



**the
Noisy
Water
Review
2001-2002**

Whatcom Community College's Literary Journal

Noisy Water Review

Whatcom Community College
2002

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You may view a selection of work by following
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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 third edition of *The Noisy Water Review*, the anthology of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and artwork by students at Whatcom Community College.

This year, a wide variety of work – poetry, fiction, and an essay--represents the concerns and artistic expressiveness of WCC's students.

We're fortunate to have such creative and insightful people writing among us.

Enjoy!

Dr. Jeffrey Klausman
June 2002

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I have nothing to say
and I'm saying it
and that is poetry
as I needed it.

John Cage

Rachel Blakely

Epitaph

pre-dawn I dove into a lucid sand-tiled ocean,
a warm reflection of sunshine flickering
on the thin film of the water's surface
and I felt the waves – the underwater ripples – gently/
pull me.

Sometimes I had to swim against the current
but sometimes it carried me.

I existed merely in each foot of aqua that surrounded/
me,

never turning around to see what could have been.

And there were shadows – laughing and fighting and/
breaking hearts,

making bets and interrupting my life and bringing me/
gifts,

and smiles that came from strangers
that unknowingly affected

the way the water parted for me –

I fell in love with one of that company

and he helped me breathe in the immense underwater /
world.

but the air... the air cooled eventually, in the evening

and I felt sweetly tired

and fell short of breath;

the swim had been long enough, I had taken what I/
deserved

so the smooth indigo ocean filled my lungs.

Linda Cooper

Trying To Paint It Clear

The first dollop of green gold
reminds you of a salmon eye,
set in place next to all the other eyes,
shimmering in rows,
frozen on ice.

That eye reminds you
of a tiny moon,
fat with light, pulling
you toward something you don't yet understand.
Pulling you away from him.

You try to paint the feelings
about all the small decisions
that came before the final one.
Your brush pushes against the current,
over river rocks that cut
in water so cold your fingers numb.

You wonder
if Van Gogh felt the same way,
alone in his room,
torn up by choices,
fighting against dark colors on his canvas.

Cadmium yellow marries
cadmium red on the palette.
It can be the explosion of a thousand suns.
Sometimes it's just orange.

A Bedtime Story

My first night at the edge
of the White River and I feel okay now,
just before sunset,
the light washing the skin
of my tent, edges pulled taut.
I don't see the bears
anywhere and my stomach
is warm from a dinner of instant chili,
the bowl licked clean.
I feel okay in the forest, distracted
by the river's constant chatter,
the cedars overhead,
maidenhair ferns at my feet,
the sun throwing shadows
through the green web of branches.

I called a friend last night
admitting that I am afraid
of them. Their claws
curved like blades and incisors sharp
as spikes. In my dreams
I see their clumsy swats,
feel the tearing teeth jagged as knives,
smell the searing breath,
my pain melting into numbness.

From above I see myself,
bloody arms and legs
severed

like a broken toy.
All this, I told my friend, sobbing.

As night falls, it chills
and the shadows fade away.
I'm sure I hear the splashing
of their paws
in the crashing static
of the river. Alone in my tent,
without the moon,
I know the bears
are out there waiting
for the blackness
to invite them in.

Young Woman Sewing: Mary Cassatt

You loved to paint them.
This one is older--just barely woman--
her curves stuffed into white muslin, stiff with starch.
Brown hair pulled back from a tight white part,
a few curls spring free
across her smooth forehead.
Ruffles scratch her chin and cheek;
her pale skin smooth as milk.
Eyes cast down
and lips pursed toward it,
her chubby fingers steady the needle.

She doesn't see the red poppies
like you do. Doesn't notice
the green banked hillside
where she sits on a spindly chair
leaning uphill to compensate.
Doesn't see the branches above
nearly touching the top of her head
nor the clean white path below
leading away from that place.
Her world has narrowed
to a needle and fingers
slipping thread
into a tiny, impossible hole.

Sharon Freeberg

Montana Cowgirl

When I was ten
I wanted to be a Montana cowgirl.
On Saturdays I went to Western movies
and cheered as the hero prevailed.
I was going to be just like Dale Evans,
and marry a cowboy someday.
I wore boots, jeans, and silver buckled belt.
Low on my hips,
I holstered a pair of six-shooters.
I'd draw those guns out fast,
and yell "Drop em."
Then I'd let the caps blow those bad guys away.

The neighbor kid, Billy, wore a Roy Roger's outfit.
He'd swagger up to me and sneer.
"Hey, you ain't never gonna be no cowgirl.
You don't have no horse and no saddle."
He claimed that he owned a Palomino named Trigger
that stayed up near Sweet Grass on his Uncle's ranch.

So I asked my dad, if he'd buy me a horse and a saddle.
He smiled and patted my head.
"Sure I will, whenever I have the money."
I dreamed of riding my Palomino
over the Montana plains.
Sitting on a silver-trimmed saddle,
a regular Annie Oakley I'd be.
I waited and waited for that horse to come.
Seems like some hopes never completely go away.
It's years and years later now,
and I still dream of having that horse of my own.

Gerry Gabrisch

Possession—Nine-Tenths of the Mall

I was in the mall the other day and I was overcome by an uneasy yet familiar feeling. The enticements, thick in the air, threatened to smother me by their sheer volume. The smell of cheap perfume, heart pumping dance music, flashing colored lights, almost nude models mosaiced in 360°, Sirens all of them, luring money from my pocket with promises of ecstatic satisfaction. Such power I felt, walking between the rows of shops knowing that I was going to have the final word, pass the absolute verdict on which combination of smoke and mirrors attracted me most. "Look Better Sale." "Red Tag Items, Save 50%." "Spring Color Sale, Save 25% on select items." There was so much "saving" going on I could not comprehend why my bank account was decreasing, but I sure felt good knowing that, at any time, I could buy anything I wanted. I was a mouse in a maze, the cheese my reward, and I did not know I was hungry.

Such a collection of goods it is: a store devoted to nothing but baseball hats with sport team logos, the everything with a Disney® image shop...will people really spend hard-earned cash to possess the corporate logo? The answer was clear enough. Yes, they would, because people like to be part of the team, on the same side. On the surface, the Everything a Buck Store seems the antithesis to the corporate logo stores, a collection of necessary household goods, all available for a dollar or less, a huge assortment of Chinese-made products for every want or need. I have shopped at the Everything a Buck Store and been grossly disappointed, though. The problem is that everything I buy there is either pre-damaged, never working in the first place, or else it

failed on the second use, the packaging and the product adding to the heap of trash that collects at my house every week. What a brilliant marketing strategy: sell items that never work, freeing me from the toil of actually having to use the stuff, freeing up my time so I can continue to shop. Shopping is a feeling, and for a dollar or less I can afford to feel good anytime I need to. When terrorism gets me down, I purchase some Spirit of America Patriotic Jewelry (made in China). After all, it is my duty as an American to maintain a strong economy, and that eagle-and-flag combination will look nice on my Coca Cola® shirt. For ninety-nine cents plus tax, it is worth every penny to feel so good about myself, about America and our addiction to consumerism.

Shopping is a feeling, and I would be lying if I did not confess that I too love to shop. I feel good when I buy outdoor sporting equipment, and I have such a collection that it requires several wooden trunks to house it all. I am an REI poster child and it has taken years, and a small fortune, to possess it all. I will lament over a purchase for days, comparing brands, features, and price, the mood building gradually, the anticipation growing slowly like a good book or a romantic evening. The more I learn about what it is I am buying, the more real the need becomes until the pursuit of possession becomes an act of obsession. What a self-gratifying collection it is, a triple layer Gore-Tex® jacket with pit zips, Italian-made telemark skis and boots that cost more than the average income in Bangladesh, a sixty dollar Lexan® plastic shovel...I need, no, want, it all.

One day I needed that shovel. I was out skiing, crossing a steep avalanche gully when I heard the thunderous sound of a wall of snow approaching. I hardly had time to look up, much less execute evasive maneuvers, when the avalanche overtook me. In one

instant, I lost my ability to function for myself, because I was part of something that I had no power to overcome. As I was being rushed off to almost certain death by suffocation, screaming and crying for help, time seemed to slow, giving me the opportunity to take satisfaction in the fact that I had purchased an avalanche beacon, a small radio transmitter (made in China) by which my friend could locate my soon-to-be lifeless body. Yes, she will find me, and dig me out with HER sixty dollar Lexan® shovel.

Buried chest deep in sticky, wet snow, but alive I came to a stop. Staring back up at the hill that I just came crashing down, I contemplated whether I would have enough time to dig myself out before the next wave of snow came speeding down the hillside. I do not think I have used that shovel since, although I still am glad I bought the thing. The only real tragedy was a ski lost, a prized possession ripped from my body, never to be seen again. I replaced that ski, though, the very same day, on the way home even, with a "better", more expensive model.

Now as I wander through the mall, my little adventure does not seem so dramatic. We are being buried every day. The cash register receipts, the shopping bags, the endless amount of unneeded stuff that collects and adorns our body and homes, this is an avalanche that is sure to consume us. There is an underlying danger in all this consumption that extends beyond the well-advertised environmental dangers. Our ability to possess sets us apart in the world, the haves from the have-nots. We are building mountains out of raw materials with our dollars, and if the actual trash does not suffocate us the politics behind it will. Towers tumbling down, there you go, Dependency Theory in action. No plastic shovel is going to help

those poor folks, but the laser guided war machine that we call American Justice (a poor excuse for a return department) is sure to fix that situation... Well, maybe not, but we will sure feel better about having all that stuff now that we have an excuse to use it. I need to feel good, and, in the next election, I think I will vote for George W. He will buy a lot of stuff for our country, stuff we need. I need stuff and why shouldn't I have it too? I earned it. See you at the mall!

Sara Goodendorf

Breaking Glass

The room is crowded
with strangers talking,
laughing, sounding
like breaking glass—

And I? I stand alone
in a room
crowded with strangers
laughing, talking,
sounding like breaking glass—

Corey Graves

Bloodline

Technology, says nothing
to the many thousands of
generations that had to endure the
elements of the earth without it.
Enduring, says nothing now
about the difference between
me and them, the difference
between us—
How her blood
gave life to me
is a technology beyond me.
I find her use of space shameful.
The shame of callous regret,
and choked compassion
for the people around her
she recreates in her own image.
We are all familiar with the feeling
of not knowing the intention
behind our actions.
Are we callous
like the machines we create,
resenting the integrity and strength of our ancestors
by replacing their memories with metal?
Or are we closer to feeling something,
closer to achieving what they dreamed of?
Life without pain, life inside a machine,
unaffected by the elements.
Where are the dreamers now, when
we have all that they wanted for us?
All they wanted—

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.

Melissa Helzer

YGGDRASIL

Vagina
the slandered birthing canal
beings being brought forth into earth, water, fire, air
coming from the kiss of the spiderwoman's spin
pink vulva
soft, dew kissed, womanly
The hunt for the self you can smell the blood
a cleansing release
it is a flower you know
a humanly flower
Full and Ripe Of Magic

Cesarean
clearcut
A shave across my pubic hair-ever faithful, ever there
Cut into my skin- deeper- into my tissues
then muscle, uterus
Capillaries break like cosmic cobwebs murdered
My womb is pouring out stars and chi
(meanwhile I'm scared)
Scalpel, Chainsaw, Oxygen Mask
chemical drugs with a 12 inch needle
do you know how big that is?
Pull out, Pull out, Pull out
A little tiny real live man
In a rainbow of blues and reds skin tones and tears
Fears of the sterile in an animal wild baby body
My son, My son thy sacred
It is true I was pregnant with a real human!
They saved my life, our life and the life breath is slow

but there in a calmer traumatic peace
heartbeat, soft speak I can see him but not hold him
I am paralyzed from the shoulders down
and as high as dying on morphine
I am still alive womb weeping
Blood still seeping
Now I have a scar and a son
and a bottle of vitamin E-shared stories with/
mothers and sisters and daughters and/
grandmothers

and the men who are curious
healing snaking medicine goddess
she is blood thimbleberries and hazelnuts
peering under ferns limbs loosely vibrant green touch
nettles and decaying leaves
I see my old self in the compost
someday my scars will lay to rest
My hopes of a homebirth are
my old hair falling out in the shower
The thought of the placenta growing under a great tree
Well, it did not happen, the hospital lost it.
Breastfeeding at the time of birth- no- I was in a room/
of recovery on machines
Birth is all emotions it is all physical sensations and all/
possibilities
Birth is how we were born- the common thread of us
My thanks go to these people who cut me open
My thanks go to the spirits for my life
My thanks go to my son for being just who he is and/
coming just the way he did- through me
Because of him I am more alive now than I ever was
Because of him I know a little more about what life
entails.

The Old Disease

The old disease
it came in bitter, shaking, wrenching hardware
paint fumes
flickering tracers off cigarettes
breaking flimsy vows
stealing youth
echoing into beer cans
staining teeth
biting into new love crooked smiles
and daughters
of shot gun sure shot abusers
anonymously abandoning visitation
in the hospital of hearts
gaining diagnosis
depressing down to haunted cob webs
half full glasses
and an empty fridge
coming to the creaking bed / the sofa
lie still breathe heavy
say goodbye
let the dog starve let the car rust
let the newspapers pile
yellowed on the porch
The old disease
leaving health behind
each day
leaving dead flowers and bone.

Brie Hyslop

in shades of echoing blue

Whenever she was feeling depressed or low she would go out of her way to wander through the grocery store. She enjoyed the bright lights and array of attracting colors of the market. All the products had such potential and purpose through her own eyes. Every aisle was neatly ordered with all the labels facing outside. At the store she was able to let go, become distracted for a brief moment from a wave of indifference or slight depression – to pick and chose or aimlessly browse from aisle to aisle.

The turmoil which she called her thunderstorm, that would not thunder, nor lightning, nor would any drop of rain find an outlet to leak, to break free. The dark irreconcilable clouds churned with in every breath she drew. Beneath the wing of her heart: ache like ivy grew, nestled in between shadows of guilt. This was a frustrated storm. There were times when she would cup her hand as if to catch rain – to relieve the weight of such heavy heart.

She suffered from beauty that was too much for her own eyes – for her own soul – she would flinch then turn away, such undeserving beauty she did not know how to define – how to express what she saw in it: the hope, the suffering, the clarity, the layer upon layer of creation. As it toiled in the distance, she could feel the silent wars of man that touched her too near. She was a victim of her own mind at times, living the thin line between two battling worlds. She could not figure out why she hovered in guilt as if she had done something wrong, said the wrong thing, made the wrong decision. She struggled; she fought with this storm that desperately needed to break into rain, into thunder, to

explode into an atom of a billion stars and universes. Torturing her-self to define, to find that word to describe that smell which autumn brought in this year reminding her of the year before. The fluid experience of grace, riding the windy waves of a horse's mane, she could not express. All was contained. She knew; she felt the vibrations on the inside, her inner world, but never could it be fully manifested on the outside. It was a prisoner like that of a cadged songbird. She had panic attacks, she would throw up and her head would pulse, leaving her raw, emotionally drained to stare out through the window, which sometimes wasn't even there.

People told her to just *deal with it*.

'Tell me,' she pleaded, 'show me, because I just don't know how to deal with it.'

But no one ever heard; the few that did just nodded as if they said it without knowing why or how. However, they did leave her with small spurts of inspiration but with no answers.

It was in the produce section, her favorite place, where I met her. I could see past her eyes; past the flowers of never ceasing cyclical deaths and rebirths, a taste of milk and honey, glints of wheat in the sunshine, ancient flowing rivers, the rock of ages in her bones, endless waves into a thousands shades of echoing blue, the pulsing songs of whales resonating one tone—much like a cello's voice of bearded men in morning—penetrating as deep as the heart of her abyss.

Through those eyes I recognized myself. I can only say I saw a moment in her that transcended time and space; it was ripples of images in clouds of pearl in one unified moment. It was her eyes that reflected the sky and different spans of life spinning so fast and so slow in the same moment that there was no place for

time to hold any linear meaning. Her gaze spoke of the emerging butterfly from it's cocoon, the opening and closing of blossoms, pollinating bees, and fleeing horses—wild yet innocently sincere.

So I gave myself to her, because in her I saw myself. She picked me up, brought me to her nose, and breathed in the scent of age and ageless soils, me-herself. Her eyes welled up in tears.

She took me home with her that day and I was set on the window's ledge where the deep scarlet of my skin would glow in the autumn light of the fading sun. The ledge of the window was another favorite place of hers and grew to be mine too. A fern stretched to the window touching only slightly as if it were callused fingertips reaching beyond the boundaries of the glass. The blossoms smelled like tangerines but had the color of mangoes. Her mother had wanted to cut it down many times but the girl resisted, pleaded because she liked it so much. Her mother thought it had grown far too large to be decorative. The girl thought quite the opposite.

That first night I spent with her, I represented a world she knew, that she was born understanding but had yet to return to—for I was only a mere onion. As she watched the shadows on the wall and imagined that ivy grew from her and around those shadows, I told her that her soul was like an onion, and if she would peel the layers from the outside in when ever she was struggling with the shadows of herself, when she would shiver even though she was not cold, whenever she felt as though she were a stranger to her own self, layer by layer she would eventually reach the core, where the full flavors were rich and untainted, where she would be true and most alive.

In the last breath before night when the shades of evening mingled with twilight, with her bitten

fingernails and soft hands, she tore off the outermost layer, for it was already crumbling into pieces onto her bedspread.

Night fell; the sun rose, and sank again. She stood with broken wings; she burned with the blazing light off the blossoms of flowers in Eden. She peeled the onion layers one by one. She heard her lost child's cries of the one she had yet to bare. She thought of her friend who's divorced father broke up with his girlfriend because she threw hurtful glances at his daughter, cornered eyes that he did not see until a sincere letter written and signed with love. She smiled and then thought how her mother had not done the same for her, instead married on some far off island joining two instead of three. And she cried. Then she felt the guilt that rides along with selfish tears, as she saw the many other people suffering from hunger, loneliness, violence, and abuse. She could not justify her tears when there were others she should be crying for. She peeled another layer. She felt the valley of sorrows in her tears, she saw through the blinding fog of clouded eyes.

I remained on that ledge, waited for her until she needed me.

Then there was the time she cursed the day the umbilical cord was cut, forced her into a world of logic and reason when all was not straight forward but shades of gray between black and white. She thought about how the more she grows up the more she falls outside herself. She stood in front of the mirror staring hard into a reflection that held a vague resemblance. She walked slowly touching the glass with her fingers outlining her eyes, nose and down to the cave of her neck. She thought how this flesh was a shell, only momentary protection, a reflection that she eventually

would leave behind. She shed another layer standing in front of that mirror.

With time she needed me less and less. She forgot about me often. I was a little hurt but knew my time on the window's ledge would soon end. I was growing smaller and smaller in size. I was no longer firm but limp, soft and full of wrinkles.

There was a time she met her neighbor on the street. In passing he told her she was full of strength. Her thoughts condensed into a mist that floated to the ledge where I was waiting:

'Arms wide open, so vulnerable and afraid' and as briefly as they came, her thoughts dissipated, and a smile settled softly on her lips.

She told her neighbor that the statement was a strong one to make. Before the neighbor turned to walk away as he normally did with a dramatic grace, he paused and told her that she feels like an alien at times. I could feel her world stop as she fell into confusion wondering if it were her who had said those words but speaking with his voice, looking through his eyes staring at herself.

'A puzzle piece in the wrong box,' she said to herself.

And as he turned away he spoke in the language of her ancestors. Although she did not speak Spanish she understood what he had meant.

'He always manages to get the last word in' she thought to herself as she turned home.

I watched her from the window and was surprised when she didn't come to her room immediately, instead she sat on her porch under the sun blue silken sky. Bathed in a halo of orange and yellow light, she appeared protected and solid. In the days, weeks and returning seasons we had spent together I

had showed her the steadfast moon as it passed its arc through the sky, I dug a hole in the earth for her to explore. She swam in the waters which had sculpted every crack, crevice and curve of her and the landscape of her fragility. And from the hole, from which I dug, I saved the grains of sand for her to see the process as space and time solidify into a mountain of strength and return to a weathered stone. And now I watched knowing this was the last and the first I will see her like this.

As she grew stronger, I became smaller. I knew my purpose had been spent. I wanted to cry out to her one last time, stay nestled in the cup of her now callused hands as she drew me near her nose one last time before peeling the last layer of the skin that had already begun to smell of decay. I caught one last tear as it followed its path—eroding a wrinkle into a canyon.

From one tear, I felt faith restoring itself as it began filling then overflowing the hollow, ancient, eternal void. She reached out for the ground to shackle a rock to one hand, and with the other, she threw me to the sky. I flew through the particles of air and dust, as the rain flooded over me, thunder began playing a symphony of stormy hope and I found myself colliding into a universe of past layers and upon impact the silvery splinters of light shared a prophecy of future fertile soils. Into the air I was sent struck with lightening into an infinite cascade of watery beads, I glazed a field full of petals and dew scented mornings. Cliffs crumbled, glaciers melted, clouds enveloped me in a cocoon of pure eternity, volcanoes erupted tephra and magma, and I could taste the breath of iron and sulfur, death and rebirth. I spun in a rhythmic gyre of time.

And she let the onion go into the harmony of all things.

Kirby Jones

Who's Yelling?

I knew you
At night as a girl in the crowd—
All rhythm and gold,
A sparkling face, attached
To laughter like smiles.

I was new to the cliff
You'd been leaping from,
Asking for directions on the way
Just happy to be moving,
Testing my vigor on razor chances,
Holding my patience for later.

You slept while I talked
Of educating children and fostering
My faith, of repeating obsession
And baseball. Simple tasks
To be done—we'd change and
Be better than most.

Signals don't come from you,
I swallow my expectations.
The point was made and damage collected,
At various points was screened and tested,
mother-approved
For leaving your lover.

How else could I know my mistake?
Thanks to the day
For that personal triumph,
Now able to tell others
The room had one door.

You were a game and a teacher,
Protecting me and the future,
Ripe with the lessons of sense,
Though still unable to give.

Sara Mazza

The Mystery Man

His name was Dylan-Jay –
He always looks at me and smiles
but says nothing from his private corner.
“Who is that,” I wondered
“under those dark sunglasses?”
His clothes are old and ragged
But he is still a magnificent vision to behold.
One day he winked at me and spoke –
His voice was like a rusty spring breeze
Peaceful and calming; it chilled my spine.
I couldn’t speak back, what would I say?
I winked instead, with a sexy smile –
I, another mysterious one around the corner.

Jabez Richards

Comparatively Clean

My bathroom is clean,
Not to the point of sparkling,
Or worthy of comment from a visitor.
It is clean, not like the starched plaster walls of a nun's/
mind.

Sterile, but I am still able to reproduce
A perfect image of my bathroom
In the "not-so-scrubbed" walls of my sinner's mind.

My bathtub is clean,
Except for the filth,
Once removed from my "not-so-scrubbed" mortal feet.
Clean by my standards,
But certainly not suitable for a hypochondriac.
Sanitary enough for a poet—
But an AIDS patient? A burn victim?
Could a goddess bathe her halo in my modest Jacuzzi?
Would the cloud dust between her toes mingle
Or float like lint angels above the scum on the water's/
surface?

My sink is clean,
A wonder of the natural world.
Every day I wash the labor from my hands.
I place palms together
And let the soap and hot water do the rest.
Dear God, every day I wash dirt down the drain
Into space.
I polish windows and clearly
There are many who are heaven seeing
And all in the world that is dirty
Seems to me comparatively clean.

Matthew Campbell Roberts

Canyon Time

There are times when the world we know seems silent
And the still light of the canyon appears to be suspended,
Between river and sky.

The final rays of the sun climb the
Ridge of Last Chance Mountain,
Disappearing into the ethereal sky beyond.

This time of night the air speaks
And its voice floats through currents,
Existing Where your thoughts, the people who say your/
name

And silence live.

When you stand here,
You do not stand-alone.
The rock walls hold stories,
That come to life amidst the gray light.

I would like to think that time is non-existent here,
Knowing this night will end,
Not all at once,
But slowly.

Giving Way to a final cast
And a drift of my fly,
That listens to the currents,
which carries a voice,

Existing between the walls of the canyon,
The river,
And Timelessness.

Steve Rogers

Laura

Six hours of honesty can change two strangers forever
Poor little poets with our leaky pens,
We rub ourselves raw
Writing back to that space where words were shapes/
of definition:

Similar backdrops of violence and redemption,
The outline of odds we thought we'd never beat,
Never trust,
Never care enough to gain.

Now we amaze ourselves with the bombs we drop,
The four letter word rolling through the phone lines
and mail boxes.
The word "Fuck" shaking and exciting us
Far more than "Love" ever could.

We'll rewrite this inadequate English from the inside/
out.

You and I share a sibling-speak,
Empathizing thousands of miles like twins,
One injured, one not, both pressing the blood under/
dirty fingers.

My patience grows bigger as I wait for you to
Come close enough to look me in the eyes,
Though we've memorized the smile lines long ago.
Meanwhile we knit poems together, wrapping our/
arms around ourselves
And rocking like old women missing their long grown/
children.
We meet in the common ground of postage stamps/
and sealed envelopes

Passing through the hands of workers suddenly/
inspired
To call their wives, take the day off, take of their/
shoes—something unexplainable/
but so electric it sparks.

We waste paper on what we already know.
You read this poem before I ever wrote it.

Katie Thompson

**Domenico Ghirlandaio's
"The Birth of John the Baptist"**

Three women enter and approach the newborn child,
who is held in the arms of a woman
sitting expressionless on the floor.
They do not see the golden aura
around the head of the baby.
The first is young, elegantly dressed
in a gown that reaches the floor;
her hair curled and crimped and pinned.
She has stopped abruptly, and stares at you.

The two women behind her,
who were walking side by side
stop also, so as not to run into her.
The one on the left, lips parted in silent warning,
holds up an arm, a restraining gesture,
to stay her companion,
who puts out one slippered foot to brace herself.
They exchange glances, a look
that suggests this awkward moment was half expected.

Behind them another woman enters;
she is a servant, dressed in flowing layers
that flutter with her movement,
her rush to get into the room.
On her head she carries a platter of fruits,
in her hand a bottle of wine.
She barely pauses in response
to the motionless figures ahead of her,

but turns on her foot to angle her body around them
and looks toward another servant,
who is laying cloth and cups out on a table,
oblivious in the back shadows of the room.

Your attention is drawn again
to the young woman, still staring,
and you feel that you are an intruder here,
the reason for her halt.
She stands defensively, arms drawn up to her waist
in a subtle but guarded pose.
She watches you, eyes slightly narrowed.
Get out, says her look, you do not belong here.

Meghan Thompson

Salvador Dali's "Alice In Wonderland"

Such an explosion of colors.
A child's' nirvana
Turned narcotic nightmare.
A female innocent jumping rope,
Atop a brightly colored mushroom
Cloud. As though an atom bomb
Has been dispensed
Onto an artists pallet.
Her shadow, always one step
Behind.
Utter nonsense,
Mixing with youthful truth and purity.
Creating an asylum-like playground.
A Mantis, praying,
Bounds across the watercolored endless sky.
A giant hare
Seeming to materialize from nothing.
Come to keep watch
Over this precious jewel.

Matthias Todd

The Whale

I thought of you
When I came across
A dead beached whale

It was as though
I saw our relationship washed ashore
As this dead beached whale

And all that was left
Of us
Was bones and rotting meat

And as time moved on
The oceans tides
Would come in

Washing over
And dragging away

What was left
Of the whale
To her deep graveyard

Sitting Here

Dishes sit in the dishwasher done
And I sit here
Letting them sit there.

I should be doing homework
But I'm writing poetry.

Clothes need to be washed,
Floors need to be swept,
Two bathrooms need to be cleaned
Because they are starting to smell.

I have my homework
And I sit here procrastinating on all fronts

Noisy Water Review

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