks and have been noticed at the gym for my uppercuts. The uppercut bag is marine grade rubber or neoprene, and it's filled with water, which at seven pounds a gallon, times 25 gallons is around 175 pounds. I come in under it with uppercuts that lift it up off its chain a little with every strike. You can hear the chain clink. I can do it punch after punch for a three-minute round. Starting to feel like I'm getting some chops. Recently I've realized my legs are very weak. My Dad had this and would use a cane the last ten years of his life. I've been watching clips of a 78 yr. old boxer who bounces on his feet like a cat.

But I do have some pretty good firepower, and that's a comfort. I might even say getting Parkinson's has resulted in my having more confidence.

Mike Holland

Autumn

August 28th
 with Daddy’s car packed up
 and the gas tank filled
 and we’re saying goodbye
 to next-door summer friends
 I’m missing already.

I’m an old lady now
 and the Tahoe house sold
 many years ago
 and I’m no longer that kid
 waving goodbye to summer
 looking forward to fall.

August 28th
 with afternoons darkening
 earlier than the day before
 and autumn’s crispness prickling
 at the nape of my neck
 with winter’s chill not far away
 and Spring—too far ahead.

lynn arias bornstein



Nancy Outenreath



Marilyn Bagshaw



Susan Connelly



Nancy Pappas

**The Winter Ode in Memoriam
of Reggie Bickerson, the Ladies' Man**

He never attended to ball game score
Without a lady top drawer.

He liked dressing women to show off flouncing petticoats
Trimmed with fine fabric and buttons making elegant clothes.

Every topic he spoke of required the company of a woman he'd claim
To be taught by to be a courtesan involved in bright lights fame.

His scent hit the holidays as if he had Rudolph's red nose,
Craving cinnamon and pine tree decos along with shining candle glows.

He kissed and petted tenderly with knees bent to answer his prayers
That he could marry anytime he got beneath ladies' underwear.

But as a knock came on his door with broken bell
While brushing his teeth during midnight spell
Which he assumed to be a lady to love up his bum
And prepare him coffee and eggs when the morning has come
Surprised him not being a pink and soft sigh
But blue as dark night with silver star badge summoned from times gone
by.

For Reggie, not quite curtains seen fancy schmancy
But a flash through his heart which stopped by easing electricity.

Karen Arnold

the beginning

begin the day

with the first joy

breathe

life

A new day

A new beginning

be here

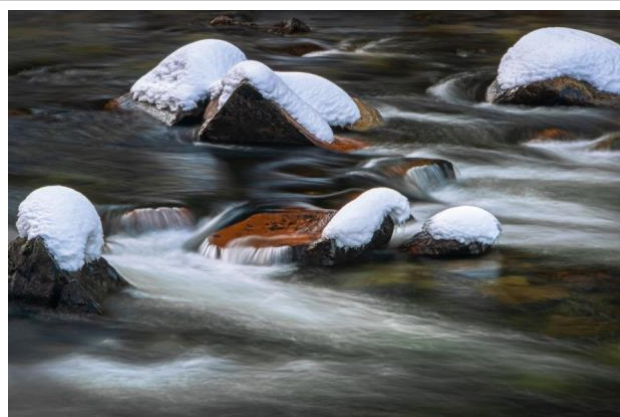
be now

nothing else matters

only this moment

rejoice

Barbara McDonald



Harvey Abernethy



Jeff True



Kathi V. Stewart

Destined for Dentures

A dental dilemma,
 your mouth in a tremor,
 your smile - just a trifle askew.

And the tooth-fairy came,
 and we know it's a shame
 that she left just an IOU!

Fear not brave contender

And always remember

I bear now the awesome truth:

While the rest of us fray,

slowly wither away,

You will never grow '*long-in-the-tooth*'.

(don't say '*cheese*', yet)

deidre silverman



Hints of Winter, Marilyn Bagshaw

I Do Not Belong Here

I do not belong here. The miles and miles of corduroy swales rising, and the quilted fields oppress me. The long strands of Eisenhower’s highways lead me places I don’t want to go. The deceptive blue sky, the perky white clouds, the icy light pouring down, harsh, uncaring. Seeing for miles at the slightest rise in the road. I do not belong here. The echoing silence that is empty space, sound with no place to go. The food is made of salt, fat, sugar, and something that tastes like motor oil, all of it. Everything smells like plastic, looks like plastic, tastes like plastic. The smells of old lotion, old skin, old hair, old and unused body parts. The closed rooms, the stale air, the unwashed dishes. The browns and drab colors of the dark rooms. The quiet. I do not belong here.

I belong in places where hills obscure the horizon, where trees and plants curve around me to keep me safe, where smells, actually smells, fresh, where the breeze blows gently through opened doors and windows. I belong in places that smell like the sea, the garden, the dirt of the ground, good cooking. I belong in places where music plays, where people laugh and talk. I belong in places that put arms around me like my husband did. I belong in places that reassure me that I don’t belong in places like this, like my husband reassured me. I belong in places where the food tastes

like food, good and clean, where colors are bright and happy. I belong in places where flesh is resilient, where it feels good to run my hand on an arm, and to have my arm touched like my husband touched mine. I belong in sand and sea and salt air, in aching beautiful skies with towering clouds reflecting in the soft warm water below. I belong with my husband beside me. I belong in warm comfortable clothing, in a warm comfortable home, sun washing warmly over me, in rumpled warm bedclothes with my husband curled at my side.

I do not belong here. I do not belong where my husband is not. I long to be where he is, somewhere, nowhere, but not here. I do not belong here.

Deborah Michie



Storm, Sharon Fusco



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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.**

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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 newspaper.