

Rumquat Challenge



2018

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.

2018

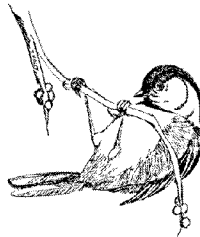
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cover design
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Book Design
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Special thanks to Diane Cronk & WCC Copy Center staff



Second Printing, May 2018

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 have to include all ten words of the library's choosing.

The 2018 Challenge words:

break highway invite know left
paper smoke silence transcend weave

Special thanks to members of the judging panel who carefully considered all of the poems:

Donna Rushing (WCC English Faculty)

Anne George (WCC Humanities Faculty)

James Spaich (WCC English Faculty)

Jim Bertolino (recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, two *Quarterly Review of Literature* book publication awards, and the Jeanne Lohmann Poetry Prize for Washington State Poets.)

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 recognition of National Poetry Month which is celebrated every April. We welcome submissions. Hopefully, you will join us again for any future poetry challenges we might issue.

Ara Taylor
Spring 2018

On Celebrating Poetry

National Poetry Month was inaugurated by the Academy of American Poets in 1996. Over the years, it has become the largest literary celebration in the world with schools, publishers, libraries, booksellers, and poets celebrating poetry's vital place in our culture. Whatcom Community College's Kumquat Poetry Challenge was initiated in 2007 and yielded 25 poems by current and former WCC students, faculty and staff. It included a poem by Penny McMahon—thirteen years old at the time—who identified herself in her accompanying bio by saying “I was a student at the Whatcom Community College's Child Development Center when I was four years old.”

One of the ten words included in the first challenge was ‘kumquat’ – thus the name. Every Challenge since then has included a ‘k’ word. Past ‘k’ words: kumquat, kimono, ken, kindle, knot, keep, kind, key, kick, kestrel, kiss and, of course, this year, ‘know’. The year we chose ‘kimono’ we inadvertently tilted the poems toward the erotic by also requiring the use of ‘glimpse’, ‘silk’, ‘pearl’ and ‘cream’. We hesitated before choosing the word ‘kindle’ in 2010, thinking we might be giving a boost to Amazon's *Kindle* e-reader.

This year's Kumquat Challenge has yielded a record number of poems: 80 in all. Many of the poets included in this volume have returned year after year. It seems we have created a “Kumquat Family” of sorts.

Thank you to all the many poets who joined in WCC's 2018 Kumquat Challenge by honoring us with your poems this year.

Sincerely,
Ara Taylor



CONTENTS

A Place for the Heart	Julie Horst	16
Age	Ellen Barton	17
Because It Is You	Brett Straka	18
Becoming a Mindful Masterpiece	Caroline Balzer	19
Breeding	Betty Scott	20
California Dreamin'	Jennie Sabine	21
Call	Harvey Schwartz	22
Caught Up	Barbara Stromme	23
Changes	Carol Wilkinson	24
Cipher	Alana	25
Dinner Date	Guy Smith	26
Disintegration	Rem Grá Naughton	27
Efficiency	Name Withheld	28
Enemy of Darkness	M. Kumar	29
Family	Priscilla Vaughn	30
Fatal Car Crash	Zach Geer	31
For Scotty	Sue Cole	32
Freeing Myself	Tessa Chau	34
Highway 20	Marian Exall	35
Highway Cowboy	Jay Hahn-Steichen	36

His Hat	Linda Lambert	37
Homeward Bound at Last	Sharon Garoutte	39
I Miss Her More	Tim Pilgrim	42
I Stand in the Silence	Jana Koshinz	44
Invitation to Begin	Kate Di Nitto	45
Invitation	Fredrick Dent	46
The Jury Is Out	Judy Teresa	47
Late	Lloyd Blakely	48
Letter to my Grandson	Scott Blume	50
Life's Highway	Alan Alatorre-Barajas	52
Massive Fire Engulfs Nursing Home	Eugenie Simpson	53
Median	Amanda Hoppe	54
No Paper	Shawndra Seburn	55
Not a Poet	Cameron Gridley	56
Ode to Kumquat	Betty Anzaldua	57
On Exploring Ephemeral Spring	Elliott Cribbs	58
Our Violence	Dominic Salas	60
Parting	Linda Conroy	61
Pit of Darkness	Name Withheld	62
Prayer of Silence	Mary Mueller	63

School Fish that Saved the Nation	Derrick Willis	64
Seventeen	Douglas Hamilton	65
Silence is Golden	John Hansen	66
Sunrise is Certain	Katrina Ivers	67
Text on Paper	Pa'e Rista	68
This Mortal Coil	Scarlett Grey	70
This Present Distress	H.C. Williams	71
Transcending Silence	Diana Swan	72
Transcending the Flames	JS Nahani	73
Trumpery	Sally Sheedy	76
Tyrant of My Dreams	Jarid Corbitt	77
Untitled (1)	kathi	78
Untitled (2)	Dante Tolomei	80
Vanishing Point	Steeb Russell	81
What You See and Get	Alissa DeLaFuente	82
What's Life	Louis Gutierrez	83
Wildfires	Andrew Shattuck McBride	84
Writer's Block	Helen H-S	85
Writer's Journey	Melissa Talbot	86
Written on My Skin	Jillian Johnsen	87

Poems / 2018



Simultaneous Visions (Umberto Boccioni, 1912)

break highway invite know left
paper smoke silence transcend weave



A Place for the Heart

We visit the old library
Filled with papers
and dusty books

To get there, turn left along the ornate hallway
past the break in the continuous row
of smoked glass windows.

The highway of books stretches ahead,
the weave of its stories muffles any sound

All are invited to sit in its silence -
Transcend from unknown to known

Julie Horst



Age

Those rooms are empty now
Not an echo left
Silence curled in corner lurks
Memory scurries there and rests.

Fresh coats of paint
Invite gusts of forgetting in
To tramp about with muddy feet
To break the spell of what has been.

These vacant shelves now know no books.
This hearth breathes no more smoke.
No warmth transcends these strangled bricks,
And I am free to no more hope.

Forty years of paper stashed,
Ninety years of blinkered trudge;
Numb, duty-shackled, gritted teeth,
No highway: your road, rutted mud.

I close the door, no farewell heard.
I turn and quite unnoticed go.
This tattered bag of wishful dust
can't weave back all that broke, a home.

Ellen Barton



Because it is you

Far from your smiling eyes,
beyond the smoldering smoke I fly.
A passenger on your distant highway,
I weave in and out of your soul.

Break the silence I know is left,
invite me into your world bereft.
I dream of your gentle meandering touch,
paper thin along the curve of my neck.

Each November I remember to transcend,
returning again and again...
because it is you.

Brett Straka



Becoming a mindful masterpiece...

We're on the highway to heaven...

Take a break.

Invite the silence.

Transcend the noise
of your restless thoughts.

Imagine them as smoke
rising...

Then write in your journal
and let the paper
make new out of
what you thought you knew.

And weave a masterpiece out of
what is left.

Caroline Balzer



Breeding

I was invited to stay by the U.S. government, taught:
“Be a lover, but don’t fall for love.” A proud steed,
smoked-up on lust, I took their oath of silence, their
“be who you gotta be; do what you gotta do” creed.

It’s hard work, driving others weaker than me
down the highway of heartbreak. With stud fantasies,
I picked up a young filly, her eyes, brown veils of fear,
my hubris stitched into the band of my boxer shorts.

Before we got to the detention center, I turned left,
stopped to rest at a cove, paper-littered, beneath
puffed-up clouds of promise that rode the purest
blue sky. I know this sounds crazy, but I swear

sunlight weaved over me. I fell to my knees, weak
with shame and awe. As waves of light transcended,
I heard, “Go North!” I rose, saying, “For freedom and love,
our guide will be that Arabian stallion cloud above.”

Betty Scott



California Dreamin’
Heartbreak Hotel

Crawling along the smoke highway

The towering flames weaving
through the homes and trees,

Bright embers wind-borne
create a tunnel of fire

as we flee.

Nature’s rage transcends belief.

We know the silence of the skeletal homes
will break the hearts of families.

Only ashes left to invite the thought

“We still have a paper mortgage.”

Jennie Sabine



The Call

I didn't hear a call
or ever feel a need.
But I heard a window
break as all that I knew
cracked.

The highway invited
me to a different way,
like a smoke signal
of hope transcending
my stillness and silence.

Life had been a game of
Rock, Paper, Scissors
that crushed, covered and cut
my hallowed plans.

Tomorrow rolled upon me
like a tidal wave of change.
Metal box on rubber wheels,
rolling with fluidity.

The road weaved dreamscape
tapestries that pulled me
away from certitude,
to a place I did not know.

So I left.

Harvey Schwartz



Caught Up

There is so much in a picture
Frozen memories in time

I know the little girl sitting by a campfire
Watching the smoke rise
Sparks fade away and reappear as stars

She listens to the night sounds
Distant cars on the highway
Singing spring frogs
The crackling of burning logs
But most of all the silence in between

Just an image on paper
Transcending time
Weaving memories that
Invite a break from the present
To relive a moment
In a photo left behind

Barbara Stromme



Changes

The paper invitation left in the silence of smoke.

Meaning, knowing transcended

Breaking, opening a way to weave off the highway.

Carol Wilkinson



Cipher

How do I transcend this –
My own infatuation
And the distance
You built between us.
From the paper you sent in January,
To the silence I tasted,
A blockade on your tongue.

Your hands, an invite,
You say slyly,
“Takes one to know one.”
I face your figure,
A call to me across a room;
The way our eyes weave pathways
To chase each other.

Hit the highway.

Tell me, what's left?
The tension begs to break,
But your reflection is lost.
I'm running down a smoke trail.
Now all I need,
are the mirrors.

Alana



Dinner Date

Billowing smoke and contrasting flames envelop the left lane
Of a congenitally clogged highway;
Deadly kaleidoscopic fragments haphazardly rain down
Upon complacently ignorant oncoming traffic,
Inviting unsuspecting guests
To a predictably disagreeable dinner date
No one even knew they were going to attend.
Suddenly awakened from their heedless reverie,
Some drivers break to a jarring, ear-piercing halt,
Others weave erratically to steer clear
Of the growing conflagration,
While everyone scrambles to avoid paying the check.
The televised carnage spasmodically jerks viewers
From the inane, hegemonic headlines
Of papers spread out discordantly before them,
Knowing full well the cacophonous daily news
Can never transcend the horribly muted silence
That forces them to foot the bill to a dinner date
We are all forced to attend.

Guy Smith



Disintegration

she said she was made from silicon
she said she was the trash that i found treasure in
corroded paper with the words
dissolved from rain
or covered in the mud that was her brain.
sometimes all you know how to do is break.

i said she was the constellation eyes
carbon-based colours she weaved together for me
twisted-up frosty soft-blue lost on that highway,
clouds, cotton-candy pink
and the way she managed to think.
i think my body collided with the grey concrete.

but we are made from smoke
she's thick in my lungs
we're choking on the silence
stuck inside each other's chests
and i know how to invite you in.
but all the smoke knows
is how to transcend.

Rem Grá Naughton



Efficiency

Paper smoke transcends

Invite knowledge, break silence

The highway weaves left

Name withheld



Enemy of Darkness

I have travelled many miles
In this highway called life
I learned a thing or two from
Written papers and files
What I know is still little
But many things I don't
Know yet to be settled
I feel like I have been left
In a dark room filled with smoke
I have been searching for answers
But as luck would have it
They showed up as questions, like beautiful dancers
Can love transcend race?
Will it lift you up beyond the colors?
Help you break away from the anchors
That tie you to your own species?
Will it weave a thread of kindness in silence?
Through all the living beings?
Answer to all these questions is a resounding YES
I invite you to love and live
Let the open heart show you
What you have missed.

M. Kumar



Family

My brain's been left in pieces,
But smoke whatever you want –
It won't fix any of this.
Your dad's going to break my thumbs
He's never seen a queer in his life.
And I
Transcend my own screams,
My paper soul folding away.
Porcelain thoughts
Invite traces of Wilde to hold me.

Highway 18, Apple Valley, California,
Where I used to live.
A lot of dead friends
Are brewing underground in silence.
The desert cradles them,
The rabbits weave in and out of the ground,
The sun boils my skin,
I breathe and I
Am gone again.

Priscilla Vaughn



Fatal Car Crash (July 17th 2:07 a.m.)

Heat, smoke, and embers weave through the cool night air.

Invited forward by the silence of the highway, I break
from the flickering glow of everything I have known.

But through the words I have left behind on paper,
may I transcend my brief allotment of time.

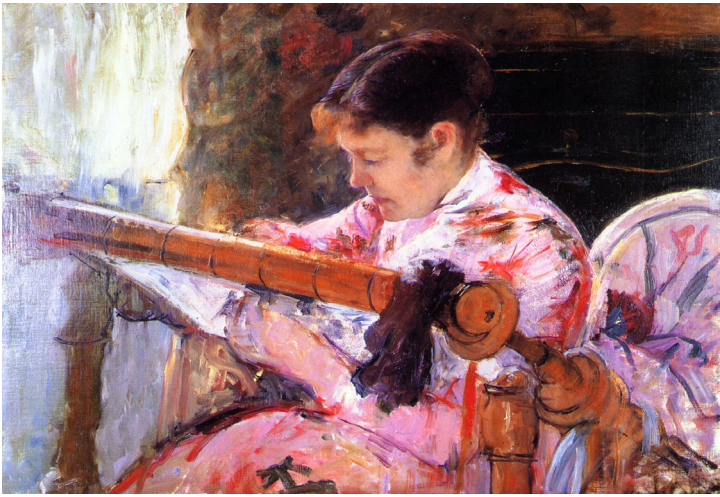
Zach Geer



For Scotty

I invite you to rest beside me
As I read the morning paper in silence.
I know the years pass too quickly
As we transcend our predictable pattern.
Shorter walks. Longer naps. Night roams.
I see the filmy smoke of time
Weave shadows in your soft eyes.
Our journey together on this highway
Is coming to a close.
My heart will surely break
When I am left behind
And you are no longer here.

Sue Cole



Lydia at the Tapestry Loom (Mary Cassatt, 1881)



Freeing Myself

You have left nothing,
but silence with me
I tried everything,
but none of them seems to be working.

Wasn't it just yesterday?
When we were on the highway,
envisioning a future that we will weave
At least I believe,
out of nothing,
but love and a ring.

Now my heart is burned to ashes.
With the smoke clouding my head,
I wish I was dead.
However,
I know I have to transcend the pain,
In order to break free from the chains.
So I invite myself to be my own caretaker,
by rubbing these emotions in a piece of paper.

Tessa Chau



Highway 20

Following the river as it weaves
Through towns named aptly, oddly,
Concrete, Rockport, Marblemount,
“No services for 70 miles,”
The road invites us up
Into the North Cascades.

On opening day in May,
Between smoke-blackened skeletons
Left by forest fires at Newhalem,
Across the dam at Diablo
Pioneers of Spring ascending
In silence to the snow.

Gliding between cliffs of paper-white,
Blue-bird sky above, swinging
Through curves, transcending
Gravity and the known world
Until the Pass, a break before
Descent into Mazama.

Marian Exall



Highway Cowboy

With rolling papers in hand
He invited me to smoke.
The break was welcome
As a light rain fell on our dayglow slickers.

We sat in silence as our
Thoughts transcended the dark work.
He left abruptly:
I can only guess
The highway called him.

He is all action, few words.
He weaves between life-lived-large
And near nothingness
In his span of days.
He is hard to know.

Jay Hahn-Steichen



His Hat

My birthmother's hospital record
notes a single fact about
the unnamed man who sired me:

Father's hat size: medium

Were I to transcend the limitations
of that one scant morsel,
I could write a biography.
The title would be obvious:
I Know My Father's Hat Size.

But, tunnel-visioned and absorbed
by the four words on the paper in front of me
I wonder...what kind of hat did he wear?
A bowler? A fedora? A tweed flat cap?
A derby? A trilby? A Panama Jack Gambler?

Was he aware that the angle
between the brim and the crown
of a hat is called a break?

A break: That's what I needed
beyond hat style and size
to weave a tale of identity,
his and mine, the daughter
he never knew, the father I never had.



His Hat (continued)

Was he tall? Did he like sports?
Would he mind a tomboy offspring?
Did he smoke? Play pool?
Watch baseball? Go hunting?
Was he a man of faith?
What kind of job did he have?
Did he know of my birth?

If he knew of my existence
would he invite me into his life
or would I be left in the silence
of incomplete familial connection?
Would my search yield answers?

To the lawyers, librarians, found siblings,
DNA suppliers, and contributors
to the digital highway
who made discovery possible,
I tip my hat in gratitude.

His name was Eugene Phillip Allen.
He married my birthmother Alyce Bower
a year after she gave me up for adoption.
He was stationed on Treasure Island
in San Francisco, the place of my birth.

His hatter and his haberdasher
was the United States Marine Corps.

Linda Lambert



Homeward Bound at Last

Since the dawn of my existence,
Two dreams have persisted through
These years of pain and joy,
Through every instance
Of hope and despair,
And these are the dreams of home.

I don't yet know where my home is-
In all my life I have never seen it,
Save for these visions of what it could be.

Sometimes, in such reveries,
Home seems a tangible place,
Set somewhere in a far-off land
Of stars and sand,
Of strange and dreadful beauty.
Yet, at other times,
It is no such definitive place,
And is not situated within the constraints
Of time and space,
But instead exists at the crossroads
Of reality and imagination,
Where dreams are materialized,
Where the fire of the human soul
Blazes in all its glory,
Incandescent and eternal.

Perhaps I will only know that it exists
And sense it's where I'm truly meant to be
When I come across it in my travels-



Homeward Bound at Last (continued)

Or better yet,
Perhaps I myself can forge the way
With pen and paper in hand
Transcending this realm,
To take a single strand of a dream
And from it weave my own reality.

How marvelous it would be
If both versions were somehow
Two components of the same possibility.

For many years now I have waited,
And at last the time has come,
To accept the challenge
To which Life has invited me
And play the hand I have been dealt,
Placing my faith in hope of these visions
As I break from that which I have always known,
Free myself from the darkness of my past,
And set out on my own.

Perhaps the hardest part
Of starting this journey
is saying farewell
To the ones I love the most.
But as time has gone on,
My dread of goodbyes
Has begun to dissipate-
Much like wisps of smoke into still air-
Ever since I realized
That despite any span of silence,
Or any distance that separates us,



Homeward Bound at Last (continued)

I can never truly lose them-
For I will always return to them.
And in the times
That I am far away,
I will see them
In everything beautiful-
In every kindness
And in every wonder.

And when they have left this place,
When we are no longer
On this earth together,
I will hold the memory of them
forever in my heart.

For the inscriptions we have made
Upon the souls we have touched
Cannot be worn away by time.
And even in death,
Perhaps there is some hope of
A form of togetherness
In the inevitable nothingness
That lays beyond the mortal coil.

After I say my last farewell
And as the first light breaks over the world,
I find myself riding along this lonely, winding highway,
Seizing the reins of fate
To embark on a spectacular adventure,
To find the way to my true home.

Sharon Garoutte



I Miss Her More

I really, really do – now that I know
it's some kind of competition. I drive
longer, lonelier highways, am so forlorn

I weave farther across the centerline.
I definitely have deeper, sadder cries,
and not from smoke in my eyes.

I truly suffer alone in quieter silence,
can't ever hope to transcend the loss –
just ask my boss. I swear I feel

left out twice or three times as much,
even have notarized papers to say
my broken heart breaks afresh

every day. I miss her so much,
let me invite you to help me forget—
say, a drink at my place to begin.

Tim Pilgrim



Buddha Incense Statue (Alexis)



I Stand in the Silence

Like pen to paper you, are indelibly written upon my heart

Come closer

I invite you to stand witness to my life

I transcend my smoke laden thoughts

Not wanting to break from this moment

Entering into a realm of joy

Within the silence

My heart races with intensity

Weaving through the emotional highway of DNA

Looking through the eyes of innocence

Nothing left to see but a heart of passion and love

I stand, I witness, I know who you are.

Jana Koshinz



Invitation to Begin

He pointed to the hillside,
said, “that’s nice to see,”
and I was flooded by
its animalism—
hunched brown back,
silence that weaves into
tracks. Grass. Mat of hair
blind over the highway.
I knew I would miss
this break of land from sky
we left. Even in summer smoke.
He said he could
smell the labor
before it began,
like last time with your brother.
How ordinary.
How transcendently basic—like the
leafed-out plum tree
thirsty in silence.
Like salt and paper.

Kate Di Nitto



The Invitation

Elders gather to smoke and weave
in silence they know what remains of memory.
What's left exists only on paper.
In a break from the past,
a highway invites you to transcend.

Fredrick Dent



The Jury is Out (*March 25, 2018*)

While some break with the president,
his lawyers paper over his indiscretions.

The first lady maintains her silence,
while Kim Jong-un invites talks
on nuclear disarmament.

It's unknown whether the leaders
can transcend past history
and weave together a workable treaty.

Perhaps the invitation is a smoke screen
and we'll be left with both leaders shouting
"My way or the highway."

Judy Teresa



Late

Chimney smoke weaves the night.

Ice breaks beneath my feet.

Down the street the paper blows.

The silence of the highway invites me.

What is left?

How does one transcend what one knows?

Lloyd Blakely



Red Balloon (Paul Klee, 1922)



Letter to my Grandson

Go peacefully amid the warp and the weave
There is peace in silence but there are times you must speak
And then sometimes you have to run
But you'll have friends in low places.

Respect another's pride but avoid narcissists
They are vexations to the spirit.
If you compare yourself with others
Remember that not all wealth is earned.

Beware of abusers, some with paper and pen.
When investigating always follow the money.
Consider that two wrongs do not make a right
But that three lefts always do.

Be cyclical about Love
For on the highway of passion and broken hearts
It is as perennial as the shoulder
Be the guy on the bike.

Do not distress yourself with anxiety
Have a kumquat. Shinrin yoku.
I have yet to surrender the things of youth myself
So invite me to share your toys.



Letter to my Grandson (continued)

Bend but do not break. Like smoke
You can transcend ceilings
You are not stone but water
Tastier, communal, and stronger.

Know God. Learn your knots.
You are a child of the universe
No less than the bees and the blooms
You have a right to beer.

Scott Blume



Life's Highway

A paper is the indicator
Of your life highway

It is an invite
To legitimacy

Where people will assume they
Know your literate abilities

With this piece
It is said you will transcend

Attain a better world
What everyone dreams for

As you weave through
Those that are left in silence

The smoke becomes visible
Their validation is nowhere near

As they work extensively
Without break

You can only hope their life efforts
Will reach eternal peace

Alan Alatorre-Barajas



Massive Fire Engulfs Nursing Home

Philadelphia Inquirer, November 17, 2017

A sense of rupture, of leaking heat
a movement towards a primal break

the weave of breath and bone at stake
the ranker smells of human meat

invite what's left of papery thought
down highways urgently unsought.

One wish transcends the stunning smoke:
to know the heartseed of the yolk.

But silence wraps their closing query
while minds burn out in random glory.

Eugenie Simpson



Median

I know the paper highway
Invites a break from silence.

Weaving from left to right
Maybe transcends
Maybe smokes
That solid yellow line.

Amanda Hoppe



No Paper

In this sacred way
We come together to pray
On this very ground
Our ancestors transcended
To the place of Spirits
This pipe we smoke
These songs we sing
To invite them here
Because the Great Hoop
Is something time cannot break
We weave our prayers
Into this Sacred place
That this land belongs to us
The people that came before
And the people who are left
The government has their paper
Claiming what is not theirs
We know their papers
Their lies are loud
Our proud protest is silenced
The highway of progress
Digs up our Grandfathers
Our Grandmothers weep
Pushed out of Standing Rock
Because we had no paper...

Shawndra Seburn



Not a Poet

I've told them more than once that a poet I am not.
They choose not to listen and invite me to give it a shot.

Last time I was lucky that inspiration hit.
This time I've got no clue how to make the words all fit.

I'd rather die and be taken away inside a long black hearse,
Than weave these words into some kind of coherent verse.

Writing another poem feels like a real bad joke.
The gears inside my head stop and my ears begin to smoke.

I put my pen to paper, trying to come up with a plot.
Instead I take a left onto the highway of lost thought.

In silence I get up and leave to take a bitter walk.
No matter what I try, I can't break this writer's block.

With everything I think of, nothing seems to fit.
I know that I can't do it, I'm just a counterfeit.

They say, "Put your soul in it and feel yourself transcend."
But I'd much prefer to just be done and make this poem end.

Cameron Gridley



Ode to Kumquat

At the fingertip of laborious hands tugged, taken, detached.
You break away from robust florescent leaves and firm stems.
Left behind are roots of wisdom weaving under secure ground.
Honorable South Asia, India, Japan, Taiwan, and Philippines.
Ancient knowledge flourished in golden orange hydrogen skin.
Inviting all who seek nourishment transcending into markets.
No papers needed to cross highways and the silent mountains.
Vivid, innocent from dark smoke and fire of the border wars.

Betty Anzaldúa



On Exploring Ephemeral Spring

There is anything but silence in this forest
It thrills with the sense that innocence doesn't
disappear entirely, forever
It fragments into
found & forgotten

Pathways long since trodden
freshly coated in overgrowth
yet with breaks to provide
a highway for those who know
that year's new thoroughfares

Living invites us to transcend
and weave awkward neural trails
Past tense preciousness ends up
obscured by the traumas
and emotionally dense moments

Wrapped in tasks demanding notation
we adult ourselves into perfect piles
of paper, maybe made from the trees
that used to be here, where we were
An unavoidable pruning-growth pattern



On Exploring Ephemeral Spring (continued)

Even when you're singing low sounds
wound in woe too great to bear
take care not to cater fully
to the thought that everything past is gone
as if you only have what's left

The human powers of imagination & nostalgia
can blaze old trails anew
cut through the smoke haze of too many days ago
Revisit, rehash, revise, and divide
as to encourage an open mind and kind reflection

Elliott Cribbs



Our Violence

Your left hand weaves around me
like smoke dancing with the air.

I invite our silence;
the napalm reflected in your eyes
our gasoline tongues,
sing louder than God's discontent.

Silver and gold from the highway pass,
paper planes and the plastic diamonds float above and away
while we break each other's bones.
While we poison each others souls.
You know this game. We play it well.

Walking home transcends playing with fire.

Dominic Salas



Parting - A Villanelle

The avenue is dusted with fresh snow.
It's melting quickly from your sleeve
but I wish you didn't have to go.
Smoke-laden air's still lingering. You know
that makes it less than safe for you to leave
now while the avenue is dusted with fresh snow.
Ice is left in patches in the shade below
that place where highway overpasses weave.
I wish you didn't have to go!
This eerie silence might transcend my fear, though
storms close more roads than you'd believe
and the avenue's now covered with fresh snow.
The forecast in the paper says the wind will blow
much stronger than it did on New Year's Eve.
I wish you wouldn't have to go.
Your love could invite a rainbow.
I might break my promise not to intervene,
but the avenue's now choked with snow.
I wish you didn't have to go!

Linda Conroy



Pit of Darkness

Darkness sets in.
Like the sound of rain on my window,
It's all too familiar.
I allow it to weave around me.

I scream, but no one can hear.
Silence in the darkness,
Like a lonely highway.

I'm left squirming.
Trying to escape this hell.
It closes in further,
An invite for the end.

I know I need to fight,
I know I need help.
Darkness fills the pit,
Like smoke in a house.

A hand reaches down.
I grab hold and brace for it.
I transcend the darkness,
Nothing to thank

But the hand that gave me a chance.

Name Withheld



Prayer of Silence

Invitation extended...
intended...
to consent and surrender
to silence
Hearts interweave
as bonds of busyness
are broken
Experience
the ecstasy
of transcendent self

Come...
paper dreams
are shattered
and scattered
Along the highway
that leads nowhere
And left as smoke
to dissipate
among the denizen of desire

Rest...
in the stillness
that Love liberates
Allow your spiritual intent
to merge
into Almighty Oneness
And know
this place
of peace

Mary Mueller



The School Fish that Saved the Nation

What is there to know?
Life's highway invites courage
Paperback books blocks

Silence break open
Educated trees walk left
Wisdom transcends hate

Like weed smoke for rest
Cotton candy students weave
Peace for the future

Derrick Willis



Seventeen

The pristine paper crackled and popped,
 Sparkled and burst with flames.
 Smoke transcended the sky with jagged tendrils.
A woman, a mother, sat cross-legged,
 Invited her grief to break,
 Upon her brow. Her arms skyward.
The flames crackled and popped,
 Sparkled and burst with radiance
 As silence the only cry.
Wetness weaved from the mothers weary eyes.
 The highway down her cheeks knew no limit.
 She was left with naught but grief...and questions.
The blaze crackled and popped,
 Sparkled, burst, and then raged.
 Six minutes this fire burned.
Consuming everything near, nothing could stop,
 The hatred and anger caged up inside,
 Bled out quickly, used up and brittle.
The fire crackled and popped,
 Sparkled and burst with frailty.
 The mother wept, yet still the cinders smoldered.

Douglas Hamilton



Silence is Golden

Sebastien and Nicholas just finished a 4-20 break.

The smoke was still in the air

That left a Dutch treat sativa smell.

Business was slow at the skateboard shop

In Roche Harbor and they didn't know how to

Transcend the benefits to their customers.

The highway was busy with Friday traffic

While cars would weave in and out to pass.

The newspaper had a listing of activities

So they invited a friend to watch the film.

“Silence is Golden.”

John Hansen



The Sunrise is Certain

I step outside into the fresh summer air
Greeted by curls of cigarette smoke
Weaving their way up to the faraway clouds;
The haze left behind is meant for me.

I invite the silence of the site, love it,
Breaking free the gods from their cobwebs,
Trapped now in reams of research papers,
Powerless since their worshippers disappeared.

Their pyramids stand, moss-eaten, quiet, clean,
Where once the mighty priests stood knowing
Blood was the only way to continue living
In a world with uncertain sunrises.

Together, you and I walk the old stone paths,
Once thriving highways of vibrant life,
And I see the ghost children coming to greet you
As together you transcend the bonds of death.

Though I stand in two separate crowds I am alone —
Caught between worlds in understanding
Each and every person who disappeared from here
Is laughing again somewhere in this world.

Perhaps the sunrise still seems uncertain,
The only constant flesh sacrificed,
But here is the secret — we are but energy,
Never created, never destroyed, ever changing.

Katrina Ivers



Text on Paper

Text on paper, I invite your thoughts to wander
Smoke gathers, transcend into the clouds
Break left...silence! I hear the scratching of emotions
The highway of expressions penetrating through the weave
I know...I know...let me in.

Know my silence, I slowly break
The smoke is heavy, I weave in circles
I'm left to wander completely unaware
Liquid paper, an invite to stay
Lonely highway, transcend me away

Pa'e Rista



Monument Pass - Road to Monument Valley
(Daniel Newcombe, 2009)



This Mortal Coil

The fabric of life
is little better than paper;
a tight, strong weave
that is unforgiving if improperly handled,
and becomes brittle with age.

When we are young,
we're often hoping to be part of the "In" crowd.
As we age a little,
we're searching for an invite
to join the "Next Big Thing".
But once the rush is over,
the dust settles,
and the smoke clears from the fire that mostly wasn't,
that same excitement rings hollow
in the silence of the devastation that follows.

As we gain a little experience,
we search for more inspiring things,
a chance to break the cycle of cynicism that is rampant
on the highway of life,
an opportunity to transcend the bonds of this mortal coil,
because we realize something we've always known;
no one gets out of this alive,
so *Now*
is the time to make the best of what time we have left.

Scarlett Grey



This Present Distress

(with thanks to Abraham Lincoln)

One of her glasses breaks on my floor.
Night-colored shards
Recall my time of keening silence, a grief
“beyond what is common in such cases.”

Others keep fading down the highway,
smoke left drifting in the sky.
Absurd tracks weave across the concrete,
but I “have learned to ever expect it.”

Transcendent impressions committed to paper
invite us to master this gospel of loss:
Time changes pain to “a sad sweet feeling”
“of a purer, and holier sort.”

“I have had experience enough
to know what I say;
and you need only to believe it,
to feel better at once.”

H.C. Williams

Quotes from:

Lincoln, Abraham. “Letter to Fanny McCullough.” 23 Dec. 1862. Abraham Lincoln Online, 2018, <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/mccull.htm>.



Transcending Silence

Silence transcends the paper highway.
Weaving smoke, breaking what's left,
Know you don't need an invite!

Diana Swan



Transcending the Flames

The fire started after midnight.
An old laundry machine, front-load dryer,
burnt metal at the back.
"Guess it needed to be replaced,"
the landlord would say, many days later.

"It's the smoke," she mutters, as the smell weaves
into a dream. She had stopped at one glass of wine,
put in a load of laundry, switched it over to
the dryer, just before collapsing into bed.
First silence, then movement, to her left.

"Hub?" Leon's voice, mouth sticky with sleep.
"Is it coming from the highway?" he asks,
somehow flashing to last week's headline
Truck Breaks Down on Highway 1
read the free East Van paper, still collecting
dust on their kitchen table.

But this was different, this – FIRE!
Suddenly, they are up, sensing the urgency,
rushing into the girls' room. Each one grabs a child,
throats and eyes burning. They race outside now



to air, to sidewalk, to safety, barefoot on cold cement,
facing the unknown with bleary eyes,
audible gasps, molten ash.

Leon reaches inside the front pocket of his coat,
fingers the car keys, grips the cell phone.
It would be weeks before they'd marvel
that he thought to grab the jacket
before fleeing the house.
His shaking hand presses buttons on the phone:
green for Talk, then 9-1-1.

"Our house," he says when someone finally answers,
his voice hollow in shock, *"a fire at home."*
He nods when the voice tells him his own address,
confirming. *"That's right,"* his voice quivering now,
"I have my keys, my family, yes, we are all outside."
Deep inside the phone, the voice states:
"Fire trucks are on their way. Get to safety."

Leon faces her, mouth twisted. He points west.
"Go to Sarah's," he says, *"I'll come soon. Go now."*
He dangles the car keys. Proof of something
that exists. Sirens sound in the distance.



She walks now with thick legs, a heavy chest,
each daughter tucked under a protective
mama wing. Legs keep moving them forward,
westward, in footless pajamas, a trio of disbelief.
They cross two streets, forgetting
to look both ways, arrive on their friend's doorstep.
She pounds on the red door, a minute before Sarah
is standing there. That's when she starts
to shake, gasps for air. "*All our things,*" she's barely
audible. "*Flames, a fire. Everything gone.*"

They are invited in, told to sit, brought blankets,
brought tea. Someone thinks to turn on soothing
music. Luckily no one decides to light a candle.
Leon will arrive later, forest green jacket still on.

He will huddle with his family, join in the weeping.
He won't mention the extent of what he saw.
It will be hours before anyone sleeps again,
months before they will stop waking, always right
around midnight. Always with a start,
searching the air for signs of fire.

JS Nabani



Trumpery

I invite you to consider
The truth about deception.
What do you know about it?
Ah, can you say you
really know anything?
I will tell you about
Smoke and mirrors.
And who you going to believe,
Me or your lying eyes?
My way or the Highway!
Now I've left the impression
that I can be trusted. Only I.
Only, I do break trust (and my word).
But I can buy silence
And a silent lie is a trifle.
And my agreements aren't worth
the paper they're written on.
But the newspapers are fake fake fake!
Yes, it's a tangled web we weave
When first we practice to deceive,
But then one gets good at it.
To transcend common
Poppycock and twaddle,
Just bring all the bluster
You can muster.
And now you know the
Deception about the truth.

Sally Sheedy



Tyrant of My Dreams

Darkness falls through unnerving silence,
tangled with low hanging smoke.
Paper ramparts found in sinister disrepair
weave highways for the abandoned.
Black embroidered fragments
transcend confused and undulating shadows.
A fog of twisted misery break memories left in haste.
Storm clouds gather and invite barbs of endless disruption.
Lazy beams of illumination know this murky abode.
Always dismal, always cold.

Jarid Corbitt



Untitled

Transcend the highway

Weave your way through the paper maze

Break through the smoke of reality

Know the silence that invites you

No sorrow for what is left behind

kathi



Graffiti Street Art - Puerto de Ciudadela
(Max Pixel)



Untitled

“I want to see it all,”
but she can’t hear me
with her head out the window, sharp wisps
of wind weave across her ears.

Raven locks and delicate fingers ebb
In abandon

she darts each eye left,
right, tear-assing two ways
over strips of nameless U.S. highways wide
as their rule,
made her think of ditching class and drive-thrus
in high school –

Portrait of the artist as a young
woman, set against some transcendent landscape
of smoke bluffs and fur tufts,

enough was never enough, she said,
until I met you, she said,
I want you to know that.

A pail of tin, full of frigid water
Invites a hiss then,
Muted screams
of a campfire clutching
to its last breath –
she breaks a silence thin as paper,
hovering over us
with no relation to death.

Dante Tolomei



Vanishing Point

The nighttime silence
Left this spring.
The frogs outside
My window weave
Their chirping invite
To live out loud
Another year.
I transcend the tug
And pull of the common
Smoke break.
Instead I reach
For my 80-page
Steno ruled paper pad
To jot down thoughts
And notations.
Knowing my ballpoint
Pen must travel
With urgency
On this highway
Where ideas are often
Discarded or left
Behind on the daily.

Steeb Russell



What You See and Get

Break me down in two single beams
like light on a highway at night
parallel until disrupted

scatter me amongst the paper
and dust smell of a library—
lost or stolen, who knows

bind my spine with string and glue
that decaying smells sweet
but loses its fortitude

while I try to weave myself anew
with thoughts and what is left
of words between us.

What a smoking gun is silence these days—
such a complicit invitation to settle.

Transcend what you assume.
Seek out the monstrous.
Weave it in.
So will I.

Alissa DeLaFuente



What's Life

Life is a funny, but complicated thing,
filled with great memories but also bad moments.

Left and right as it freely weaves,
waiting for us to grab and own it.

Like smoke caught in the wind, as it blows in every way.

Life is fragile, life can break.

Invite silence to leave, and see the light of day,
like a piece of paper, it's our own canvas to fill and play.

We are the ones who know what is best for us.
Crazy as a highway at times—but it works for us.
We transcend at the end for ultimate happiness,
with us in control, we live simply blessed.

Louis Gutierrez



Wildfires

Summer 2017

I don't need to read the paper
to know wildfires are burning,
casting a ghastly pallor over
the landscape. I avoid highways,
realize they funnel exhaust
from the in and out weave
of vehicles hurtling north toward
British Columbia wildfires or south
toward the Columbia River Gorge
wildfire and beyond to California
wildfires. I walk the woods for silence
and a break from particulates and smoke.
Thin layers of ash coat each leaf.
How can we transcend longer
fire seasons, invite the federal
government to rejoin global efforts
to mitigate climate change?
The haze is so thick I'm left
thinking our world is on fire. It is.

Andrew Shattuck McBride



Writer's Block

Paper invites pen to break the silence
The well worn highway of thought weaves leftward
In the distance the smoke of inspiration
Curls skyward transcending what's already known

Helen H-S



Writer's Journey

Invite the pen to paper,
Transcend the social smoke.

Silence is all that's left--

Weave into the highway,
Know, you cannot break.

Melissa Talbot

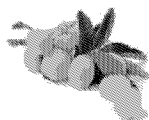


Written On My Skin

I watched you weave yourself into me
transcending the boundaries of my fragile heart
and writing your name across my skin
as though I were a piece of paper
destined to hold the thoughts, stories, and secrets of the world.
You were my secret
one I shared with nobody
because I knew it would only invite trouble.
If things went up in smoke
if you got up and left in the middle of the night
heading for the highway,
leaving me in heartbreak
they would glue themselves to my side
trying to cheer me up and help me move on.
They would never leave me alone
to writhe and scream as I reminded myself
how to live without you.
The definition of 'silence' would be forgotten
in their presence.
And so I figured it better that nobody else know.
You're still my secret
even after all this time
though we don't talk anymore.
You never left
you simply weren't mine.
But you're still a part of me
a part of me I'm not sure I'll ever be able to let go.
You're woven into me after all
and your name is still written on my skin.

Jillian Johnson

Contributors



CONTRIBUTORS

Alana: is a current student at WCC, soon to graduate and pursue an English degree. She enjoys studying languages, cultures, and communications. Her favorite class at WCC has been Intro to Humanities. She also works in the WCC Writing Center.

Alan Alatorra-Barajas: is a recent graduate from Western Washington University, with a Bachelor's in Human Services. He enjoys writing to help create meaning and believes poetry is an important platform for sending a message that is relatable to the reader about injustices in the world.

Betty Anzaldúa: is a graduate student at WWU in the Adult Higher Education Program. She has a Bachelor's in American Culture Studies and a Minor in TESOL. As an adult learner she has taken creative writing, poetry/imagination writing, and art memory dream courses.

Caroline Balzer: has settled into the rhythm of Bellingham life and is still learning to relax and go with the flow.

Ellen Barton: is dedicated to improving bicycle friendliness in our Bellingham area. She works on healthcare workforce development for the Area Health Education Center for Western Washington, a program at WCC. A member of the Bellingham Chamber Chorale and the Whatcom Chorale, her interest in poetry developed through music.

Lloyd Blakely: has been teaching art at WCC since 1983. He has been painting and exhibiting his art his entire life. Though he is not a writer or poet, he plays various stringed instruments and occasionally writes songs.

Scott Blume: is a librarian celebrating a decade at the WCC library and a first grandchild.

Tessa Chau: is a current student at WCC who came to the U.S. from Hong Kong to study, and aspires to pursue a degree in psychology. Whatcom has provided a precious opportunity to explore that dream. She is thankful to have her friends' support on her journey.

Sue Cole: has worked in Whatcom's Institutional and Advancement Department for two years and has been a WCC trustee for eleven years.

Linda Conroy: is a retired social worker who believes that poetry serves to honor the complexity and simplicity of human nature. She is a host for the Village Books poetry groups.

Jarid Corbitt: is a graduate and current employee of WCC.

Elliott Cribbs: is a former student at WCC. He tends to think imagination is just as important as knowledge.

Fredrick Dent: is an anthropologist and filmmaker, a divergent thinker, a solo operator, and a cat person. "So far," he says, "I have survived all my adventures."

Alissa DeLaFuente: earned her BA in English and Creative Writing from the University of Arizona and her MFA in Fiction from Western Washington University. You can find her most recent publication in *Gold Man Review*. She writes fiction, nonfiction, and occasionally poetry.

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 roles since 2015, enjoying Whatcom's diverse students above all else. She recently welcomed a new baby boy into her life.

Marian Exall: was born and raised in England, lived in France and Belgium before coming to the U.S. and moved to Bellingham after a career as an employment lawyer in Atlanta, Georgia. She has a cabin in the Methow Valley to which she eagerly returns each spring.

Sharon Garoutte: is a current student at WCC who will graduate this spring. In addition to her studies, she is also working on a short novel.

Zach Geer: is a current WCC student who wrote stories around the vocabulary words of his 8th Grade Language Arts class. Wonderfully, a 3 x 3 inch piece of paper compelled him to write poetry again.

Scarlett Grey: is a former WCC student.

Cameron Gridley: is an Army vet, and both a former student and current employee of WCC.

Louis Gutierrez: is a current student at WCC, twenty-seven years old and a father who enjoys poetry, sports, school, pasta, and watching *The Office*. A military veteran, he works at the college's Veteran's Service Office. After graduating he will pursue a Bachelor's in Human Services.

Jay Hahn-Steichen: is a CIS instructor at WCC and has had a life-long fascination with words, literature, and language. The Kumquat Poetry Challenge is a first opportunity for him to show his interest and modicum of skill publicly.

Douglas Hamilton: is a Financial Aid Counselor at Western Washington University. He spent eight years in the U.S. Army, did a stint in Iraq and during his downtime fell in love with poetry and the written word.

John Hansen: holds a degree in display design from Spokane Falls Community College and is on the custodial staff at WCC.

Amanda Hoppe: is an instructor at WCC who likes monsters, long walks on the beach, and bad puns.

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

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

Katrina Ivers: is a WCC alumnus who spent four years as a contracting specialist in the USAF and is now an Anthropology student at the University of Wyoming. Mr. Paul Schroeder, a former Anthropology instructor at WCC, was her favorite teacher.

Jillian Johnsen: is a current student at WCC who plans to transfer to WWU next year to pursue a degree in Journalism. She loves music and writing poetry.

kathi: likes to write poetry and short stories. She likes kayaking and spending time with her adopted grandkids. Walking, gardening and playing pool are other interests.

Jana Koshinz: is a Human Resources Consultant at WCC. She enjoys working in HR, working on her yard, and working on school. She is going to spend the next year working on relaxing.

M. Kumar: is a chemical engineer and a retired executive from British Petroleum who, for the past fifteen years, has taught Economics and Management at WCC and WWU. His passion is music: he plays guitar and sings and is currently learning to Salsa dance.

Linda Q. Lambert: the WCC library director from 2000 to 2014, she has contributed to two Red Wheelbarrow Writers anthologies, *Memory Into Memoir* (2016) and *So Much Depends Upon...* (Sept. 2018). She enjoys membership in Penultimate, a critique group that improves her current projects: memoir, poetry, and blog posts (lindaqlambert.com).

Andrew Shattuck McBride: his poem “I Was Happy as an Ant” was a semi-finalist for the 2017 Crab Creek Review Poetry Prize. His work appears in *Crab Creek Review*, *Rise Up Review*, *Cirque: A Literary Journal for the North Pacific Rim*, and *Clover, A Literary Rag*. As a freelance editor, he edits novels, memoirs, and poetry collections.

Mary Mueller: is an occasional student at WCC. Retired for almost six years, she finds there is always something new to learn. She is a former special education teacher who takes great joy in word crafting and writing poetry.

Name Withheld: is a current student at WCC and a snowboard instructor working toward a degree in environmental science. His motivation in submitting his poem “Efficiency” was to try to make a sensible haiku using all 10 of the required words.

Name Withheld: graduated from WCC in 2017 and has worked in the Writing Center for the past two years. He is working toward becoming an English teacher and plans to attend Western Washington University starting Fall 2018. His poem is “Pit of Darkness”.

JS Nahani: was raised in Florida and traveled many roads before finding herself most at home in Bellingham nearly two years ago. She hopes to spread the belief that expression is transformation through writing poetry, facilitating groups, and offering support services through her independent business of Creative Insights.

Rem Naughton: is a current WCC student finishing up her AST this summer and plans to transfer into Western’s Behavioral Neuroscience program. She is passionate about music and has written several novels along with poetry and songs.

Timothy Pilgrim: is a retired teacher and Pacific Northwest poet. His work can be found at www.timothypilgrim.org.

Pa’e Rista: works as a Payroll and Benefits Coordinator at WCC.

Steeb Russell: is a current fulltime student and on the home stretch of graduating at the end of spring quarter from the Visual Communications Program at WCC. He is a parent, a spouse, and does a daily drawing practice and posts his daily drawings to his instagram account.

Jennie Sabine: was born and raised in Everett, WA. She has been in Higher Ed for almost 24 years. She shares her spare time with her husband Michael and their two dogs, Elle & Charlie. She enjoys visiting with her family, gardening, cross-stitching and reading.

Dominic Salas: is a current student at WCC, a lighting designer, and a tutor in the Writing Center. He enjoys theatre and reading plays, science fiction, listening to podcasts, and the Caffe Adagio.

Harvey Schwartz: learned Americana growing up on the east coast and unlearned it at Woodstock, a hippie commune, and hitchhiking. A chiropractic career offered another perspective. He’s been published in *The Sun*, *Clover*, *Whatcom Writes*, and *Jeopardy* among others. Bellingham Repertory Dance and Snowdance Film Festival have featured his work.

Betty Scott: taught at WCC for fourteen years. Her book *Central Heating: Poems that Celebrate Love, Loss and Planet Earth* will be published by Cave Moon Press this summer. She writes poetry and memoirs and co-hosts a weekly musician's open mic that also features local writers.

Shawndra Seburn: is a current student at WCC, is long-time fan of poetry, is married and has two grown sons. She is exploring native culture and has plans to continue bringing awareness to the desecration of our environment.

Sally Sheedy: is a systems librarian at WCC, plays the fiddle, and loves contra dancing.

Eugenie Simpson: lives and works in Bellingham where she enjoys the good company of many writers and poets. Her themes circle around embodiment, mortality and relationship. Her work has appeared in *Cold Drill*, *Psychopoetica*, *Billie Murray Denny Poetry Contest Winners Anthology* and *Cirque*.

Guy Smith: is a Communication Studies instructor and serves as the Social Sciences and Business Division Chair at WCC. He aspires to be lying on a black-sand beach in Hawaii under a protective blanket of dogs while reading from an ever-growing pile of books.

Brett Straka: is the technical services manager for the Whatcom Community College Library. He is a Bellingham native and trained archivist, who enjoys history, photography, and the local trails.

Barbara Stromme: has lived in Whatcom County all her life and worked on and off as a hairdresser since 1970. Retired, she enjoys quilting, gardening, writing and her family.

Diana Swan: is a current student at WCC and loves Bellingham's 40 shades of gray and 80 shades of green.

Melissa Talbot: is the Division Coordinator for the Social Sciences and Business Department at WCC.

Ara Taylor: taught creative writing through WCC's Community Education Program for many years and is a former book critic. She manages the textbook program for the WCC Library.

Judy Teresa: is a retired special education teacher. *Flight Connections*, her first book, was published in spring 2017. In her memoir-in-progress, she is framing a “cathedral of learning” that critiques her educational experiences. Her poems and essays have appeared in local publications.

Dante Tolomei: is a current student at WCC and lives on Lummi Island with his girlfriend Sarah and their dog, Ed.

Priscilla Vaughn: is a current student at WCC and an aspiring linguist with a passion for Russian literature and birds. She is twenty-five years old and moved to Bellingham in late 2015.

Carol Wilkinson: is a Psychology Instructor at WCC. She likes to write poetry only under certain conditions. Opt IN.

H. C. Williams: is a librarian at WCC. Come see her if you want to know more about Abraham Lincoln, grief, highways, or any other topic.

Derrick Willis: is a current WCC student. He is quiet, compassionate, and shies away from confrontation. He is passionate about justice and fights for the poor with his energy and finances.



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