

Rumquat Challenge



2017

THE KUMQUAT CHALLENGE

Whatcom
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Whatcom Community College Library's Poetry Challenge
featuring poems by current and former WCC students, staff,
and faculty in celebration of National Poetry Month.

2017

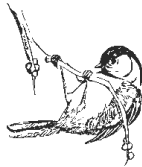
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PREFACE

The library is grateful to all of the talented poets whose work is represented here. To meet the Kumquat Challenge, all of the poems had to include all ten words of the library's choosing.

The 2017 Challenge words:

become dance join kiss listen
memory passing path rain thought

Special thanks to members of the judging panel who carefully considered all of the poems:
Ron Leatherbarrow and Jeremy Voight (WCC English faculty)
Mike Singletary (WCC Registrar)
Bob Winters (WCC Division Chair for Arts & Humanities)
Shannon Laws (current WCC student)
and Linda Lambert.

A word about the judging:
All poems are submitted to the panel without names attached to ensure impartiality.

The Kumquat Poetry Challenge is sponsored by the Whatcom Community College Library in celebration of National Poetry Month which is noted every April. We welcome submissions. Hopefully you will join us again for any future poetry challenges we might issue.

Ara Taylor
Spring 2017

On Celebrating Anniversaries & Poetry

This year marks the official 50th anniversary of Whatcom Community College and the 11th year of the Kumquat Poetry Challenge. Celebrating anniversaries has always been one of poetry's most traditional offices, so it is fitting that we place this year's collection in the context of history. From Whatcom's earliest days, creative writing has been an important part of our educational mission. Long before Whatcom had a campus, we taught writing and poetry. We took seriously our role in nurturing the creative spirit and the "inner muse" in our students, our colleagues, and our fellow community members.

Then in April of 2007, Whatcom's college librarians were inspired to honor National Poetry Month by setting a challenge to all poets at the college and in the larger Whatcom community. They selected 10 words that each writer would have to craft into a single poem. The contest has been called The Kumquat Challenge since the first year, when "kumquat" was chosen as one of the required words. A word starting with the letter "k" has been part of the Challenge each year since.

The first Kumquat Challenge was very much like the early years of Whatcom Community College itself: experimental, perhaps a little funky and cobbled together—but also boldly democratic. Like Whatcom Community College it is dedicated to the notion that, provided an opportunity, anyone can achieve something remarkable.

Today, as you look at Whatcom's beautiful campus, or consider the elegant volume you hold in your hand, it's obvious that both the college and the Kumquat Challenge have achieved far more than their founders had imagined was possible. So as we celebrate both the college and the Challenge, let's also celebrate the spirit of creativity that inspired them, artfully captured in these poems.

Bob Winters
WCC Division Chair for Arts & Humanities
Spring 2017

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Poems / 2017



Rain Down (Gwen Meharg, 2001)

become dance join kiss listen memory
passing path rain thought



A May Day Reflection on Mirrors

If I could, Dear Statue of Liberty,
I'd return to those days without delay,
listen, smile, offer a hug in the rain, a kiss
before I lost the ones I loved, adrift without
good-bye. Estranged as immigrants or native
born, suicides become a salty

memory on cloud-burst nights of Why?
until sad-sick for friends and family, I dance
to the call and whispers of my ancestors'
inner lives. I thought once and still believe
eventually their passing will be mirrored in
the coiled path of body cells that join in
synaptic bonds with hope and love
in equilibrium, Dear Liberty, beneath
your shroud of verdigris. *

Betty Scott

*According to Wikipedia, verdigris is the name for the pigment or natural patina when copper is exposed to acetic acid, air or sea water. The Statue of Liberty was dedicated in 1886 and by 1900 its dull copper color changed to a vivid green. The Army Corps of Engineers decided that verdigris “softened the outline of the statue and made it beautiful.”



Broadcast Love

After a short path and a flight up to the hall,
we've left the rainy world behind
and have become swingers again.
I kissed you on the floor, and I thought
about the moments that are like a present.
Unwrap them and unfurl them,
that's what keeps them safe
so they're memories we can keep.
Make a night of it
that, instead of passing into the past,
will remain in memory.
Join the "dancing fools,"
listen to the music, and
dance like everyone *is* watching,
as you broadcast love
for your and all humanity.

Sally Sheedy



Along an Earthen Path

Outstretched limbs kissed by falling rain
Roots joined firm on ancestral land
Dancing
Swaying
Vitality passing through upright veins

Seed engenders a towering giant
With the stature of life lived fully
Listening
Whispering
Thoughts becoming memory

Aging with wounds and scars and crooked trunk
We are not so different than trees

Heidi Wassan



April Becomes a Beatitude

Fire in the lake,
 shadows passing back and forth,
no moon, no sorrow,

no thought of heralds
 making way by night to kiss
your eyes, your last breath.

My heart does not stop.
 Overhead the rainy stars
shine silver bright—and

high, beyond your reach,
 are dreams that you could never
understand, or join.

Soon, you will be gone—
 no part of hope, or dream, or
memory, just . . . gone.

The path you once strode,
 cut with thorns and nightshade, will
fade and overgrow.

Listen! — freshening winds
 dance among the April leaves.
Where is malice now?

Ara Taylor



Do We Have To

A quick kiss and off they go.
They file out two by two,
Off the path of thought.
Should we dance, or not?

The curves in the road lap their insensitive shoes,
As the dirt shuns them as if they're all sittin' on pews.
They pass through the altar of the weekdays,
Joining each other as they become one
They become one, they become one, they become one . . .

Listen to the falling rain of memories
As they pass through our heads,
Unravelling like a ball of yarn with hollow threads.

Douglas Hamilton



Dream

I dream of the dance
Passing through a grand ballroom
Or perhaps joining the crowd in a smoke-filled First Avenue dive

The memory of the kiss rains down around me
I listen as the thought becomes an obsession

My heart carries the dream down the path
To dream again

Dennis Barnes



Eve

Mush over moss on fallen trees from broken dreams
Overgrown on an ever-winding path
A time that was as times always feel,
a wishing for it to be what it used to be,
Could be, should be, a memory long gone.
Once sustenance for all that could be, now frozen over,
A little gift from hell in the sky, who we once prayed to for rain
We become few and fewer still, the thought of hope snuffed out.
no longer a mighty clan of wrought iron and tempest steel,
We are that no more, merely passing by, as that's all we can do.
There are those who strive, wishing, hoping, dreading,
To become more, to hold a ground in this idol forsaken world
Listen, reject your ears, It beckons you to join, run while they let you.
The dance of death strides, one day you'll face the music,
Kiss the life, times, hopes, dreams, nightmares, stories and worries you once had away.
They mean no more now, I question if they ever did,
Life's over, the spring of winter has started, it will take its place one day, I hustle down,
alone, with what little I have now, I face the truth of the outcome, yet lie still I do
The dawn has only ended, a day which took many from me, now I face its maker.

Julian Hoffman



Explaining the Rain

(DAD discovered by LAURIE staring out the window.)

L: Something out there, Dad?

D: Rain. Cherry.

L: Not Mom, Laurie.

D: Thought Cherry.

L: Not mom, Laurie.

D: Dance Cherry.

L: Join the now, Dad, I'm not Mom.

D: LISTEN

L: I'm listening.

D: Rain on the path.

L: I hear the rain.

D: Cherry dances in the rain.

L: She did like that.

D: Passing by, stop, watch, Cherry- (DAD struggles with speaking)

L: Dance in the rain.

D: First time saw- (DAD struggles)

L: First time you saw Mom.

D: Saw Laurie. First time saw Laurie.

L: Saw me how?

D: Cherry dance in rain on the path, should be mother, saw you.

L: Thought me? Imagined me?

D: Thought you up. Join her. Kiss her. Love her. Make you happen. Become Dad. Sound of rain on the path, that's Cherry. That's Laurie.

L: Good memory, Dad.

D: How many left?

L: We'll see.

Sean Walbeck (They listen to the rain on the path. ©2017)



For Henry

I will listen for your voice
And hold you in my thoughts,
Until I follow you down the path,
Passing through some portal,
To join you and become
Your dance-partner again.
Will we kiss in the rain?
Will there be rain?
Will we retain the memory
Of this life together?
Or will we be meeting again
For the first time.

Susan Campbell Cross



Go Well

She becomes old
As is normal with passing time.
Memories move along the path
Of a dance
And a kiss in the rain.
You thought it wouldn't happen.
Listen here, my heart
It's for ALL of us.
Join your ancestors.

Julie Horst



I Wonder

A passing memory,
My mother had become old,
Her memory faded,
She would just listen to the rain,
Dance upon the windowpane,
I wondered if she remembered my father,
If she remembered the first kiss,
If she knew she would unfortunately join him soon enough,
But that's life,
That's god's path for us.
I thought they would be here forever,
But all good things must come to an end.

Logan Lyall



Idiot Teenagers with a Death Wish

A single moment can change your entire life's path,
And at times, leave you to deal with the grizzly aftermath.
For example, a chance meeting with a foreign prince
Who offers you power and a mission; you haven't been the same since.

Sometimes the mission is straightforward; become an animal and fight
The distant-yet-near enemies hailing from the starlight.
Other times, it can seem unconventional or even ridiculous,
Like defeating infantile warriors with the memory of a kiss.

Morphing can be a mesmerizing dance,
But only if you have the talent by chance.
Otherwise it's a vile, living nightmare,
Unpredictable and horrifying, nothing for which you can prepare.

Give thought to your mission; remember that your effort is not in vain.
Remember that hope will come again, like the sun after rain.
Listen for covert words spoken briefly in passing,
And whatever you do, don't join the sharing.

Adrianna Tiesinga



If Ever a Passing Thought

If ever a passing thought
Should start to cause you pain
Let me cleanse it all away
Like a warm gentle rain.
Take my hand and walk life's path
We'll stop to listen, smell and see.
Joining in dance, we share a kiss
Soon the thought becomes a memory.

Jennie Sabine



Impressions

Share a kiss with me in rain
And become my memory
A passing thought to revisit
From time to time

Dance with me along the path
And join my reverie
Listen to the sound
When our thoughts intertwine

Crystal J. R. Holtzbeimer



Integration

The memory path listens to the passing thoughts:

“Those Rains! Oh that Kiss!”

Joining instances across time

The now becoming one with the dances of the past.

Carol Wilkinson



It's a Killer

I remember that moment,
The day passed and the sun had lost its shine
It was beautiful
I was there on the edge looking
Listening
And these thoughts
These thoughts
They become a path
They kiss and they join into
one and turn into passing memories
That we listen to as we dance in the rain
While our hearts are in pain
I didn't jump
Yet they killed me
They kill you
They kill us,
These thoughts.

HatLovE



Kumquat Haiku

Memories dance so
bittersweet listening to
rain kissing our roof

Passing thoughts become
regrets numerous as drops
joining on the path

Levi Heeringa



Lethe

Floating in stillness
She listens to the rain
Lost in the moment

The murmuring water
Beneath and around her
Passing by forever

She has no memory
Of the gentle river's path
Or thought of the future

She watches the souls
On the banks dancing
And kissing one another

As if for the first time
Lethe rises and brings them
Dripping handfuls of water

And their old lives fall away
And they join the souls
Returning to Earth

Leaving Lethe to float
As they become new people
She stays lost in the moment

Katrina Ivers



Life 101

Some people call it the path
To enlightenment,
I call it Living.
If you listen, really listen
With an open heart
You will know

Negative thoughts will come and go.

Like the passing of the rain,

Fierce at first, then gently fade away.

No need to hold unto the old,

Choose a memory worth reliving.

Let strife become peace,

And all things good join together

To overshadow the bad.

We are imperfect, yet perfect,

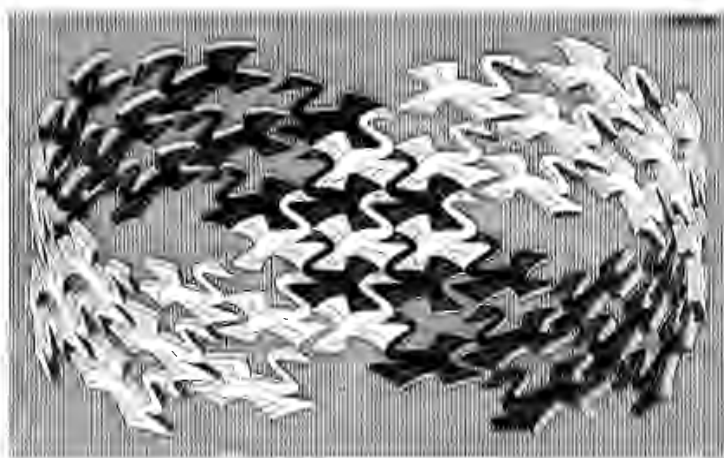
If we allow ourselves to be true

And live each day with gratitude.

This dance is called life,

Do it well, or kiss it goodbye.

Linda Compton-Smith



Oiseaux de Monebius (M.C.Escher, 1956)



Life Path

A baby crawls, listens,
absorbs the cadences
of family voices.

She, the toddler child,
dances in her mother's
red heels, reels, and,
awkward, falls.

A kiss-ready junior high girl,
new to the shimmers of love,
sees a blonde boy passing.

Unaware of his allure,
his rain-glistened hair,
silver braces, patchy beard,
and shambling stride,
he takes no notice.

In college, the braces are gone
the beard is trimmed, the walk confident.
His arms hold cheap coffee,
expensive textbooks,
and finally her.

She joins him often,
without any thought of
consequences until a thin
strip in a test kit turns pink.
Motherhood becomes her.



And memory reminds her
of the red heels, glad
that she kept them,
glad that the family voice
her daughter hears
is his, the blonde boy's.

Linda Lambert



Listen

Remember? We're back to being kids, So many girls with slews, volumes of hair
And you lament every morning: hair everywhere!
Hairs shed without a thought, raining onto the floor, sweepings joined into heaps of warm
fodder
That feed the weedy tendrils of our growing lives.
At night you listen to my miseries, hers, his, hers, then repeat
You tell me now you kept biting your tongue, But you were also braiding your wisdom in
Leaving us to dance each our own dance
Blessed with your goodbye kiss. As we are passing out of your life until the next time
We take away an idea that becomes a memory
Of a waiting nest, picked out in hair (our hair?), Strewn on the path ahead of you.

Susan Witter



Listen (Ky Olsen)



“Listen”

Goddess of Illusion, she took my hand, and then whispered gently into my ears,

“Don’t forget to listen, listen to the rain, for there is much wisdom there.” She laid a sweet kiss upon my young, pink-blushed cheek, and then she set me free.

“Choose your path wisely,” she said, “you will only get one, you’ll not have another, you see.”

She faded softly into the recess of my memory, forgotten, until now, it seems.

Behold! Two paths clearly in front of me, one clear with no trials, no tribulations, or none that I could see.

As my eyes gazed upon the second path, I was dismayed to see it was darkly gnarled, full of thorns and debris. Clearly, this wasn’t the path for me?

Or was it?

Merrily, I shall make my way down the easiest path, “How hard can it be?” I was young then, and ‘Folly’ who had become my companion that day, had special plans for me.

“Join with me,” he cried, “and we shall dance the night away! There’s always a new day tomorrow, just wait, you shall see!”

And, so I did.

Are those raindrops that I feel cascading down my face today?

The hours turned into days, into weeks and then into years. I wondered what had become of my youth? It has taken its leave of me, I now fear for it was just here yesterday.

Gone is the dewy blush upon my cheek, long since receded with the passing of time.

To my chagrin, I believed in ‘forever.’ I verily thought I was immune to destiny’s embrace.

What a foolish mortal I had become.

Realization quietly sets in, this is still my life, it’s not over yet, the choices made are still mine.

Is that a murmur of laughter I hear in the falling rain?

Up ahead, a light tentatively gleams in the darkness, beckoning me forward in haste.



Another path hidden but found, another choice to make, and this one I won't waste.

I lift my face up to the heavens, with a smile on my face, I step forward into the new-found light and whisper "I will listen this time, your wisdom I will embrace."

Brenda Nelms



Living the Dream

I feel like I have become, a man changed forevermore!
Because I've gone and met a woman, she makes my heart rate soar! While

While passing through the forest one day,
I first spotted my off-course queen.
The most beautiful girl, she had lost her path, whilst taking in the scene.

I offered to lead her to salvation, as the clouds began to drop their rain. I had to
ask this girl for a date, but how?

The thought was driving me insane.
As civilization drew into sight, I knew it was time to take a chance.
“Would you join with me this evening,” I ask,
“for a bit of drink and dance?”

She graciously accepts my offer, as I walk her to her car.
Then we make plans to meet at 8, outside of the local town's bar.
We have fun for hours, she might even be my future wife.
But I need to know more so I ask her,
“Would you please tell me all about your life?”

I listen as she tells her tale, with emotions nearing bliss.
Then she smiles at me seductively, so I lean in for the kiss.
Her lips are warm and soft and nice, I reach up to stroke her face. When
alarm bells ring out, the room distorts,
something strange is taking place.

My throat is parched, my eyes are blurry, my mind is feeling frayed.
I jolt awake with a feeling of sadness, as the memory starts to fade.



It's mornings like these that I am reminded, my subconscious is a jerk!
But I don't have the time for lamenting now, because...
I'm running late for work!

Cameron Gridley



Meet Me Where the River Grows

Strong in its love for spring
And bending to touch your toes
Dance to connect
Thought and body where
Conscious
Knows
The infinite beauty of each and
Every line
Eradicate the memory of a
Happier time
Than now
When winter's hand reaches down to
Join the toes of spring
Passing lessons through gentle
Worms
Celebrating rain
We crawl like babes upon this path
Ear pressed, a kiss to ground
We listen
And in sound
Become
Aum

Monique Everett



Winding Path (Tim Green)



Midnight Walking

Most Saturday nights I walk to his house alone.
He walks me home at midnight –
through rain-kissed leaves in fall,
crunchy snow in winter, slushy snow in spring,
and cool evening breezes in summer.
No kiss at the door. Just a simple “Goodnight.”

*I wonder where he and his wife go
while I babysit their daughters. They leave
no number where they can be reached.*

Mrs. Butler, a statuesque lady, wears
a stylish dress that complements her beauty.
Mr. Butler, a gentleman potato farmer,
wears a finely-tailored suit and tasteful tie.
He helps her on with her coat
and off they go until midnight.

*I imagine them dining at an elegant restaurant,
listening to the orchestra play, and dancing the
night away. I thought their life idyllic.*

Years later my mother and I are eating dinner
at Memory Lane Bar and Grill. I see the Butler’s
sitting at the bar looking dejected.
They don’t join in conversation with others
or dance to music from the jukebox.

My passing fancy to become
like the Butlers ended.

I had a better time on Saturday nights
dressed in blue jeans, reading books
from the Butler’s library, and keeping
their children safe –



and when the Butlers returned home,
the pleasure of midnight walking
with Mr. Butler in all kinds of weather
on the well-worn path back to my house.

Judy Teresa



Passion

A kiss, a dance, a loving passing memory
Like raindrops on a path to join the mighty rivers
The thought becomes words to listen
The soul, it aches, it shakes, it shivers.

The Storm

Twisted thoughts, blackened dance
The crow listens to your memory
The darkened path, what have you become?
Passing kisses of misty rain
Join the souls of the sinking sun.

On the Verge . . .

Fight, fight, join, join
No want for a passing thought
Become, become
No need to listen to the path of not
Kiss, kiss, dance, dance,
Don't let it rain upon your memory
Fight, kiss, dance, join
Become one with us in this insanity

Pae Rista



Palm Springs Eternal

Morning clouds passing by
begin to show blue
until remaining wisps
dance and scurry away.

It's as if they know
fire in the sky
will burn them
if they stay.

I sit with morning tea.
Condo sprinklers like rain.
My thoughts like dark clouds
as I listen to morning news.

Yet memory calls with hope to
become Woodstock Nation anew.

I reveled in its kiss
and joined the path.

Look skyward and wait
for the clouds to part.

Harvey Schwartz



Prom Memory

Listening to the rain
Passing paths with each other
Dreading the thought of the dance with you
Joining together to become one
Freaking out if I'd get that kiss
Waking up from a daydream.

Erik Huynh



Rain Kissed Land

Rain kisses land
Clothes it green
Unless land's cleared by hand.

Most remain in a trance,
Transfixed by worry and by screen
Even as rain kisses land.

Rejoin the life-dance.
Songbirds flit or preen
Until scared by hand.

Become more, despite memory or chance.
Above this path crows convene
As rain kisses land.

Life, passing—a thought-lance.
Loss leads me to keen
Over land cleared by hand.

Listen to life's death dance,
Resist the Anthropocene.
Rain kisses land
Even after land's cleared by hand.

Andrew Shattuck McBride



Raindance Memory

Listen! Join the thought
passing as a kiss!
This raindance will
become the path to memory

Diana Swan

Raindrop Dance

Join rain.

Dance with the rain.

Then take a path

With the rain

To make a memory of joy.

Then I thought I could

Listen to the rain and

Become a raindrop and never splatter.

Kiss the rain.

Start passing the kiss around.

Calvin King (Katherine Snyder)

*(Calvin is 9 years old & the youngest poet
ever to submit a poem to the Kumquat
Challenge.)*



Reflecting Reality

I am love and hope
The path of my life, is it right?
Rain drops falling softly as the skies weep,
Seeing the memory of my parents, long since dead,
Tears drip from the clouds in my eyes,
Watering the seeds of the future.

Imagining the strife inside & out will cease,
Feeling the passing of life racing by,
Too late to reconcile, like the kiss of lovers?
Do I really listen to others?
Sorrow for those who will never come alive,
I am love and hope.

Our time on earth is short,
Where a thought today, is the reality of tomorrow,
I dream we can become united with those we hate,
To dance as one, rather than be ripped apart,
Join me now in my dream of truth,
I am hope and love.

Jonathan Cragle



Renewal

Thoughts dance through my mind.
Sunbeams kiss my face.
No rain today!
Passing clouds
driven by the wind
sweep away the
unwanted memory.
A pool of stillness,
I listen.....
My spirits become lighter
and join with my wish
to find a better path.

Caroline Balzer



Sidewalk Camaraderie

Forget for a brief moment,
that parallel universe
where zenith violence reigns.
There are no snarls or hisses here.

Today broad smiles, kisses,
display mercy on upturned faces
forming a flatland made for our delight.

Mottled by the noonday shadows of
overarching leaves, the chalky menagerie
of rainbow-hued replicas: whales, pelicans,
monkeys, parrots, leopards, kestrels, eels,
elves and clowns stare at the runaway sun.

A million bright interests gather suddenly.
An aging seamstress looks out her window.
Imagination begets ultramarine approval.
Sudden, kinder fingers point with delight.
Playground laughter scatters
up and down hushed Nirvana Street
and love
is everywhere.

Jim Milstead



Smile

Join us on a distance path
where passing thoughts become like rain
dancing all around us
kissing our memories with joyous
remembrances of youthful pleasures.

Smile
as you listen
to your own soft laughter.

kathi



Sonnet for ESL Class

On rain kissed mornings students enter class
From every part of the Earth and stage of life
Diverse and yet they've formed a single mass
To win against grammar and spelling strife.

The mother tongue reshapes words anew
The dance of thoughts are filtered through the past
They listen but, at times, they have no clue
But then understanding delights the last.

The passing of words into memory
Helps retrieve and makes others understand
Hearts are joined in laughter and shared story
Their path: become at home in this new land.

If only divisive discords would cease
Like these students learn in unity and peace.

Helen H-S



Steps upon the Path

I thought I heard a sound
 just outside my door
I listened to the rhythm
 of a thousand beats or more
This passing rain
 washed out the stain
Of a memory once sweet
 and I become a fellow
 to these dancers in the street
So I join the wisdom-seekers
 upon this path of life
Twisting down its bends
 and ends
taking in its gifts
 and strife
As I learn the steps once more
 not miss the kiss
 of rain upon the door

Mary Mueller



Storm Drains

Slowly, a body floating into an open ocean.
An ancient sea, a blue to black, blanketing, blank vacancy.
By chance the body sorely dances through this passing
though the passage resembles something from memory.

Barely conscious hearing calls from choirs of ambiance boiling beneath, wavering.
Eyes roll adrift shifting views to cream colored commotions and sapphire skies.
Inhale, exhale the final sighs and full breaths of freedom, of time, of thought.
To become the molecules in pools as clouds and bloom proud in light and fly.

To triumph in life is to become and desist, join into and birth through solipsistic existence, oddly.
The abyss is a kiss of blissed continuance and life assisted by a dissident body.

Afar from shore, lying upon the path where eye-lids crash in folly
listening to the subtle shuttering reverbs resonating through the body,
as it becomes soundly seduced and succumbs to the darkness like rain
to flood the world for a time and crawl into the circulation of the storm drains.

Jacob Blomberg



The Clock

Listen, the clock is ticking, and it's 4:20.
I thought it was much later.
My memory of time is passing, as I blow a kiss in the rain,
while walking down the dirt path.
I become filled with joy and want people to join me,
and dance the night away.

John Hansen



The Cosmonaut and the Whale

We watch the dance of the orcas during the twilight
As the sun creates a path of light across the Salish Sea.
And soon after we join the whales, I become the thought,
I transform into the memory that sings me to sleep.

I dream of tidal waves passing along the beach; rolling pebbles,
While scattering gulls across the sky as the rain pelts our skin
And we seek shelter in a thought, on our path to the other side.
I listen to a choir of cetaceans passing into my memory like
My first kiss among jade pebbles, dried jellyfish, and a new dawn breaking
Across the Milky Way . . . I am speechless. I am complete. I am a cosmonaut
As I launch my rocket into the deep unknowable.

Patricia Herlevi



The Kiss

I remember kissing your mouth while the rain fell on your face. A passing girl giggles, becomes embarrassed, and glances away. We listen as her mother calls, and the thought that her life is now forever changed dances through my mind as we are all joined by our memories in the path of life.

Lloyd Blakley



The Lake

My memory of late is a crystal ball -
foggy, highly questionable, fragile.
Perhaps inevitable when your days are foggy, questionable, fragile.
My memory of late is a crystal ball
except for this. This, I remember:
My fingers pass over the dancing surface of the lake,
the rain becomes my skin,
my skin joins with the rain,
this is the moment the thought kisses me:
I'm happy again.
Startled, I listen with my whole body to the moment.
I resist the hunger to look behind me,
to memorize the path here.
Instead, I close my eyes and – with a smile –
dive in.

Cecania Alexander



The Plaza After Rain (Paul Cornoyer, 1910)



The Swan-Maiden's Grown

Maybe I will put on
My swan-robe and fly away
Never to return

Remembering racehorses at the gate
The excitement of summer vacation
And the taste of buttercups

Self-awareness fades;
I am drunk on sunshine
And childhood memories

No path I could have chosen
Is harder than this my own,
Where everyday I become

It isn't easy to sit back
And accept the rain is gone
And with it insecurity

The trial is passing
Like brooding storm clouds
I watch this time blow away

I feel the spring is here
When it has been so long coming
And I am becoming myself again

We played with boats in the bath
And built fairy houses
In the backyard gravel banks

We played beneath the sun
In the most beautiful gardens where
All the flowers lay dreaming fairy
tales

We clambered on the mountains
And crossed streams on hanging
ropes
And fell surprised into them

I was a water sprite cheerful
And now to cheerful I return
But I have lost and gained

I will never be the same
You cannot take back kisses
The tree is only once a seedling

And now I am the chestnut tree
Shading the child in the graveyard
Telling stories about the dead

Why do we fear the Other
When it is the Other we become,
Slowly and then all at once?

I am heady with poems
And the realization of spring
Outside and in the soul

I can forgive the me
That has struggled these past years
I am a butterfly now



These last three years were dark
But the greatest knights face an ordeal
And I have come out alive

Singing in the meadowlands
Rejoicing in the sunshine and I
Will never again hide who I am

I have awakened
In the star-strewn cosmic dance

And how do you value a star?

I am stardust made mortal
I am a sunbeam tied down
I am a girl become a woman

I live in laughter once again
Lost in thought or daydreams
Sitting in a sunbeam in a meeting

I listen to the cars outside
And make them into croaking frogs
And I do not need the swan-robe

I left my mother and father
To join with my husband
And it's different but good

And I have after all
Only to close my eyes and I am
In childhood's yellow wood



The Trees Tell Me

The trees tell me I am fine.
To listen to them I need to become
like them, find stillness
grown through memory and connection
to all that lives around and in.
To dance in place—if need be,
in the rain.
To join with others by tuning in,
as trees do, with the mycelia,
passing signals like thoughts
through thread-like networks
to nearby trees, their kissing cousins,
a path of interdependence
that honors each and all.

Ellen Harris



Kiss from the series A Love, Opus X
(Max Klinger, 1903)



Those Who Starve for Art

Those who starve for art
Carve paths in our hearts
Burning bright and brilliant
Lighting stage and screen
We all are torn by the stories they love
And the poems they sing

They cry from their lost loves
Smile from pains they've overcome
Wrapped up, we listen amazed
For the very thing that torches us
Comes spilling from other lips and eyes
Comes burning from other hearts alive

Those who starve for art
Make space in our thoughts
For all we've never seen, never heard
Conduits to a world we've rarely tasted
Their tales become our truth to tell
Their fables our fortunate fall into depths untold

They speak words eaten from other pens
Wait for cues and read reviews to tell the story right
Helping the blind to see, the lame to dance
Beating drums to wake from sleep
Those too somnolent to be
Those too somnolent to sing



Those who starve for art are
Alchemists of memory and fragility
They join loves and hates
Drinking down the mixture of fates
Once said to kill a man
For love is strong as death, hate the stealer of breath

They kiss the earth to hear her secrets
They cull the voices of the ages
An ancient temple is the human heart
Where they take their pain and make their art
Passing back and forth from fiction to fact
Living a thousand deaths, dying a thousand lives

Those who starve for art
Carve paths in our hearts
Like rain makes streams
And love makes dreams
We all are torn by the stories they love
And the poems they sing

They cry from their broken hearts
Sing from their hunger to be whole
Wrapped up, we listen amazed
That someone can be as starved as us
And live with such pain

Hannah Lucille Emory



Thoughts of You

High along the windward side

Of the last remaining mountain's carcass

Sheltered from memories that strain to listen

A passing gale senselessly meanders down a precipitous path

The pungent smell of

Dying flowers and berries

Radiating from Earth's core

A cacophony of muted colors

Ancient weathered eroding rocks

Kiss the trembling ridges of boulders

Enveloping vast decaying crumbling reaches

Cascading noiselessly like a once mighty waterfall

Fading into extinction

Now plummeting into the remnants of the last remaining river

As forlorn rain listlessly dances

Becoming one with wistful wind

Lightening silhouettes all and nothing

Joined by thunder cackling caustically

while
thoughts
of
you
slowly
pass
away

Guy Smith



Unnamed Profession

Whether they're thoughts you ascribe to the tides of your mind perpetually dancing within
or the off-color essence of so many feelings on the tours of your memory lane

Scoff not at the path upon which you are walking, nor stymie the flow of another
Give the gentlest kiss for the chances you miss, for that's never the chore of a stranger

Bow with goodwill to your chapters in passing and please don't get mad at the rain
We become what we train our synapses to be so why cleave to depression and pain?

There's plenty of time yet for glorious failures, to listen to lessons presented
So join in the session, enjoy the confessions of your jubilant, unnamed profession!

Elliott Cribbs



Until We Meet Again

It was a brutal passing. There were months of agony waiting for the next wave of emotion. First the diagnosis, then the terrible news that there was nothing that could be done. The waiting is the hardest but for whom, the one passing on, or the one living with thoughts of the past and what could have been. I wondered as I sat listening to the innocence of the falling rain, could they feel the pain, could they hear life beyond the dark abyss of eternal nothingness. What kind of memories were becoming the slide show of their life, and as I replayed memories of my own were they the same. Days became months, I wished for their pain to be over, if that is what they were feeling, or was it my pain that I wanted to end. I wondered why they picked this path as opposed to going to sleep and never returning to this dimension. I knew I would join them one day but the thought of them leaving now was hardly bearable. We have so much more life to live but we don't always get to finish the dance. I will kiss you sweetly goodbye knowing one day we will meet again.

Jana Koshinz



Warmth Turns Outward

Passing, you listen
for the dance—
kiss of heel to wood
push of air
from thought, through body,
to memory.
No path. No care for rain.
Risk to the bone,
tendon, psyche.
She joins,
becomes the fabric
as it unfolds.

Kate Di Nitto



When You Came Into My Life

when you came into my life
so out of nowhere
i thought it was a sign
a sign that you were meant to
become
someone special to me
because they say the love that is
realest
is the kind that finds you
when you aren't looking for it
and i definitely wasn't expecting to
find you
standing at my door that morning
with excitement dancing behind
your eyes
it wasn't like you were a stranger
i'd seen you before
in passing
because in a town as small as this
it's impossible
to not have encountered everyone
in it
at least once
but for whatever reason
you let years pass
before finally deciding to take the
path
that led to my door
and when i opened that door
i was so amazed
and awestruck
that i let myself fall for you
much quicker than i should have

and i let you kiss me
much sooner than i should have
but you made me feel important
and seen
like i wasn't invisible
for the first time in my life
and so i told myself it was okay
that the rules didn't apply here
that this was something different
because when i spoke to you
you would listen
and when i told you how i love to
dance
to my favorite songs in my bedroom
you offered to join me
and when i wrote you a poem
you wrote one for me too
it turns out though
i shouldn't have listened to myself
no
i should've run
while i still had the chance
before i had to learn the hard way
that just because a beautiful boy
walks up to your front door
when you least expect it
it does not automatically mean
that the universe is finally operating
in your favor
sometimes
it simply means that there is some-
thing



the universe needs you to understand
so
when i asked to hold your hand
and you did something else
instead
something i can't even bear to put into words
something that i only let myself think of
in little snippets
when rain is falling from the sky
and i feel like letting myself cry
i realized
what the universe needed me to understand
and that is
that people are not like the characters i read about in books
and expecting them to be
will only hurt me
so having learned that
i have been able
to let you become just a thing of the past
a memory
that fades more and more
with each passing day
but i still can't help but wonder
if your name will always
be written
on my skin

Jillian Jobnsen

Contributors



CONTRIBUTORS

Cecania Alexander graduated from Sehome High School and the University of Victoria with a BA in Writing. She is currently completing her license to become an airplane pilot.

Caroline Balzer has lived in Bellingham for five years and spends her time socializing, volunteering and taking continuing education classes.

Dennis Barnes is a graduate of WCC & WWU Fairhaven College where he received his degree in creative writing. This is his eleventh participation in The Kumquat Challenge.

Lloyd Blakley has been teaching art at WCC since 1983. Though he is not a writer or poet, he is entertained by the presentation of words and ideas. The poetic statement for the Kumquat Challenge was written using the words exactly in the order that they were presented.

Jacob Blomberg has been dedicated to practicing writing poetry since 2008 and was published in the book "The International Who's Who of Poetry" in 2012. He practices writing daily and continues to enter competitions to further improve his form. He is a WCC student.

Susan Campbell Cross has lived in Bellingham for twelve years. She enjoys writing poetry and misses her husband Henry Cross, who died recently. Henry's poem, "Necessary Skills" was the 1st place winner of last year's Kumquat Poetry Challenge.

Linda Compton-Smith began working at the WCC Library in 1999. She enjoys spending time on her hobby farm caring for her "kids" and tending the garden.

Johnathan Cragle works as a technician in WCC's IT department.

Elliott Cribbs is a former student of WCC. Since graduating he has temporarily returned to his homeland on Whidbey Island to reacquaint his adult self with the nouns of childhood. He tends to think that imagination is just as important as knowledge.

Kate Di Nitto is a student navigator and the associate director for the Area Health Education Center for Western Washington. She has worked at WCC in several rolls since 2015, enjoying Whatcom's diverse students above all else.

Darcie Donegan teaches Early Childhood Education at WCC.

Hannah L Emory is a highly-caffeinated enthusiast of stories, music, and all things Scottish. She has attended WCC for four years and this is her last quarter. This fall she will begin studies in performing arts at WWU and preparing for her next adventure. . .but WCC will always be in her heart.

Monique Everett is a WCC student and artist with a passion for learning. A native of Bellingham, its beautiful landscapes continually amaze her. Expressing oneself in a nonconforming way has been a common theme throughout her life, and poetry has allowed her to do just that.

Cameron Gridley is a former WCC student and currently works for WCC's Mail Services. He really should work as an editor!

Doug Hamilton works for WCC in the Registration and Financial Aid office. He spent 8 years in the U.S. Army, did a stint in Iraq and during his downtime in Iraq fell in love with poetry and the written word. "Poetry enables the writer to express everything and anything. Some poems are as deep as the ocean, while others crash into you like waves on a beach."

John Hansen has a degree in display design from Spokane Falls Community College and is a custodian at WCC.

Ellen Harris has worked at WCC for the past two and one half years as a part-time registration advisor for International Programs, in Entry and Advising and Running Start. She previously taught Introduction to Poetry at WWU and enjoys writing poetry herself.

HatLove is a twenty year old WCC student who lives thousands of miles away from the people he knows and the people who used to care about him. He's been battling depression for years since he first discovered his sexuality while living in a conservative family.

Levi Herringa has always been a poet at heart, but feels he has not been enough of a poet in practice. While he may enjoy math and video games, he also loves to write when he finds the time, and always appreciates a good story. He is currently a student at WCC.

Patricia Herlevi is a professional author/journalist/astrologer who resides in Bellingham. She writes for *Whatcom Talk* and *Bellingham Alive* and has completed several novels. She has published poetry in journals and chapbooks.

Julian Hoffman is writing a book based on his love for the dark & twisted art style of Tim Burton & Henry Selick and their stop-motion films such as *Nightmare before Christmas*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and *Coraline*. He is currently a student at WCC.

Crystal Holtzheimer is a WCC alumna (class of 1999), and current faculty and Chair of the WCC Math Department. Crystal enjoys reading poetry, and occasionally writing it. Everything she knows about poetry she owes to Betty Scott, former Adjunct English faculty at WCC, and the instructor for Crystal's Intro to Fiction and Poetry Writing course.

Julie Horst is a former WCC librarian/instructor who has written a Kumquat Challenge poem every year since she's moved away because nothing in her current job is as mind-bending.

Helen H-S is a semi-retired ESL instructor. She volunteers at WCC's ESL classes. She is currently working on a book about her maternal family's escape from North Korea.

Erik Huynh is a Running Start student and will be transferring to the University of Washington this upcoming fall where he will work towards a biology degree. Writing isn't a big focus of his but freestyle is his favorite.

Katrina Ivers (once Kappel) has a deep and abiding love for the histories of the "little people" -- the people who will never get written into history books but nevertheless lived and mattered. She served as a procurement specialist in the U.S. Air Force for nearly 4 years. She has developed bipolar in the past few years and has become an advocate for mental health.

Jillian Johnsen is a 20 year old WCC student, who lives in Burlington and absolutely loves music and poetry and cats. She is planning to transfer to Evergreen next year to study poetry and other forms of writing, and hopes to someday play in a band!

kathi attended WCC and worked at Whatcom County until her retirement. Her interests include watercolor and acrylic painting, writing poetry, and playing pool. She is working on her first novel.

Calvin King is 9 years old and he's "really good at poems." He attends Geneva Elementary School while his mother, Kathleen Snyder, is a WCC student. He likes the fountain in the front of the library, especially when people throw quarters in it.

Jana Koshinz has always wanted to participate in the Kumquat Challenge so this year decided "why not?" She happily works in the WCC Human Resources office, is going to school, and has a dog named Bella.

Linda Lambert is a member of Red Wheelbarrow Writers, a contributor to the anthology *Memory into Memoir*, and a recent graduate of the University of Southern Maine's MFA program in Creative Writing.

Logan Lyall is a Running Start student at WCC and also attends Sehome High School, where he does Basketball and Track. After graduating, he will be attending Idaho State University where he will study Energy Systems Instrumentation Engineering Technology.

Andrew Shattuck McBride is a writer and freelance editor. He has recent work in *Cirque: A Literary Journal for the North Pacific Rim*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Raven Chronicles*, *Perfume River Poetry Review*, and *Clover, A Literary Rag*. He edits historical novels, memoirs, poetry collections and chapbooks.

Jim Milstead is the winner of two Sue Boyton merit awards and is a member of the Independent Writer's Studio. His poems have been published in Clover, Bellowing Ark and Whatcom Writes.

Mary Mueller is a retired special education teacher who finds great joy in word crafting. She has written several small books of poetry.

Brenda Nelms is a student at WCC.

Pae Rista is in charge of Payroll at WCC.

Jennie Sabine was born and raised in Everett, WA. She has been in Higher Education for almost 23 years. She shares her spare time with her husband Michael and their two dogs, Elle and Charlie. She enjoys visiting with family, gardening, cross-stitching and reading. This is her first poem.

Harvey Schwartz learned that life should be "serious business" when he grew up on the East Coast. He hitchhiked west and has been trying to unlearn seriousness ever since. He had a twenty-five year career as a chiropractor. Since then he's been writing about his life.

Betty Scott taught at WCC for fourteen years. Her poems and essays are featured in many publications throughout the Pacific Northwest. A collection of the poems titled *Central Heating* which explores "What use is poetry?" will be published in 2017 by Cave Moon Press.

Sally Sheedy is a systems librarian at WCC, plays the fiddle, sings and contra dances, and is the mother of recent college graduate daughter-twins.

Guy Smith teaches Communication Studies courses and serves as the Social Sciences and Business Division Chair at WCC -- though deep down he would rather be lying with his dogs on a beach in Hawaii while reading from the piles of books he continues to accumulate.

Diana Swan is in LOVE with WCC and the Lifelong Learning Program.

Ara Taylor taught creative writing courses for WCC Community Ed for many years and is a former book critic. She works at WCC and manages the student textbook collections for the WCC library.

Judy Teresa is a retired special education teacher. *Flight Connections*, her first book, will be published next spring. In her memoir-in-progress, she's framing a "Cathedral of Learning" that critiques her educational experiences. Her poems and essays have appeared in local publications.

Adrianna Tiesinga is in her second year at WCC. She has lived in Lynden her whole life, although she enjoys the occasional trip to Bellingham. She has been writing poems and short stories with a fervor since her 7th grade English class, and doesn't show signs of stopping anytime soon.

Sean Walbeck is a playwright and theater artist teaching Intro to Drama at WCC. Previous plays have been presented at the AACTFest National One-Act Play Festival, the Seattle Fringe Festival, the WSCTA Kaleidoscope Festival, the BOAT Festival, and iDiOM Theater. He is directing "I and YOU" at the Bellingham Theatre Guild this summer.

Heidi Wassan likes word games and this year's Challenge words struck her as a great opportunity to play. Her poem's theme came from reading about tree pruning and thinking about a dear friend with cancer. She works at WCC and this is her first attempt at poetry.

Carol Wilkinson teaches Psychology at Whatcom Community College.

Susan Z. Witter is a fiction writer living in Bellingham for 20 years and is especially interested in problems of the self. When not writing, she honors mind, body, and spirit, and she is addicted to observing her fellow human beings.



A collection of poetry by current and former Whatcom
Community College faculty, staff, and students.