



The
Noisy Water
Review
2003-2004

Noisy Water Review

Whatcom Community College
2003-2004

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You may view a selection of work by following the links from this address:
<http://faculty.whatcom.ctc.edu/jklausma/>

Submissions of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and artwork are welcome from all current WCC students from September through May. Electronic submissions only. Include name, address, phone, and student number and send to jklausma@whatcom.ctc.edu. Write "Noisy Water Submission" in the subject line.

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Preface

Welcome to the fourth edition of *The Noisy Water Review*, the anthology of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and artwork by students at Whatcom Community College.

This year, we again have a wide variety of imaginative work, from "flash fiction" (a short story told in only 101 words) to lyric poetry and creative nonfiction. The themes are as widely varied, from pre-marital strife to a romantic recollection of a life lived in love with the sea.

All in all, the work speaks of the creativity and imagination of Whatcom students, a dream-like power that lingers beneath the exceedingly rushed surface that marks the lives of students often juggling school, work, family, and personal needs. Perhaps these works are a kind of political act, as our epigraph from Sherman Alexie suggests: as acts of the imagination, they give real-world currency to our dreams and hopes.

We're pleased to be able to present these to you.
Enjoy!

*Jeffrey Klausman
Donna Rushing
June 2004*

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Imagination is the politics
of dreams; imagination turns
every word into a bottle rocket.

Sherman Alexie

John Dahl

I'm Driving

I'm driving my daughter to ballet class. We are late, and it is raining. She is dressed in her pink leotard. My Jeep races through the dark tunnel. My daughter is singing, she is never quiet. I see the corner too late, or do I take it too early? Either way I can't take the turn. The glass danced with us into the sky. Now I'm surrounded by other people in black. It is still raining, it hasn't stopped. My daughter is already here, but she is silent. I get down on my knees and tell her I won't be late.

Our Park

I clasp the bottle in my hand and begin to remember what I used to have before I brought it here. Today is our anniversary; we used to play here when we were children. We would come back every year, and play like we still were. Sitting in the tire swing I begin to spin, and spin, I grin a little because it was the same feeling I used to get when she was around. Stopping the swing with my feet I climb out of the center and begin to stumble over the big toy.

The slide spirals down to where I stand now. Five years ago we stood up at the top of that yellow and red slide, and placed a ring on her finger. We slid down together and became what we always knew we would be. Since then I have never been able to make it back up there. The slide is too steep, and it doesn't allow for climbing once you have slid down. The stairs too many to climb and I don't have the will power to climb them anyways. Still a little dizzy I see the teeter totter and make my way over.

We never could get enough of this toy. It was here that we sat for our first wedding anniversary. I had a bottle of wine and a loaf of bread; we sat and ate the bread. Up and down, up and down, just like any relationship, but I never wanted off. We sat on the seat and talked for hours; it was then when she told me that she needed some time away from me.

"I want to be alone Joe."

My side hit the ground as if to keep her suspended into the air forever...perfect. I let her down when she told me that alone meant to be with someone else. She got off of the teeter-totter and left me with the bottle of wine.

We both came back to the park a year later, but the tire swing wasn't there to make me dizzy. Then we

tried to see if we could still fit in the slide but it had gotten too small to fit the both of us. Next we went sat on the teeter totter, at least we could still do that.

"I still love you Joe," the words didn't sound the same as before, it didn't have the same pitch or, or was it tone?

However, this time she was too heavy to keep up in the air forever, and I didn't want to remember the time when I was strong enough to keep her there. I just wished I could forget the time she got off. All these memories are starting to make me queasy, I wish they would just close this park. That way I wouldn't have to keep coming here.

Slam!

Stepping into my car I open it once more to leave a four year old bottle of wine in the parking lot.

Birds In The Fall

With dark ice-cream on his face he asked,
"Where are they going?"
His dark-bearded-faced counterpart replied,
"South, for the winter."
Pretending to understand, the
rocky-road faced child nodded.
"Where is south?"
"Where it is warmer all the time."
With his kindergarten logic he asked,
"How do they know that?"
"They just know,"
he said as he wiped the chocolate of
his son's face.
"Ok," he said, accepting his father's explanation.
"Hurry up. We're late for church."
Perplexed, yet again he asked,
"Why are we going there?"
Slightly annoyed the father answered,
"Just because we are."
His confusion turned to understanding, and he said,
"Is it warmer there?"

Jemma Everyhope

Half Full

A glass of water, perfectly round, perfectly clear
sat upon the vinyl counter, spreading patterns
of light, patterns of light, light across
the ripples and scratches there. I only wanted
tea. I only wanted chamomile tea, to salve
and to comfort me. I reached up, and
somehow, a difference of spirits arose
between that glass and me, and it was
the one to fall. It fell.
I was kneeling, holding water
in my palms, and no matter the shift
of my hands to hold, clarity escaped me
and small lucid drops were for a moment, free.
I was kneeling, upon the kitchen matt, darkly wet.
I was kneeling, amongst the shards of glass,
traces of water in my palms. I did not know
why I had leapt for the water
and not the glass.

Season Finale

I let you lean against me, resting your head on my
shoulder
your lips on my collarbone, as if it once was.
You thought I wouldn't notice, and I let you
think with silence and supposition.
You assuaged your guilt. It was like forgiveness
but words between us had never meant more than
paper.
I let you; yet, when you left
I could feel an imprint of warmth on me
empty echo of was, was no more.
I felt like I had given a gift
and you had left the box behind.

Jennifer Forslof

Lessons from Fruit

I watched her searching through the pile
tossing aside the imperfect pears
as if pressing a bruise against her lips
would cause her pain.

She collected them in a small bag
and suffocated their aroma
wrapped in plastic . . . just like her.

I stood for a while and admired them.
A plethora of imperfect pears waiting to be chosen
inspected for their flaws and left to rot, unwanted.
Until all untainted had been removed,
until these defective fruits were the only choice
remaining.
Then ~ within those remaining,
the most perfect of the imperfect would be selected,
leaving the rest to continue to decay from the inside
out.

Too many bruised and bleeding lay within my reach.
My hand grazed one and its skin moved beneath my
fingertips.
Having been tossed aside so often, it was bruised so
deep
it nearly melted into my hand when I touched it.

From the front, it appeared perfect..
Red and beautiful, full of promise.
But upon further inspection - it bore a cut so deep,
I was sure it had been completely drained
of any life, it once had held within.

I cradled it tenderly, as it molded itself into the palm of
my hand
as if it were trying desperately to feel a part of
something.

The man next to me, searching for an unblemished
melon,
offered me one of the perfect pears he had found
and reminded me that "too soft on the inside"
meant it was on its way to rotting
and I should really consider choosing one with a
tougher exterior.

I thanked him for his concern, then tucked my bruised
pear
up against my chest as I left the fruit stand
cradling it as if it were a hurt child,
begging to have its cut healed with a kiss....

Once home, I held it under the warm water
trying to wash away the filth of fingers
that had touched it, inspected it and tossed it aside
the ones responsible for the cuts and bruises
it now bore to the core

I pulled the label off ~
it tore the skin away to reveal the flesh below...
Delicate, tender, and bleeding into my hand.

I had to stop and wonder,
if we took the time to remove each others labels
if anyone else would notice,
that we are all the same inside.

Delicate.
Tender
and bleeding.

Patrick Jones

Pelo Negro

Playing
In a black feathered forest,
Two little girls in pajamas and smiles,
Sit in wonder, brushing
A grandmother's hair.

Kisses and hugs
From hands so small and tangled,
Frozentogether
By a life huddled shivering in the cold,
Melted by such merry warmth
Whimsically skipping off
Her beautiful children.

Pablita
Roared love to her little cubs,
Licked sweetness into their pores,
Kissed smiles enough
To overflow their hearts,

Each visit would end
In a slumber party, such things should happen
In a place called home,
Two little girls
Blessed by pajamas and smiles.

El Capitan

Crusty
Nuggets and berries,
Making sugar sand on a pink ocean,
The milk coagulates.
All thanks
Be to the Captain.

Always a game of goodies on back,
Puzzles
So simply subtle in solving,
You let me play
Your colorful games.
You give me so much joy
My Captain.

Sweet pasty cornmeal
Marches slowly
Down
My
Throat.
My mouth
A roof with loose shingles,

Hanging.

Milk makes a run for it
Down
My
Chin.
They're looking for more
Of the Captain,
As I always am.

El Paciente

Let me fluff your pillow,
Help you die.
Let me hear your last Wisdom, your
Last breath.
Let me know how it was
Eighty years ago.
A Time not so different than my life
Now.

Let me see your eyes,
Hear them close
Once more.
You're not a bad guy, but you don't know.
So many questions
Come in the End.
What can I say?
You should have the
Answers.
Dignify your time,
Rapidly disappearing
By not wondering
Why.

You've had a hundred years
To find out what is Right.
Why be so unsure in your last spare
Minutes?
"My kids don't really love me; I've
Lived my own life."

You're no one
And nothing; a thought
Too late,
But sadness plays
The plentiful Jester.

So hope
You have lost your
mind if you fear
The end
Of your time.
Madness is always ready for those who forgot:
Beauty and Truth, Are
Gifted
Solely along the way.

Diana Kitching

Graphic Design

Lost in a sea of eloquence and design
Hyperion of Technicolor
Traveling through plotted line

Strict notations with exaggeration
Of mathematical restrictions
On physical artistic dedication

Beauty versus structure
Art versus logic
Stoic expression tincture

Held together with strength and integrity
A fragile delicacy of looks
To be mastered in sanctity

Enveloped in eloquent design
Without getting lost in the color
Outside the plotted line

David M. Laws

Natural History

Insect

Catching Montana grasshoppers is easy. There are millions of them and, though they are quick, little boys are quicker. My brother Bennie and I fill a Ball jar, holes punched in the lid, the red bug juice staining our hands like blood. Too young to fish, this bait will be our contribution. Our excitement about the trip translates into many broken and dismembered specimens, but Dad accepts our offering without comment.

Flower

Mom does not fish, but on Dad's rare day off, she brings her art supplies and sons to the flies, mosquitoes, and ticks, the ride there and back being the closest we will get to family time. Her art will occupy her day, as she baby-sits her sons and awaits her husband's return. She has found a brilliant red Indian Paintbrush for the subject of her next oil painting, and is setting up her easel. Bennie's shout panics her, and she knocks it over, destroying the flower.

Reptile

We park at the end of a rough dirt road, near the river, next to a cliff. Bennie, who climbs everything, is thirty feet up it before Dad gets his waders on. I want to follow, but, afraid of heights, I can only watch. Bennie slides nimbly along a shelf, steadily angling up, then stops. After several attempts to find handholds above, he jumps sideways onto a ledge that is already occupied. A rattlesnake clatters its maraca warning, and Bennie cries out. I hear the snake, and see my brother

trembling with fear. At Dad's order he holds still and stops crying.

Fish

Dad angrily relaces his boots. After sticking a rock shaped like a flattened grapefruit under his belt, he flies up the cliff like he's on fire. He chunks the rock just beyond the rattler, and when the snake strikes at it, he grabs Bennie's belt and yanks him off the ledge. Overbalanced, he makes a controlled fall, taking five giant steps down the face of the cliff, bearing his firstborn to safety. "Stay by the car!" he shouts at his sons. Bennie is still scared. Mom hugs him, wipes away his tears, and brushes his hair with her fingers. I watch my father. He puts on his waders, grabs his gear, and strides off into the wilderness. At that moment I realize he is not a man, but a god. We have trout for supper.

Kansas Mermaid

As a boy, Dan spent all his time looking at sailing magazines. He had no interest in boats with motors. He was in love with the wind on the water, wanting only a boat with spars and sails, and only weather and waves to move it. His parents, good Kansas farm folk, didn't know what to make of their son's obsession. Dan contrived his first sailboat out of a chunk of wood, two chopsticks, and a scrap of linen from his mother's sewing room. He sailed it endlessly on the cattle-watering reservoir his grandfather had built, by hand, during the Depression, years before Dan was born. The small sailboat could only run one way; its canvas was not capable of being trimmed or reefed, its beam not adjustable, its rudder fixed, giving it a single-mindedness that rivaled its maker. There could be only one or at most two sailings a day, since once the boat was launched Dan had to walk all the way around the reservoir to retrieve it.

When he was older, Dan saved chore money from milking and mowing, and sent away for an expensive model kit with a radio, and remote control rudder and sails. With tacking, coming about, and running against the wind added to his repertoire, navigation took on a new complexity. He could dispatch his boat to any point in the reservoir and bring it back. Grass began to grow again on some of the paths around the pond. Even when he left for Topeka to start school, Dan only wanted to talk about sailing, to the amazement of classmates and the consternation of faculty.

Geraldine finds him fascinating, knowing he's an explorer in spirit, not in flesh. Shortly after he graduated with his degree in agriculture, his parents died and left him the family farm. But he

sold the farm, and began his one great voyage. He took Geraldine with him, persuading her to elope from nursing school for a sail through the San Juan Islands on a rented sloop, and a Seattle city hall wedding in rented clothes. He doesn't mind that she has no passion for sailing, can't even swim. *She has her own interests*, he says, and that's fine with him. Her interests mostly consist of Dan and the two children she has borne him, although she does work part-time on call at the county hospital, and her garden produces most of their vegetables, the goods she cans sustaining them through the dreary Northwest winters.

Although Geraldine is by any standard plain and a bit plump, Dan thinks she is the most beautiful woman in the world, and, when she smiles at him, it's hard to disagree. He sings intricate sea chanteys he makes up himself, with her name woven through them, usually as a mermaid, a siren, or an island girl in a grass skirt, who (although neither of them have ever sailed farther from Seattle than Victoria) lures Dan the Savage Sailor Man to some tropical paradise. Somehow the sound of his songs is enough adventure for her, and for him, too. When he's not at work, in the stock room of a sailing tack shop near Golden Gardens, Dan fishes out of a small dory with an improvised mast and sail. He sometimes crews on the weekends, when his boss races the big company boat, a 50-foot single-masted schooner that almost always wins the Unlimited class. When he comes home, Geraldine bestows upon him a welcome worthy of Captain Cook, back from three years in the South Seas; he salutes her with his latest song, about sultry tropical islands, treacherous currents and reefs, pirates with plunder, and the perilously enchanting siren of Kansas who stole his heart.

Seasons

In Spring, the world begins anew
As flowers appear,
Far and near
And drape the earth in dew

Then summer arrives, heating
The world in a choking haze
And disguising the streets with waves

Then I feel my heartbeat restless beating
As Fall comes wildly to put nature to the test
And send wind harshly past trees bending

Then Winter comes to make amends
And put the world in a hushed white
Silence
Before the world begins again

I am affected by the dreams of a man,
who shared my blood, a hundred years ago,
wondering what intentions were behind his actions.
It seems a familiar feeling, something innate in me.
I struggle with fate, with words,
to define myself, my child, my life.
Making progress between resting and growing older,
that is never seen.

Matthew Roberts

Cave of the Lost

In final darkness,
you pressed a new wall
of air and light,
using what sight could
see beyond clouds,
crawling hollow steps
away from backs
turned monasterial
against flames
lighting passing shadows
echoing a dream.

And each flame,
would flutter and sway
toward a passing step,
where distilled thought
cures its own space,
smoldering into a rise
of coiling smoke
as chains fall heavily,
dragged and sifted
through an unknown
age of sand.

Loss repeats itself,
over silence carved
of stone, beyond a ceiling
of passing daylight,
where time is measured
by dissolving vapors,
becoming a consciousness
remembered: as beings,
(left to roam cold walls)
guard belief against reason,

dust against dust.

Now, in your memory,
a cave waits still
in the rainless score of light,
where an ancient fire burns.

~Matthew Roberts

(In response to Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" as
told by Joanne Munroe)

Sunset Over Stillaguamish

The Stilly glides through
fluvial sky, bending ripples
onto itself, colored red
almost for a moment,
then changing to field-gold.

Rises follow wending bends,
count seconds in between
imagining daylight
stays here always—
while dusk fades to a current,

where a sleeping river waits for
sea-run cutthroat—
to hold in water knee-deep
against the shadow side of rip-rap,
below the concrete plant.

How soon they leave
tails swift and weary,
like a candle flame
lighting currents to silt
as silent clouds drift to deposition.

When water rises,
tributaries will remember:
hollow summer pools,
of striders twitching
the surface in blue-moonlight.

Nothing left now
to call this day,
there is no name they know,
only what matters
is found in copulating hues

shedding sea-silver,
to become a sunset of an early fall.

Our Last Storm

There is a farm on the Palouse
where nobody lives but the wind,
sending blind
dust-devils across waves of barren
hills forgiving the cracked earth

for asking "How can a silo outlive
a family more than once?"
Then drought
came making everyday follow
the same thoughts of rain.

Even tumbleweeds grew scared,
shuttering the barn door to a vertical
crease of light
where an old international dreams
a field to drag its rusted tines.

Father wanted to stay here;
he knew each losing acre
by wrinkled touch,
sifted its dark soil with his fingers
until every grain scattered

downwind like a thermal carrying
mother's ashes glittering above,
while we prayed
for prisms of irrigation spray
to become a rising thunderhead.

That was our last storm together.
others would try to follow
in their way,
rolling over rain-shadows,
whispering in some familiar voice,

"Remember those rumbling years?"

Justine Stephens

A Full-Time Job

The vase shattered against the door behind
him.

"Get out!" she screamed.

He stood there, plastered, dirty work
clothes, staring. She grabbed the sink with both
hands and relaxed her neck, her tears fell, adding
to the dirty dishwasher.

"Twelve hour days!"

He dropped his arms. She turned and
looked at him between tangled pieces of unwashed
hair.

"Just once will you eat with your wife? Me,
the one you love, right?"

She looked down at the soaking dishes in
the grayish water from breakfast, hanging her
head. Her hair brushed the water.

"You are my other half, not theirs."

He inhaled and looked down, shaping his
pursed lips into a silent whistle.

The living room was vacuum stripes,
plumped pillows, a vacant love seat. The remotes
set, evenly spaced, on top of the TV in the corner.
The dining table was set for two, the silver lay next
to wine glasses.

"I miss you," she whispered, still looking at
the dirty dishes.

"I know. But we need the money."

"I'll work."

"You're pregnant."

"I—we need you more than they do. We're a
team."

"I'll try harder."

"We need *this*," she said, turning to face the table. "I love you."

"I'll try harder," he said.

Please . . .

Psst... you, you don't understand, do you?
I'm here, I'm always here...
waiting for you to invite me to your table.
You are the host, but I bring the life to the party.
I am the joy, the laughter,
I am your party.
Every time I wait for an invitation, pen in hand,
I'm eager to respond with my gratitude, but
you fail to remember me.
I was here before you and will wait until you're
gone.
Don't you see?
I am content, I am peace, I am prosperity. I am
life.
Listen . . . if you would only hear my call.

Melissa Terszakowec

Sheets of Powder

Sheets of powder swirling
Through the dark sky –
I come inside to find your glass
With ice still floating
As if you had just been sipping of it.

Was that today?
Was it only this morning
That I laid in your warmth –
Heard your heart beating –
Felt the breath of your whisper?

On this coldest day of yet
I cannot bear this frigidness –
Like a bubble in the center of an ice cube –
I am enclosed by the chill.

Am I Not?

Am I not right in front of you?
Do you not see me?
You research, seek, inquire
Everywhere –
Everywhere but here.

Here
I am.

Here
Within this silence
Waiting
Is there a fool?
Have I gone mad?

Here.

Noisy Water Review

*Whatcom: Where the waters are noisy
with the sounds of falls and frogs.
(Coastal Salish language)*