

Rumquat Challenge



2016

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.

2016

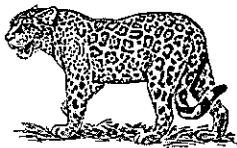
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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



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 2016 Challenge words:

hush kestrel leopard mercy million
nirvana seamstress sudden ultramarine zenith

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

Ron Leatherbarrow and Anna Wolff (WCC English faculty)

Mike Singletary (WCC Registrar)

Bob Winters (WCC Division Chair for Arts & Humanities)

Emma Islip, current WCC student and 1st place past Challenge winner.

In addition the library thanks the following artists who
performed at the Launch Event:

Melanie Sehman and Coral Marchant

Percussion & Cello

"Hush" (Tonia Ko, composer)

Alethea Alexander and her WCC Dance Department students.

Expressive movement of Challenge words

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 2016

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Poems / 2016



hush

kestrel

leopard

mercy

million

nirvana

seamstress

sudden

ultramarine

zenith



A Moment in Time

Does a leopard change his spots?
No – he shows no mercy
In the ultramarine, green hush
Of the lush underbrush.

Do birds of a feather flock together?
The kestrel swoops to join his mate.
The sun in its zenith breaks through
A million raindrops

Does a stitch in time save nine?
The seamstress pauses to drink her tea
A taste of nirvana
A sudden fulfillment
In an unfulfilling day

Caroline Balzer



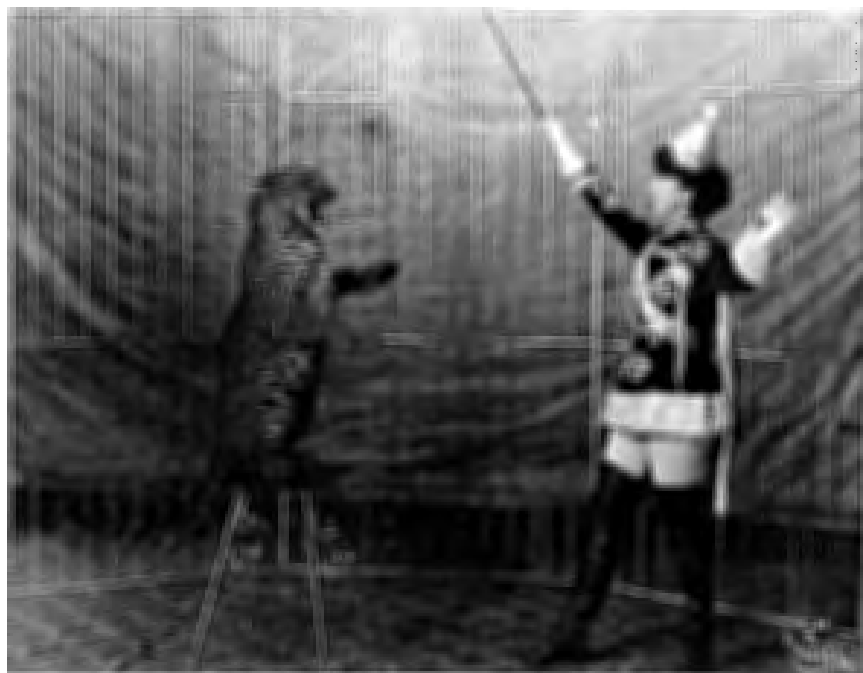
A Cautionary Tale

When placing a small leopard in one's arms
Use wisdom and be warned
any sudden move could have startling results!

Carrying a kestrel on your shoulder shows no mercy for the little falcon
who prefers looking around
for food on the ground
that zenith could frighten it away from its enforced perch!

Wiser to find Nirvana in the ultramarine night sky
abounding with the many layers of the Seamstress
who spins the millions of nature's patterns and hushed tones.

Dennis Barnes



Dolores Vallecita (1877-1925) Leopard Tamer



Art (v.)

Harold made me art.

He's an old art himself

Seamstress of batik banners

He arts by the millions.

I normally don't.

We were walking after the vigil

Suddenly he reached down and stole a rock

Outside a bank.

We drank coffee at the Black Drop.

He took a gold marker

And drew on the rock.

Swooping lines, kestrel flights,

Evocative figures. He stopped

And handed it to me.

I hushed and mulled and drew

A snakeskin, a god's eye

Reflecting the zenith sun.

This would look good with black between.



Good idea he said.

The black made the rock a leopard,

Damascene on a sea

Of ultramarine.

He made me do it.

It was a small mercy

Trailing confetti of nirvana.

Scott Blume



The Silent Trigger

Hush now
as I watch
the persuasively
beautiful leopard
surreptitiously sneak
gracefully

eyes widen
as it breathes
so sudden

noticing me,
as the seamstress of my nervous system
sews my million follicles
and teaches them to stand up
it weaves back and forth
and I
undulate carelessly under the pressure
as it moves closer to me
strategically
demonstrating its facetious intentions as it
seamlessly moves from the physical
to the natural
to the mental
gripping my brain
my inner peace, my zenith, my once had nirvana
with its claws
it clutches me like a kestrel victoriously
and vigorously celebrates its prey

it's knowing me
consuming me
and it's begging me



as I push its bright red lips out of my mind
it pleads for mercy
it tries to devour my pristine,
ultra marine,
waters
that are the abyss of me

it encompasses me

Sarah Bosch



Meet the Wind

It is too easy to wish we were the evenkeeled,
enraptured in throes of hush and mildly
quaking in elation. Pressures of care, unrushed by
and guided through each gentle mercy breezing along

But jolts of disquiet are able to filch a
relaxing afternoon away when the winds turn chill
It is sometimes seen, as in the sky when a kestrel loses
its arrowpath and is tossed sideways against the strain
It is sometimes felt as a disembodied ache
when a small thing tells its passing a heart beat a
halfbeat too slow, or a seamstress missing a stitch
So it can wind us down, skew our movement
and even drive a mighty river limpid.

But it cannot be predicted or quantified as
a millionmillion people have readily discovered
The more we learn to think, and the more we
think we know, ever more we want to figure it
out: what is this wind and why does it move us?
How can other animals, whose plights are essentially
similar to ours, move fluidly through movements
unhindered while we so readily falter?

A leopard isn't subject to the waves of disillusion
that upend our hearts and start us down pointless paths
Overthinking, overwishing for simplicity, the place
where we started. A paradise of ultramarine skies where
winds won't make us shudder, and we happen to huddle
together, not for warmth but as a gesture of connection



Acceptance seems to be where that comfort comes from
and it is seldom sudden, often starting as the subtlest
shimmer. And it is claimed that in time our acceptance
will reach a zenith, no more chill or darkness or disquiet,
as endlessly outward bound rays of awakening disperse spirit
So it is said of nirvana, but we need not transcend to find
at least parts of it here in all those things carried on the wind
that can so easily chill

Within filaments of frustration
meaning can be found and we need not
shine to be brilliant. Like wind,
our swiftness is a shifting
dance of unexpected
movements.

Hobart Cambro



The Last Day

The leopard did not hunt and the kestrel did not hover
In the hush of that last dawn.
When the sun, barely showing over the eastern horizon,
Stopped suddenly and paused for one last precious second,
Before streaking upwards through its zenith
And shattering soundlessly into shards of shimmering light.
Across the universe mercy rained from a million stars
And a sad seamstress, standing in the shallows of an ultramarine sea,
Was the first to find her own nirvana.

Susan Campbell Cross



The Leopard Waits

The leopard waits
waits for what seems like
millions of breaths
waits in the hush of the evening's ultramarine light
waits, not thinking of mercy
waits for the moment
suddenly, with the precision of a seamstress,
she leaps
transporting the kestrel to nirvana
with one swipe of paw
one snap of jaw

Susan Clark



Three Lovely Ladies

I'm moving, he said, Would you like some chickens?
They're messy, I thought. They'll tear up the garden.

Caught by surprise with sudden reply,

I said, Yes.

Soon they arrived, complete with little house.

Not fully grown, sporting baby combs, I was smitten.

Soon they will start laying,

I was told.

Never mind, for I was busy learning all things poultry,

Discovering each little hen's personality.

While they acquainted themselves with the farm,

Including me.

Big, bright Joy was the first to produce an edible treasure.

Small, yet so perfect in shape and color, beyond splendid.

Each girl has her own trademark. I know every favorite

Hiding place.

On warm days, beneath an ultramarine sky and green boughs,

My lovely ladies roost on a rail fence surrounded by roses.

Side by side with hushed voices chanting, is this chicken

Nirvana?

Scratching, pecking, chattering happily, they follow along

As I dig in the dark, rich earth. Lead seamstress Lovie,

Rapidly sews the ground in search of juicy worms and fat grubs.

Oh, heaven!

As the sunset reaches its zenith, signaling the day's work is done

We head for the safety of the barn where fresh treats await.

Beware my darlings, of the kestrel, eagle and coyote.



No mercy!

Yesterday, I discovered a bird's nest had fallen from its perch.
Intertwined with a million bits of hair, straw and twig was a
Leopard-spotted feather from none other than, shy Feliz.

I smiled.

Linda Compton-Smith



Nirvana

A seamstress twists the threads of color
moving through the masterpiece,
her needle nimble in its art, its end
in sight, the last of what must be
a million stitches put in place,
a rush of satisfaction as the tapestry takes shape, the sudden wish
to see it hung, depicting the leopard's lope,
the hush of jungle's shaded sheen
and kestrel's plunge towards the sea
of green, and grey, ultramarine.
She puts it down to mercy
that she's got it done, her need to
touch some kind of pinnacle,
her zeal to reach a zenith she can see,
a test of patience and dexterity.

Linda Conroy



Necessary Skills

The soaring kestrel hovers in an ultramarine sky.
Intently scanning the ground below.
Survival is paramount.
Mercy not an option.
Hidden among the trees, a leopard also watches
They have both hunted this way a million times
Nirvana is possible only if the hunt is a success.
There is a hush, broken by the gentle whisper of the wind in the trees
The bird sees a sudden movement below.
He attacks at once
Climbing to to the zenith of his flight,
Then plummeting as a stone towards his prey.
In the nearby village,
A seamstress works,
Unaware of the drama that has unfolded.
Her survival depends on a different kind of skill.

Henry Cross



Thieves on the Wing

The seamstress tries to count the stitches,
ultramarine to leopard-print. She's back

from nirvana today. Millions of hushed kestrels,
wingbeats uncountable hover at her periphery.

Their steady zenith, all brown featherspots
and hawk-eyed sharp. Ultrablack hunger—

no mercy in the belly. She's back from sudden
sudden, languid over her work. They have her

now, like the snap of a kumquat
tight citrus beneath the tooth.

Kate Di Nitto

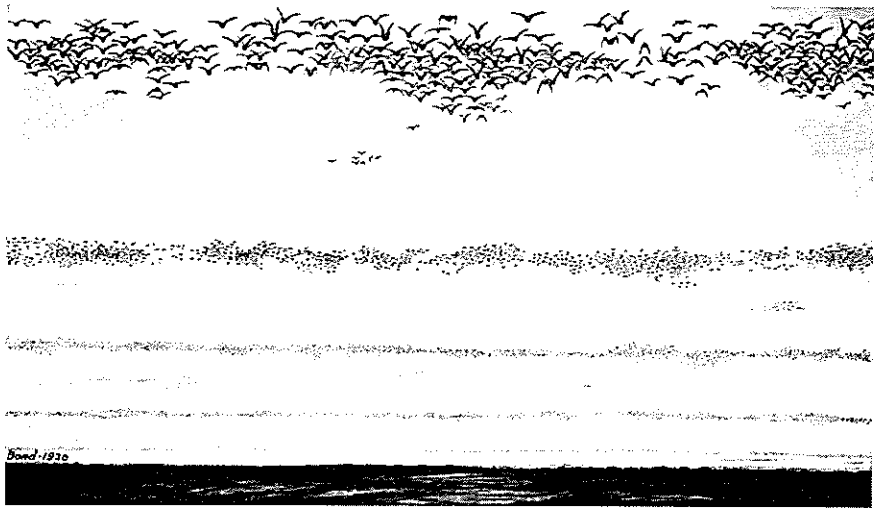


Illustration of migrating flocks (Frank Bond, 1920)



The Route to Nirvana

It's about time
Shouts the old woman in the leopard print coat,
Boarding the bus to Nirvana.
You're seven lifetimes late.
Seven.

One stuck in bed five years,
Couldn't move, couldn't talk.
Piss in, piss out, tubes, tubes, tubes
Locked in, they called it.
Locked into life, I'd say.
Three lifetimes past and I still see that ceiling.

One with a bastard husband
Strung out on his own rage.
Stubbed out a cigarette on my privates once
Just to teach me a lesson.
Don't remember how that one ended.
Too friggin' long, that's for sure.

The girl with the ultramarine hair
Takes off her earphones.
They don't care, she says.
Simple enough to get a seamstress in,
Mend the fabric of space/time.
Not cost effective, that's why.
What's a few lifetimes to them?



What's that kestrel doing here?
Demands the old lady, waving one arm,
Wafting the scent of stale sweat and beer
Cigarettes and violets.
The kestrel draws its wings to itself,
Fixing one black eye on her.
In my day, says the old woman,

We expected to suffer.
Put in our lifetimes.
Round and round the great wheel
Half a million times
Till we were dizzy sick.
Didn't know which end was up.
Waited for the zenith of enlightenment, we did.

Bloody spittle makes a trail
Through her lipstick.
Now they all plead Special Circumstances.
Oppressed this. Misunderstood that.
Flap around a few lifetimes
Fledge
Mate
Starve
Have your entrails ripped out,
And bingo,
Easy pass to Nirvana or they file a complaint.

Mercy
Observes the girl
Is cheaper than a lawsuit.
That's why.
Replacing her earphones she hears
The sudden hush of oblivion.

Sandra Funk



Failing Nature

As a kestrel crossed the field
a sudden hush fell upon the world.
The knowledge of mankind had reached its zenith
but instead of nirvana,
what lay spread before them under the ultramarine sky
was a warning.

Wrought of a million, million stars
was a plea for mercy,
as though the seamstress of the universe herself
had stitched a banner of defeat.
The last leopard lay slain
and the world wept for the failure.
Humanity had failed nature
so she wept alone.

Scarlett Grey



Bird of Prey

Circling. Soaring. Gliding.

The Seahawk scans the ultramarine waters
from its zenith of flight.

Eyes sharp, like a kestrel searching for a field mouse.

Looking. Seeking. Spotting.

Suddenly the osprey swoops down towards it's prey.

It pierces the reflective liquid repeatedly, like a seamstress
rushing her final job of the day.

Screaming. Splashing, Thrashing.

A million drops of moisture explode from the sea,
as the bird of prey rises triumphantly.

Showing mercy, he tears into the fishes' flesh
with the rapaciousness of a leopard.

Full-bellied. Satiated. Hushed.

The water hawk rises gracefully, returning to
its peaceful cobalt nirvana.

The predator peers down over its kingdom once more.

Cameron Gridley



Nirvana

As the kestrel hovered over crystallized stars,
A sudden hush crept over everything, the only mercy.
Close by,
The leopard hunkered ever lower in the ultramarine depths
Eyes blazing sun, focused and alight.
Both focused on their zenith, for the millionth time.
So intense that neither moved nary a twitch.

The final stitch was made, as light as a seamstress
As the two stuffed animals were put on display.

Douglas Hamilton



Nightmare Comes True

Bombs packed with nails
terrorized Brussels in the deadliest assault
on the European heartland
since the terrorist attack on Paris
hitting the airport and subway system
at 4:20 Pacific Time, March 22nd.

A Belgian seamstress heard a loud noise
and saw a big flash at the airport.
There was sudden panic and mayhem
followed by a hush after the airport
was secured into lockdown;
passengers could be heard crying for mercy.

Soon after, another bomb tore through a car
in the rear part of a subway train.
A kestrel hovered in the air against the wind
at the height of the morning rush—an
eerie coincidence that
so many were killed, or wounded.

On the Zenith news, world leaders reacted
with horror and calls for peace.
Many said the world must unite together
or there will be a nirvana. The bombings paralyzed Brussels
triggering international travel warnings to
millions of people to avoid Belgium.

People gathered and lit candles
at the Place de la Bourse, in an
ultramarine setting
with one woman in a leopard coat
lighting candles
all through the night.

John Hansen



An Angel on Earth

“Lord, have mercy!
No person has seen,
Through brown eyes nor green,
Nor ultramarine,
A more perfect place,
Nor more perfect plane,
The Nirvana of form,
The sunshine of “warm”,
As pretty a space as her heart.

Lord, have mercy!
She’s a seamstress of love,
A soaring kestrel above,
The hushed coo of a dove.
But the growl of that leopard
Sends this innocent shepherd
To a place defined only as paradise.

Lord, have mercy!
She’s the essence of royalty,
The left-hand ring of loyalty.
When that sun is at zenith, she boils me.
And somehow, one day
In some humorous way,
We’ll suddenly be
Remembering, how we
Found our way home together.”

Levi Heeringa



The Head of Leda (Leonardo da Vinci, c.1505)



Hush

Hush

You may not be at your zenith

You may feel as if you're underwater

Surrounded in ultramarine blue

Sinking

Drowning

Failing

But have mercy on yourself

Don't give up

Swim

Struggle

Surface

Suddenly, you can breathe

Inhale.

For now,

Enjoy the endless peace

Enjoy the nirvana

Enjoy the end of your suffering

Because you'll need your strength

It's not over yet.

A kestrel circles above

Searching for prey

It spots you

Helpless

Soaked

Breathless



It dives for you
You gaze up in fear
Tears fill your eyes
You think you're done

But you're a fighter.

Run
Outwit the ones who see you as prey
As they dive at you
As they attempt to beat you into submission
Use the strength of a leopard
For you are strong

And when you come out on top,
Millions will watch you in disbelief
The world will sing your praise
Seamstresses will sew your face on apparel
Those struggling will look at you with hope

You made it.

April Jade



SNPS on Sale

Both the colonizer and the colonized,
both the kestrel and the mouse,
again and again over history.

How do I have mercy on me?

How do I hush those millions of days
that swim down in the ultramarine depths of my DNA?

You have to work on yourself first,
they say.
Before you can address the rest,
they say.

But how can I trust myself to be the seamstress of this new cognitive gown
I should wear here and there and everywhere
Like the leopard print of yore.

See?

How do I have mercy on me?

Is there no sudden transformation,
is there no fast pass to the nirvana,
could I appropriate and plagiarize my way to the zenith?

No?

I ask you, then, to have mercy on me.

Guava Jordan



Oblivion

watching her Zenith tv
the seamstress is transported
to nirvana

a million thoughts flow away
in the sudden hush of her
external environment

the oblivion of her cares
that had numbered like the many
spots on a leopard

now a gentle mercy

her mind light as the blue-gray
feathers on a kestrel wing
glides to an island ultramarine

kathi



Lunch in the Park

A hovering kestrel, in the zenith of her flight, quietly tittering to herself.

Seemingly floating in nirvana.

Ever watchful, with a sudden rush attacks the trapped sparrow,
demonstrating no mercy for its plight.

A million thoughts rush and flush the mind of the park-bench-lunching
dressmaker, not a mere seamstress, in witnessing this disquieting occurrence.
She drops her sandwich on her skirt, staining the ultramarine fabric. She
silently curses.

She then rises and returns a faux leopard skin hat to her head, rushing back
to her chaotic factory.

John Lindh



Mercy

Watch a thousand times on your old television
or a million times on the internet:
a kestrel's hover-sudden drop on its prey,
a leopard's crouch-running lunge at ungulate,
a shark's closing circle through ultramarine depths.

The end of a life so others may live.
Despair over predators' prerogatives
conceals a great irony: the fiercest predators
are humans—indifferent and cruel
in consuming the world.

Hush. Listen, this would be nirvana:
we mitigate the effects of climate change,
reverse global warming
and environmental degradation,
end the sixth extinction.

Humans—at neither zenith nor nadir
of life on earth—become healers,
begin urgent environmental repairs worldwide.
There is no greater mercy than the mercy
we could have for earth's inhabitants:

plankton to blue whales,
fungi to kumquats to giant sequoias,
ants to elephants. The seamstress of time
waits for us, for our mercy, for what we will do
for earth and for every living being.

Andrew Shattuck McBride



Origami Afternoon

Unfolds itself
mercifully released
by gentle seamstresses
whose austere zeniths
lie beyond
the kestrel's
clouded eye,
the leopard's
hungry imagination,
where
the deep
ultramarine
clarity
of hearts in love
suddenly evolve
a nirvana
of hushed
arrival.

Jim Milstead



Gift of Stitches

Her seamstress-eye sought any discord
or stress-loosened thread
As she inspects this quilt-child
of her imaginings:
A jungle-moment caught
in vivid color and fashioned fabric

Bright hidden parrots peer
from below leaf layers
A snake makes its sudden
slithered appearance
Soon lost in the nirvana
of delight and deception
(It is a serpent after all)

Far up in corner a tiny appliqued kestrel
hovers in the ultramarine sky
Having reached the zenith of its flight
contemplates the descending feast
A million French-knot flies
lay in the path
to culminate in vole a la crème

Below a leopard lurks
camouflaged by
jungle greens
Its hunt halted
by the hush
of artificial textures
At the mercy
of the needle's bent

She leans to kiss and bless
the place that will cover
her grandson's heart
For she knows...the joy
he will have receiving
her gift of stitches
Well matches
the joy she has
in the giving

Mary Mueller



No Mending Love

Sun put out by a million clouds,
zenith delayed another day,
her eyes gone from green

to ultramarine, back to black
or so it seems. Slipped away,
her lithe sway, whisper, smile.

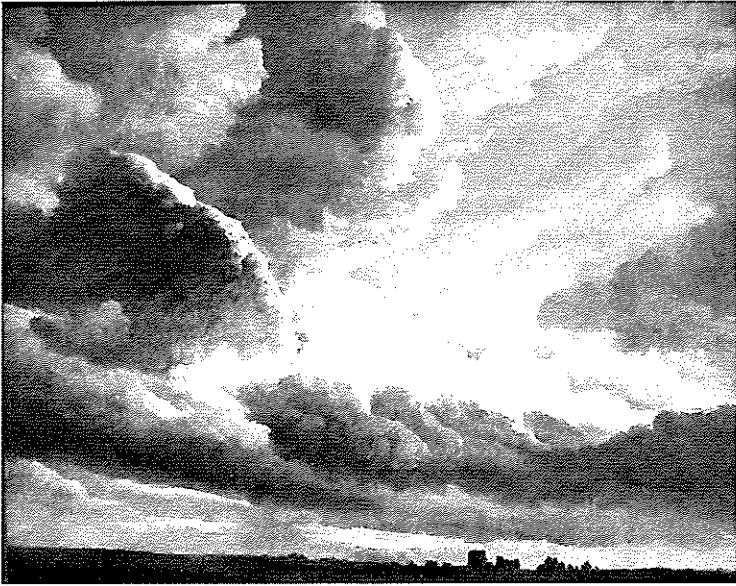
invitation to stay awhile. Nirvana,
worn through, needing mercy,
repair, a stitch or two. Leopard

kestrel, sudden leap, swift dive—
my hushed heart torn apart,
The rip, so deep, ragged, wide

any seamstress mending love
ceases to sew, lays down

her needle, gives up hope.

Timothy Pilgrim



Study of Clouds with a Sunset Near Rome
(Simon Dennis 1786-1801)



Skilled Labor

And here she sits
Shoulders hunched, pressed down
By the weight of this world
No mercy
Atlas incarnate
Chug
Chug
Chug
The melodic rhythm
Hypnotic
Needle
Up, down
Up, down
Piece together
Here, there, create
There used to be dignity in her craft
Easter dress, fitted suit
Outsourced to the mall
Today...this day
The seamstress is relegated to fairy tales, jungle books
Faux fur
Cheetahs, lions, leopards
Ad nauseum
Neon feathers pretending to be regal
Eagle, hawk, kestrel
Caricatures of nature
Her arthritic hands numb from working, working



Into the darkness
Lunar light at zenith
A while longer, a few more stitches
Parental demands, dreams of stardom, millions
For their mediocre monsters
Children given a trophy for showing up
Stomping, screaming... "Ultramarine?"
"I wanted blue", simpleton
Rolling her eyes
Frustrated, exhausted, bent to the task
Chug, chug, chug
Scent of ozone, spark, flicker
Sudden silence, needle paralyzed
She sits up, smiles, sighs
"Hush"
Relief washing over her
And thinks at last
Nirvana

Kimberly Reeves



Early Morning Musings

I watched the kestrel
Soaring over the verdant field
Seeking
Flying higher to its zenith
Where it stopped and hovered
Then a plummet so sudden
To snatch up its prey
No mercy
Just a dying cry echoes
In the hush
Of the morning's sparkling sunshine.
And if I were a seamstress
I'd fashion myself a cloak
Made of a million kestrel feathers
All dappled leopard in color
I'd line it with ultramarine silk
So I too could hover
High up in the air
And blend with the azure sky.
Then I'd know nirvana
Removed and watching
At peace.

Gena Riley



The Kill

Emboldened by a
sudden hush of fear,
I scoffed as a million
weak ones scrambled away.
Philly was a jungle.
You were easy prey.
I stalked you like a leopard
who knew I would win.
I was kestrel at it's
zenith, ready to strike.
You, a mere mouse
did not see my shadow.

The mercy of my kill
would be your
gateway to nirvana.
Love was a hunt. You were
oblivious to the obvious.
Naïve seamstress, knitting
your powder blue gown of
gossamer cloth, as if your
life was a prom.
Magically transforming
the mundane into
otherworldly ultramarine,
sparkling with interwoven stars.
I still did not understand.
And when I swooped and sprung
upon you, your look of indifference
quietly shouted that it takes
more than the strength to kill.

Harvey Schwartz



Like a Leopard

Like a leopard skinned
The color of mercy
The stench of pelt
In a seamstress' hand

The zenith of calm
A box for my body
And I am alone
Deep in ultramarine

The scream of the sea
The sigh of the kestrel
My withering wings
Sudden sweat of the sun

And I have been loved
By millions of granules
And I am a dream
In a song hushed by sand

And should I depart
On a red boat of hope
To sail and to strum
Strong strings of stars

I'll discover a heart
Beating wild beside you
Nirvana in hum
A blanket to warm

Sharalyn Sentinella



Leopard-spotted Kestrel

The leopard-spotted kestrel
preens its feathers with the care of a seamstress
as if it needed to align and connect everything before a flight,
before it suddenly ascends into the ultramarine sky
(or ultra-celestial sky.) At its zenith, it floats
in the hush of bird nirvana. It sees the shape of the earth
and the light playing upon it, and its bird brain wants down.
Suddenly it purposefully plummets back,
its wings beating millions of atoms of air, and then
it shows no mercy to its shadow on the ground.

Sally Sheedy



The Vagaries of Avarice

Outlined against mosaic ultramarine tiles,
A hushed kestrel soars motionlessly to nirvana.
We proselytize for a peace on lustrous leopard skin rugs,
Provided by mindless hunters and penniless seamstresses.
Ensnared in the sudden trappings millions will never need to know,
We feign mercy while ever reaching for the zenith of our own destruction.

Guy Smith



Clothed for Survival

Springing from his perch he takes flight
Searching for a movement, a flash, a scurry
Reaching his zenith he sees what he came for .
Hovering, the Kestrel flashes feathers of
Rose and ultramarine at a setting sun
Suddenly he dives with no mercy upon his prey

The Leopard glides through tall grass
Sun winking through the trees
The hush, not even a breath
Then he attacks, swift and sure.
Birds screeching from the trees,
Millions of locust rise, chaos in the kill
In the end, a Leopard's nirvana and
Eternal peace to the pursued.

The nature of bird or beast. The hunters, small and large.
Dressed to facilitate their survival by the seamstress of all creation.

Barbara Stromme



A Million Seamstresses

Mercy! A million seamstresses
could not hush the glory of
that ultramarine leopard-kestrel.
Suddenly! At the Zenith . . .
Nirvana!

Diane Swan



Fabric

Millions of threads born into color,
Ultramarine begets green begets blue.
Against hues of mercy, the kestrel steals,
The leopard adapts, makes sudden choices,
Believes he has a chance...
A celestial seamstress strokes the fabric,
Hushes her creature's delusions of life,
Rests, for a moment, at her zenith,
Before piercing their souls,
Stitching them into nirvana.

Melissa Talbot



Now You Know

Hush, wounded one,
there is mercy
after all.

The end of struggle
is nirvana.

Seven continents you
roamed, conqueror
of them all,

Black panther, white leopard,
fantastic.

Two dressers you had,
and the seamstress to the gods
to cloak your shimmerous danger.

Bewitched, millions fell, under your spell—
the ultramarine glow of your aurora.

Did you reach your zenith
before they brought you down?

Before you could turn
breath into kestrel?

Death comes hard,
without hope, or
sudden—no preface.

Now you know.

Now you know.

Now you know.

Ara Taylor



Bittersweet Serendipity

A child's shirt, woven in ultramarine
The seamstress unknown, the time unseen.

An angel or demon, like the kestrel above;
Like a leopard in the grass, or a vicious dove.

A million lives in the palm of their hand.
The world falls to a hush in the dark, empty land.

Choosing mercy over the will to fight,
A sudden flash of deafening light.

The other has nirvana stolen,
Their zenith of life all but forgotten.

Two beings intertwined irrevocably:
Souls together in harmony.

Perhaps one day, they will join forever
With a love so deep that none can ever sever.

Adrianna Tiesinga



The Seamstress

Her quilt is a savannah in the dark.
The kestrel waits on an acacia branch,
and in the grass the leopard's dappled back
lies tense and deep among the million blades.
No mercy to be found for simple prey
should predators who wait there in the black
burst out—a sudden struggle in the dust,
a heartbeat slowing 'til the final hush.
This carnivore's nirvana born of thread
the seamstress sews to trick the tired eye.
Ultramarine, the blue above the hunt

holds Libra at its zenith; do not dread.

Heather Williams



Sewing Fisherman's Wife (Anna Ancher, 1890)

Contributors



CONTRIBUTORS

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 tenth participation in The Kumquat Challenge.

Kate Di Nitto is a part-time Registration Advisor at WCC and has an MFA from the University of Montana. She is also a freelance writer and former editor at CutBank literary magazine.

Scott Blume is a reference librarian at WCC.

Sarah Bosch is a current student at WCC and mother of two fine boys. Hobart Cambro was a student at WCC until winter 2016 and “glad for every class, each teacher!” He submitted his poem from Berlin, Germany, where he is on an adventure.

Susan Campbell Cross is a poet and writer who lives in Bellingham with her husband Henry. She has improved her writing with poetry and creative writing classes at WCC. Her poem “Color” appeared in the recent Whatcom Community College anthology Noisy Waters.

Susan Clark has attended WCC and WCC Community Ed classes since the 1980's. She has kept busy over the years raising a family and working in sales. Her interests include art of all kinds, including realist, figurative and writing in addition to cooking, hiking and travel.

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.

Linda Conroy is a community education participant. She believes it is a writer's responsibility to watch things as they happen, to see people as they are.

Henry Cross was born in England and spent his first 23 years there. He emigrated to the U.S. in 1957 and has lived in the U.S and Canada. He enjoys writing, acting and singing. Travel is another interest, particularly in Europe.

Sandra Funk is studying towards an accounting certificate at WCC. She is a frequent if bemused rider of Whatcom Transit and prefers to keep her past lives to herself.

Scarlett Grey is a former WCC student.

Cameron Gridley is a former WCC student and works for Mail Services at WCC.

Douglas Hamilton is an assistant in Financial Aid and Registration at WCC. He enjoys reading, skating and sports.

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

Levi Heeringa was a Writing Center Reader for a year and is currently a student at WCC. He loves to write when he finds the time, and always appreciates a good story.

April Jade was raised in Bellingham is currently a WCC student. She wishes to continue throughout her life diminishing ignorance, helping others, and laughing.

Guava Jordan is a multi-discipline faculty member at WCC.

John Lindh is a poet, retired carpenter & civil servant and occasional student at Whatcom, mostly Continuing Ed.

Andrew Shattuck McBride has recent or forthcoming work in Mud Season Review, Acorn, Connecticut River Review, A Hundred Gourds, Perfume River Poetry Review, and Clover, A Literary Rag. He edits historical novels, memoirs, poetry collections and chapbooks.

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

Jim Milstead is a member of Independent Writers Studio and Village Books Poetry Group. He is the winner of two Sue Boyton Merit Awards, has been published in Clover, and is the author of “Collage.”

Mary Mueller has taken many evening and weekend classes at WCC. Retired from teaching Special Education she now has time to do things she always longed to do. Writing poetry is one of them.

Timothy Pilgrim, a U.S. Pacific Northwest poet, has over 300 published poems by dozens of journals such as Jeopardy, Cirque and Windfall. He is author of “Mapping Water” (Flying Trout Press) and co-author of “Bellingham Poems”. His work can be found at timothypilgrim.org.

Kimberly Reeves, veteran poet and part-time seeker of fame and glory, continues to follow in the fine traditions of Alan Ginsberg, Gary Snyder and Jim Harrison....weaving a tapestry of imagery that can only be relevant to the author and a world full of steadfast and enlightened followers. Come to her Moroccan poet’s retreat to experience the wisdom and knowledge that can only be disseminated to her most “valued” apprentices. Cash and money order only please.

Gena Riley is in her first quarter at WCC working towards her Associate’s in Business Administration. She loves the Northwest, especially Bellingham, which has been her home for 16 years. She enjoys painting and creating mixed media, writing, and spending time with her daughter and her cat, O’Malley.

Harvey Schwartz learned Americana growing up on the east coast. He unlearned it at Woodstock, a hippie commune, and during extensive hitchhiking. A long 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.

Sharalyn Sentinella graduated with honors from WCC in 2015. She is studying structural biochemistry as a transfer student, and hopes to be part of a cancer research team someday.

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 and serves as the Social Sciences and Business Division Chair at WCC (though deep down he would rather be lying under a blanket of dogs reading books about baseball).

Barbara Stromme lives in Ferndale with husband Joel. Her daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren live just down the driveway and her son lives in Skagit County. She enjoys a few goofy chickens, a little quilting, and feels blessed by family.

Diane Swan, a former WCC student and member of the Bellingham community feels all entries to this challenge are winners.

Melissa Talbot, a program coordinator at WCC, says writing poetry is like riding a bike – sometimes you crash, and don't want to do it for a while. But eventually you get back on and realize it's still the thrill it once was.

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.

Adrianna Tiesinga is a first year student at WCC and has lived in Lynden her entire life. 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.

Heather Williams is a librarian at WCC. Her poem "The Seamstress" is about anxiety—focusing on it, wrestling with it, and ultimately rising above it. If you have library anxiety, come see her and she'll help you on your way to mad research skillz.



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