

THE NOISY
WATER REVIEW

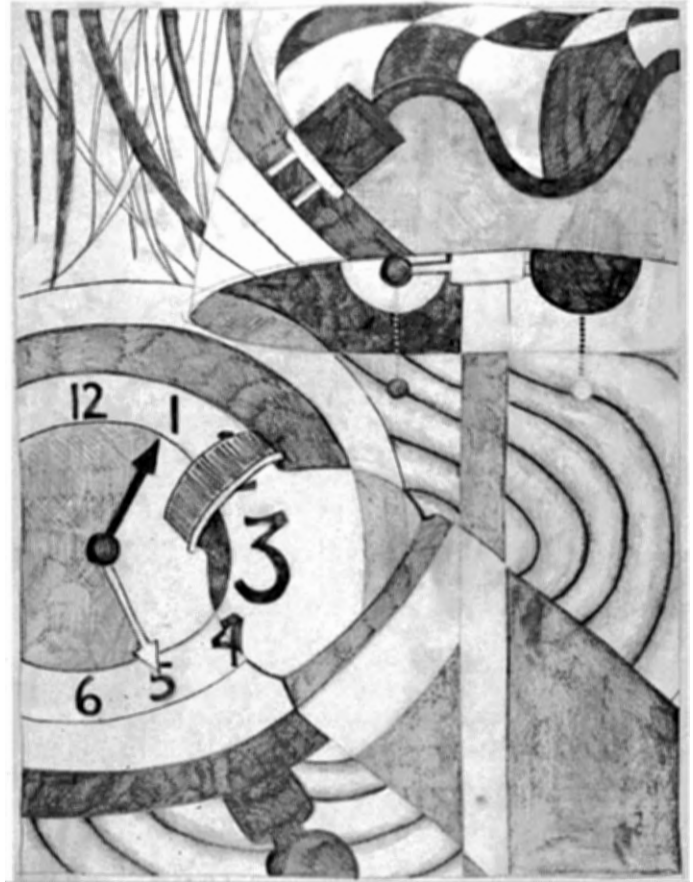
2006-2007

THE
NOISY WATER REVIEW



WHATCOM COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S JOURNAL
FEATURING FICTION, POETRY AND ART FROM
WASHINGTON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STUDENTS.

2006 - 2007



Maris Holmes
Lifestyle
Pencil, 24" x 18"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Editor
Kami Westhoff

Art Editor
Karen Blakley

Fiction Editor
Kate Miller

Poetry Editor
Chad Helder

Special thanks to Rosemary Sterling

The Noisy Water Review accepts submissions of fiction and poetry from current Washington State Community College students from September through March. Submissions should be emailed to Kami Westhoff at kwesthof@whatcom.ctc.edu.

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PREFACE

Welcome to the 2006-2007 issue of *The Noisy Water Review*, a journal of fiction, poetry, and art. This issue is the first to publish students from around the state, including writers from Highline and Wenatchee Community Colleges, alongside Whatcom students, and we hope this trend will continue in order to include a variety of voices from around Washington.

The content of this issue addresses such tragedies as a soldier leaving for war, a woman trapped within the illness-stricken shell of a body, and the never-ending cycle of pain one human causes another. However, even within such suffering, hope endures: the magnolia still blooms; the loyal dog licks the face of its owner; there is comfort in the sock, the shirt, the pillow of a lover.

We're delighted to present such brave and innovative work and hope you enjoy it. Thank you for reading.

Kami Westhoff
Spring 2007



Alison Weimer
Summer
Oil, 16" x 12"

RAY ARANI

Picasso

I have Picasso's vision in this place we call home
A whirlwind of casual dance turns to a hurricane of sight
sound and mostly touch,
Time is frozen but we
Barrel on tossing and turning in our once-dance-now-
storm
Finding another, more fitting place to call our own
Because this home is like Picasso's sight,
Close in and find that nothing's out of place at all and
everything is just -
Right up until that ghost comes floating by
And you start spinning and falling and spinning slows to
rolling
And you're a top that's lost its momentum
Rolling over the once-smooth-now-cracked sidewalk
cement
Dodging skid marks and road kill on the street
Finding what's different out there is only a reflection
Of what matches inside your own mind.
Will you come stumbling back?
If you do I swear I'll wrap you up so tight you'll barely be
able to breathe
So safe and sound until I pull your string and send you
spinning
Into a whirlwind tossing up paper scraps and leaves
Until I join in
And our hurricane stops time and,
In this picture frame we find
Picasso's sight
And everything is just
Right

RAY ARANI

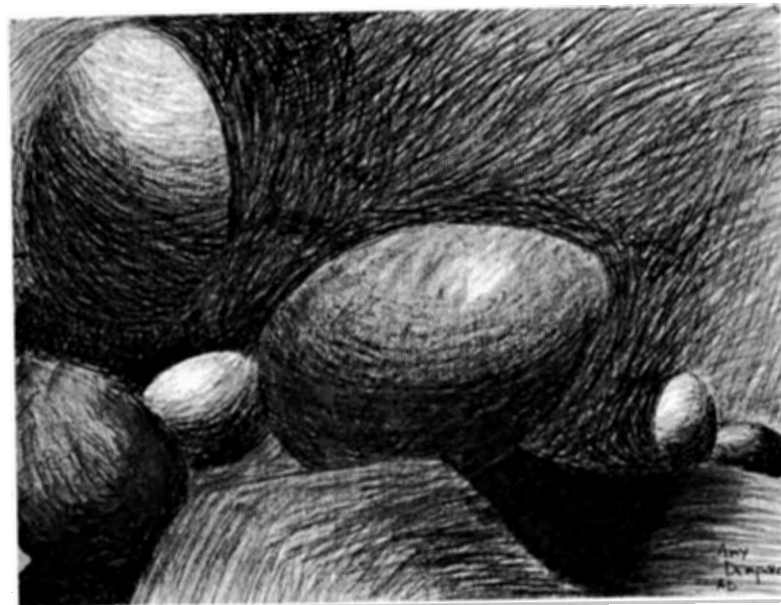
Fifteen Minutes of Shame

think like a poet
get the words to flow
like water in a hot shower
release the confusion
like the steam of the shower stream
as it hits her skin she silently screams
to burn this plague within
rewritten emotion like an afterthought of shock
the poet knows she weeps futilely
she has no control of this disease
but her forehead on her knees
she can't will away this sickness
even after the cure
the potency of the shock lingers
tainting her...
tainting what?
her womanhood? her femaleness?
what is it she tries to wash away
breaking her fingernails on burning skin
fifteen minutes of shame
assessing her sin
her sickly tarnished name
she dreads exchanging the shower for a mirror
to see her face
dreading what she'll find there
suddenly she longs for a paper and a pen
to let it all out, what's seething there within
to let the words just flow...
to think
like a poet

RAY ARANI

X

Her favorite letter of the English Alphabet is X.
Like an X-rated movie or the X X X of a poison bottle
She is something to be publicly avoided or treated with a
cautious respect
Or the double X chromosome she wears like a badge on
her sleeve
Showin' the world what's buried within,
Beneath her skin,
Tattooed across her shoulders,
Screaming and whispering "SHE".
She is a woman whole and complete,
Beginning to end,
Queen bee,
Undeniably female...
Woman; definite and divine
Woman; supple and dark as moon light
Woman; shines light as the sun,
Rays shooting infinitely through time
As all things that come close
Are caught up in the undeniable force;
Spinning in the grip of Her gravitational pull.
Woman; Goddess in her own right
Woman; indelible perfection,
A flawless reflection of X and its twin
Chromosomes haunting each cell within
Permeating an energy so intense it can only be defined;
Divine.



Amy Dempster
The Eggs
Charcoal, 18" x 24"

GREG COLFER

Work in Progress

This is my tribute to the incomplete
This poem, a burning monument to "Works in Progress"
How many sheets of forgotten paper litter
The world of shadowed corners
Crumpled under beds,
and couches,
forgotten and bitter
Half birthed from the minds of their creators
Frankenstinian creations abandoned
for greener fields
More appealing and filled with freer flowing verse
This is tribute to the stoically resolute,
Those poems left unedited in the darkness of desk
Or nihilism of un-powered hard drive
How many fallen poems
like forgotten toys
Litter the corner bedrooms of the world?

Let Dead Gods Rest

The priests that dribbled blood
Over their alters have faded
Their hymns have echoed and
 Fallen into silence
The dead rest in ancient ruins
And the books of History Students
Why call up the dead?
The many names and legends become
Distorted caricatures of living faith
Taxidermic mounts in modern prose
And line
Mounted trophies of intellectual prowess
Like that Elk we took on that Alaska trip
Whose head adorns the wall of the den
Blank glass eyes staring
Forever

Let Dead Gods Rest



Elizabeth Clements
Dawn, Sunset
Monotypes, 8" x 14"

HEATHER HAMM

The Demise of an Angel

There, that is where I stood,
the carving knife in my hand, poised,
aiming for the cold moist sandwich.
In a millisecond of darkness, the TV changed.

My football game was gone
In its place was a reporter's face
Graphic images of the 3 o'clock train appeared
Women, men, pieces of a bomb.

Terror filled my mind
jarring my thoughts and body.
Lisa was on that train
my life, my angel.

In one last spark of desperation
I grabbed my phone and keys
After an eternity my car roared to life.
Raindrops pelted the windshield.

Uncomprehending I was outside my car,
walking robotically
toward a stainless steel door –
in slow motion I was ushered in

Slowly I wandered, listlessly –
the faces everywhere in lines
broken, bruised, bloody
bodies crumpled and waiting.

Then I stopped.
This face stood out from the rest.
She lay on the slab,
steely cold and polished.

Bloody scalp and mangled hair,
Missing fingers and her nose,

yet the most haunting, was her eyes.

Empty, lifeless, and glazed,
they stared up at me,
open wide, in horror,
the same way I was looking at her



Alex Machin-Mayes
The Shades of Twilight
Oil, 8" x 12"

JESSICA LOHAFFER

Blade the belly

she broke his back when she left town
couldn't stand the idea of him standing on his own

He's just been too loud about things lately.

it didn't take much to take apart the spine
start at the bottom. Slide the knife in.
give it an inch.
Pull the blade across the belly.
Soon the ribs start popping out like pictures in a children's
book

I just needed a little understanding.

She held the ears, in a jewelry box
set it next to her knee during Thursday's marriage
counseling,
damp handkerchief resting on the closed
lid

Do you see? He's not even trying to listen.

of course.
There's blood, pooling at their feet, his feet, or hers.
it's a squirt gun a full bathtub
finally, a water fountain
closing from years of
neglect

*you damn near ruined my life, did you have to take my favorite
sweater too?*

what does it take to keep a complaining woman happy?
A broken sink tapping heels
someone to hold her story.



Darleen Dixon
Paper Bag
Conté, 18" x 24"

JESSICA LOHAFFER

Metacognition Part 3

He put her on the other side of a bridge unfinished.
Promises

give me today. I will find strength materials stone

(and what of tonight)

tonight

tonight my voice will find you in the places you dare not go.

He put her on the other side of a bridge unfinished.
Whispers

*I will wait here. I will wait softly and barely moving
lovely for your return*

*I know that each day I lose builds me closer to you.
Drink the power from loose moments
I will sustain myself with the thought of you.*

Today

*Today I keep my shaking in a box for you
when you are ready.*

He put her on the other side of a bridge unfinished.

While skyscrapers scooped danger in the bright air

a restless clock like like like
this.

This is your last call

Champagne dripping off the bow

Broken bottles spinning towards sails



Laura Williams
Woman with Flowers
Ink, 22" x 18"

The Soul

Sweeping melodies of the Romantic
Era, born away by the constricting
Sense of formality. And the static
State of modernism; disengaging
All ties with the past and little hope for
The future. This is what we call life now.
That current which feeds to our very death
And takes a little bit of us each day.
The cold touch of life is felt from the first
Breath we breath, gnawing slowly to reach our
Soul from which we will one day surely burst
Into the life set for us on that hour.
When groping our way ignorantly there
We find naught but infinite space and air.

SARAH POLLOCK

He's leaving again

He's leaving again;
For the front line.
His arms embrace me, lips tremble.

See his shirt, his sock,
The last book he read
Clench his pillow, inhale his scent.

I cry until I sleep.
Two years until I see him again.
He's leaving again.



Jason Jurado
Self-Portrait
Oil, 12" x 8"

SUNSHINE BURGANDY RIMER

Karmic Rape

*-it is said what they do to you now, you did to them in the
lifetimes before*

bright bloodlust flashes,
cosmic dance.
I'm bitter, bitter, bitter,
so anything to take the pain away.

a lying hope,
who breathed its last,
before my love.
crushed beneath numbing frozen waves
of my eternally bruised and bloody voice.
screaming with no one to hear me,
falling but nothing's beneath me,
this human body denies *me*.
this limited life with limited eyes,
cut off from the dance of creation
trapped in flesh and utterly powerless,
punished for sins I've forgotten.

accused, too weary and too worn,
too wanted and too undeserving,
Karmic Rape, how could I?

soft tiny fingers, little round belly,
I sing to bring the sweeter things,
but my heart bleeds into the world,
and my light bleeds into you.

drained and empty.
ancient runic ties to my past lives.
Karmic Rape, how could I?



Joy Simong Khom
Untitled
Charcoal, 24" x 18"

GLORIA PIPER ROBERSON

Magnolia Blossom

That morning lay crisp when Charlotte
drove her green convertible
up my weed-cracked driveway in Wenatchee.

We walked along
the dirt path
beyond the house to the edge

of the maple trees
where the magnolia bloomed
with saucer-shaped,

pale pink flowers. Her untidy
hair dangled about her face
like frayed jute

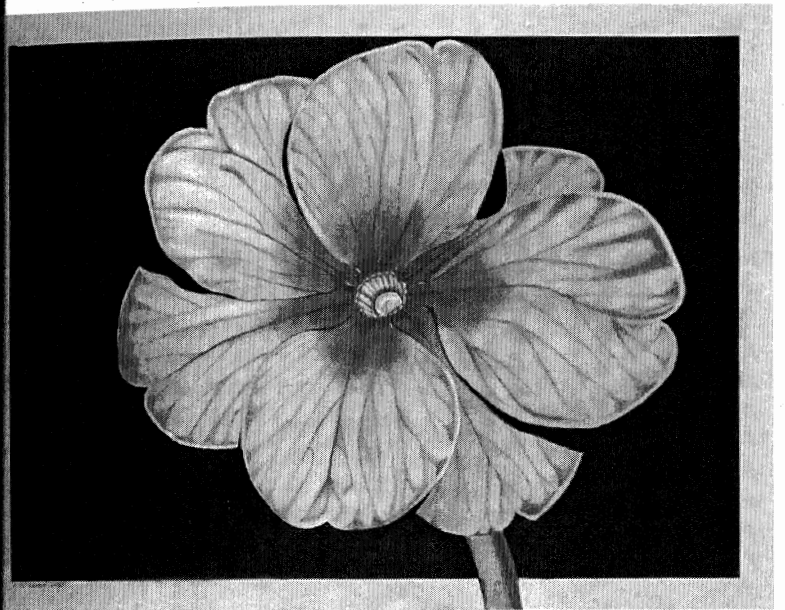
from the English sparrow's nest.
She told me about going away
to a hospital to make her mind

whole again,
and then, one day, coming back
to sit on the grass

under the tree with me, yet again.
She picked
a magnolia bloom

to float in the footed
crystal candy dish
on my mahogany sofa table.

I never saw her again.



Akane Tomizawa
Primrose
Graphite/Charcoal
17" x 22"

GLORIA PIPER ROBERSON

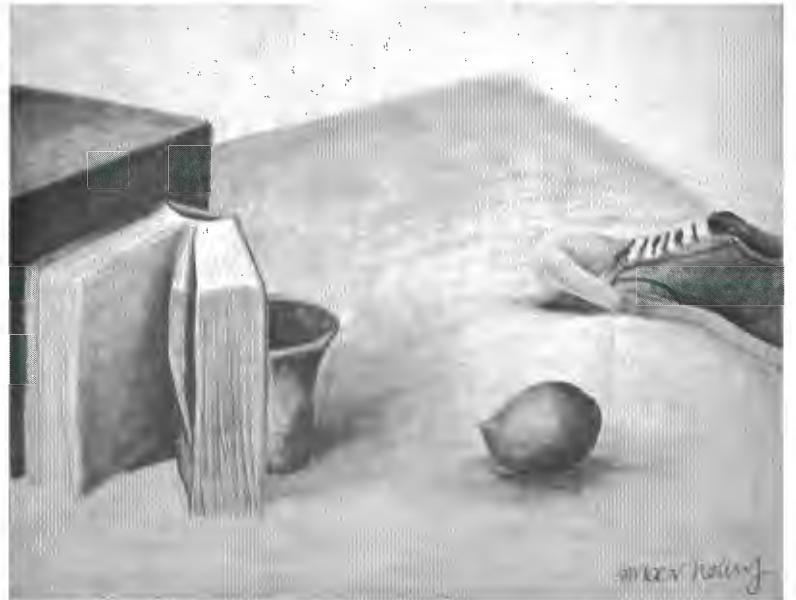
Air Raids, California 1943

The wild siren
sent me collapsing
to my knees
under my school desk
my head to the floor
my eyes squeezed shut tightly

tucked in a small heap—
raw and fragile
as a fresh laid egg—
not wanting my pink underpants
to show, holding my breath
as if I had fallen in a black lake

waiting for the shrill scream
the straight all-clear wail
the come-now-children
back-to-reading blast.

When it finally came
I was a frog let loose
from its lidded box.



Amber Holway
Untitled
Charcoal, 18" x 24"

SHAWN STALBERGER

Mouths

Those future NASCAR dads are on the prowl.
Please hide your daughters! They all have Bluetooth!
A mouthful of spark plugs? Suburban spoofs
of gold fronted grills are proud of their scowl.
While fanged stilettos stay inside bowels
of buildings, speech impediments butcher vowels
into walls of pink reverb. I have proof.
Dry off your body with sandpaper towels
and chain smoke your way into the Redwood
Forest fire, burning the bad ideas
back into your idle conversations.
Forgetting what in the hell was just said,
what mattered, feeling your perspiration
playing tug-o-war in my open grave.



Tyler Jones
Pumpkin Tea
Pencil, 9" x 12"

The Box

The UPS man found her in the backyard bending over wild, tangled raspberry bushes plucking the bruise-red berries for pies.

“Mrs. Cornwall?” His voice landed near her.

As she straightened to face him, her hand full of berries, her hat fell from her head.

“Yes.” She shaded her eyes with her upturned hand, holding the sun’s heat on her palm.

He stepped forward, stooped quickly and retrieved the hat, replacing it boldly.

“It’s my late husband’s. It’s too big for me but I like to wear it anyway.”

He nodded, his lips pressed into a hard line. “Memories are hard to let go, Mrs. Cornwall. I need your signature this afternoon.”

She let the berries spill from her hand into the strainer that sat near her bare feet then took the official pen he removed from his uniform pocket and signed her name on the form. He handed her the gray-wrapped box from Granite Hills Crematorium.

“My mother’s ashes,” she confided softly as if his kindness with her toppled hat made them close enough friends now for her to reveal suddenly such a secret.

“Are you keeping or burying them?”

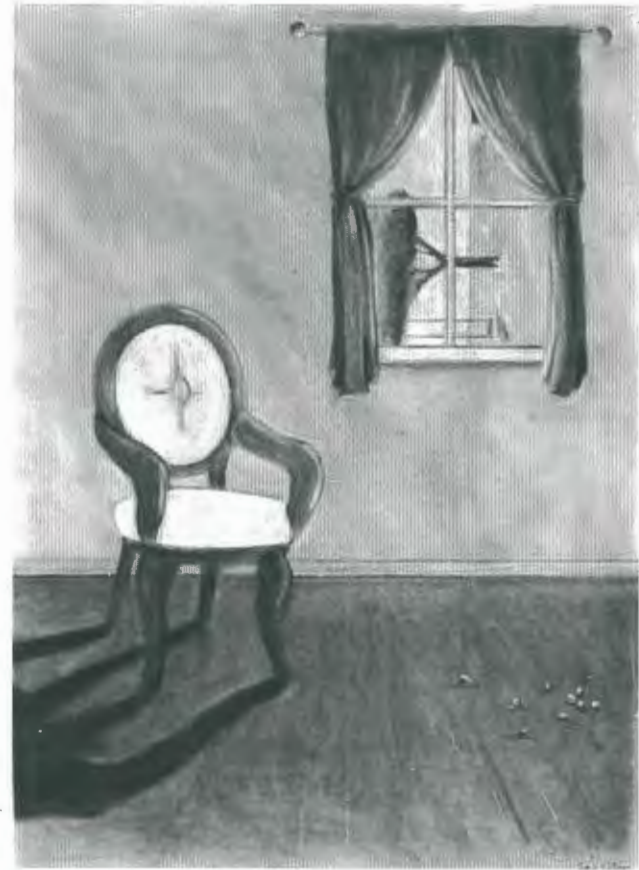
She shrugged.

He took her secret and strode like a soldier, duty done, out of the yard. She watched the back of his wrinkled uniform

vanish around the blue hydrangea in full bloom at the corner of her house.

She took the box into the kitchen and positioned it in the middle of the pine table. She sat down, pulled her feet up onto the wooden seat, and laced her fingers around her knees as if a turtle held tightly inside its shell, not moving, staring out at the gray box.

When the dull pain took over, she stood and rubbed the small of her back then took the box into the spare bedroom. "You are a horrible girl," she said, shaking the box until the bone chips rattled. "You know what that means." She slapped the side of the box then opened the closet. She dropped the box in front of the door. "Not one sound out of you, not one, do you hear?" She kicked the box into the closet. It shot past hems of woolen skirts and winter coats and hit hard against the back wall. She slammed the door and pushed the chest of drawers in front.



Joshua Willems
Surrealist Interior
Charcoal, 20" x 16"

Deep Blue

The sun catches in the glass on my windowsill, casting a liquid blue light on my wall. A thousand fragments of memories, dancing, calling me. One piece hangs above the others, suspended with fishing line and a thumbtack. It's oddly shaped, and smooth around the edges. I can still remember the feel of it between my fingers, though it's been years since I touched it. It's covered with dust now, and doesn't throw light like it used to.

The day is overcast, and walking on the rocky beach hurts our ankles. But the beach is my life; I don't feel right when I'm not breathing it. Well, the water, really, but being a land-dweller, the beach and boats are about as close as I can get. I love living on this island... the water is never far. We catch sight of the whales, I'm sure they're the pod I've been studying. They're flipping their tails like they're waving to me. My husband stops walking, and bends to pick something up. He holds it out to me- a piece of blue beach glass. It matches his eyes, peering out from the black curls of his hair and beard. It's a bigger piece than I would expect to find here, our waters so rough. It's as large as a silver dollar, though not nearly so round. Perfectly soft around the edges, smooth as skin but hard as marble. I tell him I love blue glass, it seems almost magical, like something potions should be stored in. "Well," he says, "this is for you, wife." I motion to my pants (no pockets) and tell him he better hold on to it. I'm making a joke- I have been dropping everything lately. Last week when I was driving home, my hand didn't listen when I wanted to shift the truck. It's probably my back; I've been doing a lot of lifting on the boat. I'm going to the doctor tomorrow, just to be sure. We turn and head for home. We are having friends over to barbeque salmon.

A wind of cigarette smoke rips through the beach, and I am back. *She* is here, 100mm cigarette hanging from her mouth. It compliments her faded homemade tattoos nicely. They are thick and black, looks like something is crawling on her arm. I ask her to turn on the TV.

"Do it yourself." She grunts, flicking ashes on my bedspread, and leaves. Bitch. Just as well, no TV. The smoke makes it harder for me to breathe, I concentrate...air goes in, air goes out, air goes in, air goes out, air goes in, air goes out. Two months of running an add in the paper, and she was the best we could do. My dog, Koa, jumps up on the bed with me. In my blurry vision I can make out the copper shape of her head. Her ears are up, I know she's smiling. She puts her paws on my arm, and lays her tawny head on my chest. She is my joy. We lay together, just breathing. My eyes land on the blue glass fish from Hawaii.

It has been six months since the doctor told me I have multiple sclerosis. He told me it might not be that bad, that lots of people live long, full lives. My husband and I see now that this will not be me. My legs are already starting to shake, my head moves involuntarily. It has come far in six months. We decide we will travel, do all of the things I was meaning to get around to. I have maybe one year, maybe a few, to pack in a lifetime of experiences. We buy tickets to Hawaii. So exotic, and so far away from here.

We get a hotel on the beach. It is a nice room, money is no object. And they let me bring Koa! Who knew being a cripple would have such advantages? We spend our days on the beach, most nights, too. We get our meals to go and picnic. During the heat of the day my husband takes me in the ocean. The water slides up my thighs like silk stockings. Once I'm in, it's hard to find the boundary between the water and my skin, it's almost the same temperature. My husband stands behind me, his arms around my waist. I look out at the sea and cry.

We stroll through the main street, ducking into the tourist shops at every cloudburst. Almost without warning we are drenched again, and run to the next doorway (my leg is hurting today, so I have this funny gimpy run). We are laughing as we come through the door. It's a nicer shop, artsy. I find a whole display of glass fish, set up like they are in an ocean, with little pieces of coral scattered throughout. There is one that is all blue, several different shades twisted together. Somehow when I look into its center it looks so deep, like all the oceans of the world have been squeezed within its

belly. He doesn't say a word, just takes it from my hand and up to the register.

Koa licks my face. "Koa, remote." She perks up, I repeat myself, "Koa, remote." She brings me some socks. I repeat; she tries again, her ball. I repeat; she hits the light switch, plunging us into the dark. Repeat, and finally, the remote off the floor. It takes me a few tries, too, but finally I get it on our favorite channel, it's all nature shows. They describe everything as it happens, so I can make some sense of the colorful blobs. My favorites are the shows about whales. One time I heard a sound-byte from one of my old research teammates. They are still doing a lot of good work, helping our whales. Not letting the commercial fisherman drive them all out. Today it's cheetahs. We watch, and as the cheetahs make a kill Koa gets excited and barks.

I can hear my husband come home. She greets him, then silence. They are kissing. She lights him a cigarette while he puts down the pizza and hangs his coat. We never smoked. The pizza smells so good, even through the smoke. My stomach rumbles. Well, at least something still works around here. I grin to myself. Damn, that made me drool. I can feel the dribbles sliding down my chin. She always acts so damn smug when she wipes my face, sometimes she even baby talks to me. I struggle to get it off; slinging my head towards the pillow...I just can't seem to twist my neck enough. There! Contact. Not quite enough, though.

I really want some pizza. A year ago, my husband would have mashed some up and brought it to me. Even after it was too risky for me to swallow for myself, if it was something I really loved, he'd put some in my mouth for me to suck on. Now he doesn't even come in to say hi. She controls him completely; she knows he is too tired. Well, he'll see plenty of me tonight. My home nurse whose visit is often the highlight of my week, is coming tomorrow, that means they will give me a bath tonight. New feeding tube, new catheter tube, the whole shebang. Ugh, that whores hands all over me, wrinkling her face at

my stink. *If I could do it my self, I would, lady!* It's her fault I get to stinking, anyway. She was hired as my caregiver, now she just fucks my husband. As soon as she started that, she started complaining that her back hurt too much to do anything for me. "Of course your back hurts," I want to scream, "you're always bent over for my husband!" She still gets her paychecks.

I really don't begrudge my husband a little satisfaction, God knows it's been a decade since I could do anything for him. I only wish we had common corner hookers on this island. I wouldn't have to live with one of them.

My gaze floats up to the only light in the darkened room, the window. The sun pouring in is stained blue from all my glass. One piece shoots up, narrow at the bottom, tall and fluted. Through my eyes it looks like a fountain frozen mid-air. We bought it at the Oregon shore. I was in a wheelchair by then, and we knew I wouldn't be able to fly much longer. My husband already had to do almost everything for me, although usually I could at least manage to feed myself. We went to see his family, kind of one last reunion. We all rented a beach house together. I was so happy to be with everyone, but it felt like my last trip out, like I was about to go to prison.

It is so windy today! I say that like it's any different than all the other days here, the wind never stops. Koa sure enjoys it, though. All the new smells in the air drive her crazy. We are all walking into town, my husband pushing me in my chair. The girls run ahead, his sister's daughters. They are so beautiful, bursting with life. I was so sad when I realized we would never have children. How could I go through pregnancy in a wheelchair? Now I am glad we found out before we even tried, it would be awful to have a child along on this downward slope. Still, I am in the sun, I feel the wind, and I have my husband to care for me. If this had to happen, I suppose this is the best way. We are heading into town, to check out the shops and find some dinner. The girls are boycotting dinner in favor of ice cream. They are singing their silly song "You scream, I scream, we all scream for ICE CREAM!!!" between bursts of giggles.

The first shop we come to is old and weather beaten, sitting right off the beach. A cheery little bell rings as we enter. The girls are off,

investigating. We round a corner (no easy feat in this contraption), and it's a whole room of blue glass. Vases, glasses, bottles of all shapes and sizes. Plates, bowls, statues, wall hangings, sun-catchers, wine glasses, jewelry. I can't believe all this is in one place, it looks as if the ocean has crawled right through the window. I am off, too, on a treasure hunt. By the time we leave, my lap is over-flowing with boxes. The girls are finally settling for spaghetti.

We have taken a dozen trips now, but he will never tell me what anything costs. I know it must be a lot, though, especially combined with all my medical bills (which he also refuses to talk about). He says my only concern should be with enjoying myself.

On the plane on the way home, I open my eyes and see my husband's face, so tired. The bags under his eyes are dark and puffy, his skin sallow. He looks used up; I have used him up. He catches me looking at him, and quickly re-arranges his face into a false smile that breaks my heart. I have tried to pack a lifetime of experiences into these few years, but it looks as though he has packed in a lifetime of worries and strain. At home, I can hear him in his office next to our room. I can hear his agitated movements, shuffling papers, shutting drawers too hard...the occasional muttered curses. I wonder how much more of this life he can take. I wonder how much more I have left.

My husband and his whore come in to bathe me. She unhooks the bag on my catheter, making a gagging sound. At least he shoots her a dirty look. I won't meet her eyes. She leans close as if to adjust me, "Cunt." She whispers in my ear, and begins yanking my sweatpants off. I stare off, and dance with the light on my wall.



Jettie Wilce
Woman
Chalk, 24" x 18"

Peccavi

And it started as just that--“just that”. The profile glance came, and with it, a smile--your eyes. Your eyes told stories and gave centuries. There was nothing of your age there, youth was wasted on you and present conversation lost. Gazes into centuries left me traveling. They left me in places where time and place were nothing. I just flew with my thoughts and myself weightlessly. Into your eyes, I found universe, infinity, and everything beyond; with you I just flew. Inside your eyes, the world was allowed to just pass on by.

Ocean, and you were blue. You were so calm, utterly complex, and came in waves. You had an undertoe but would never let me drown. You took me under, taught me to swim in these new waters. We came to new worlds that we discovered and would leave behind. We drew maps so that our journeys would never become lost. Eagerness was the one thing we never lost, eagerness was the only thing.

You could never just step, never just walk, never just talk. Your apartment was damned with wooden floors and you brought quakes. Your voice came too quietly, so abrasive, in fake accents, or in song always two keys flat. With a look that gave you years upon years, you showed yourself in baby steps. It was with this that I was drawn to you. I was your boy who couldn't remember if he was Catholic or not. For you, I might cross myself. For you, I sang “God” in high keys, and for the first time, I gave myself wholly. In simple touch, in kisses, or in the bindings of sex, I never just held you. I never just bit, never just heard moans; I always gave back. As you put yourself in me, I threw into you. I dove into my ocean, my seas. When we made waves, I gave you tide.

One day, the seas became too calm. Stepping through a broken door and silence, I looked for you and tried to find causes. Searching the rooms, I came closer and closer to your deluge, and found you. You knew I was there, and of

course, I saw you. We stayed there for so long. And you just stared out the window. Your gaze never changed; your held your posture. I sat down and waited. I could only imagine your eyes now. How many more years would be brought in your reciprocal, in change? In this, would your eyes still be the same? And then finally, for a time too long, you turned around and sat with me. Held me. You just cried. There was no sobbing, no shaking. I could feel your tears, and as always, I gave back. Your waves crashed in finally. I pulled them back, and held you tighter. And then...you let go. You left. Maybe I didn't pull back hard enough.

I took a breath in, and sat there. I took in your situation and just cried for you, for your silence and your broken door. I wept for the steps too quiet, and the sobs you didn't have. Even with you gone, I just gave back what you had given to me. I let my rain pour, made deluges of my own. The sun slept and I watched my shadow disappear. I came home. I slowly began my pillar, the rituals. I turned on the lights as I went in, took off my shoes appropriately, let my jacket go back to living on the floor. I came into the kitchen and filled the kettle, waited for its chorus. Then there it was, perfectly centered on the kitchen table. Wrapped in blue paper: *David* in black ink, and I could not stop my oceans from falling. The kettle screamed, I matched it, and let my oceans pour. My days of blue faded, and it had all come to this:

Our kisses behind closed doors, moaning beneath sheeted pillows, the bending of contours into a single line, sharing of self, grasping of hands and the climax in our sin--and this. With this, I could no longer give back. With this, you gave and our rhythm fell. I forgot the tide, and drowned in your waters; I floundered. Your waves stopped coming and I was left with nothing. You had taken away my reality.

I sat on a rock today and watched you. It ever so slowly became my precipice. I watched the waves and the grey skies torment. Demeter wept. With the rain upon my cheek, the wind played with me, with all of us. Seagulls

fought it, charged it with all of their might, gawked at this unknown force, and one-by-one, lost their battles. The waves colored themselves, filed in crashing. They sprayed and salt filled the air, filled my nose, covered my skin, soaked my clothes. The wind blew and the rain poured harder. I held your letter and watched its ink run. Your cowardice stained my fingers. Staring at these waters, I screamed at you, let my tears fall into you, and I wondered why. This morning, you faced the dawn with slit wrists, waded in, and slipped your head under; let life go.

Taupe walls and shitty magazines: the aesthetic of tranquility. With a pinch and a push, I watched my blood, my fate run down yellow tubing. In a glass tube, I watched your only remnants flow. In purple fluid, vicarious death poured.

Today, you, my everything, my mind, body, and soul cast a shadow upon me. Your messenger, a man with an Arabic accent and a stethoscope delivered my sentence. You killed me, Cameron, and someone else came and did your bidding.

Life's bitter irony came today. It was your love that gave me life, and now that love has killed us both. In killing yourself, you already killed me. You slit your wrists, and it was my blood running down your arms, my life departing. Your head went under, and today, I stopped breathing. Today, your blood spilled on my fingers. Sweetheart, you've grabbed my hand and I can already feel my head slipping under. Pay attention, baby, because here I come. Here I come.

Shadows in moonlight, Norma Baker on this silver screen, I became lost in your footsteps coarse in the sand. I followed the paths of others, of you, and brought myself to Hemingway. The bell tolled for me tonight. Veiled stars looked down upon me and shells crushed beneath my feet. I decided to sit down. Poseidon's breath grabbed me, and I fell into your chest. With inhale, I took you in again and remembered. Your arms were harbor, your presence nothing less than solace but where have you

brought me now? Typhoons in my ocean's crying, you were supposed to save me. And where are you now? Coming closer to all beginning and to your end, I freed myself of clothing and felt all of creation blanket me. Water was velvet against my skin, Cameron. I walked forward, only in inches. This blanket was a bit colder than what I had imagined. Giving chance to these cold hands, these nimble fingers, I watched the skies and adjusted. In its obliteration, its torment, its desperation, it finally began to smile. Grey clouds departed if even for a moment and the moon's raw glow enveloped me. It reflected off the water and onto my skin. I kissed it, tasted its salt upon my lips and continued to admire. I stood there and found my breath next. Something so my center, and with hands upon my belly, I became it. Stars glimmered, grabbed for my attention. My eyes became their reality. Thousands of years in triumph made it into this moment. I saw them, greeted them. I stepped in another inch, the cold hands took my lower back and morphed reflection. Cupping my hands, I grabbed this canvas and took the power of waves, willed them. I took it and threw it upon my face, baring it of all impurities. It was so exhilarating. I allowed myself to fall back, take on the action of water upon my face. It was still so cold, but I didn't mind. For a moment, I let myself shiver. I took these pressures, held them, and then released. Coming up, I again found my breath. Water rivered off my back, and dripped from my chin, my fingers. Sin fell from white skin into reflective waters, repentance found in mirror image. Baptism became my own, and these waters, creation, this ocean became my River Jordan, and I dipped myself again. I gave myself freely to this force, and again became cleansed. Running my fingers through my hair, I washed my sins away. I prepared.

I continued ritual and stepped back on shore. Reborn and creating this destiny, I placed relic in my right hand.

"Hail Mary, full of grace..."

My finger dancing across beads, I continued and found my blue steel. Cheating you, I took fate and held it between my thumb and index finger.

"Hail Mary, full of grace..."

Taking a new path, I ran parallel to my first. I kept past experience in sight of this future. I began my own Hajj and took myself back into the beginning of all time, and feeling it with my toes first, I found it again: my River Jordan. With waves coming up and going back down, rebirth became so relevant, and I felt myself cleansed. I felt myself whole.

With kid gloves, I felt this water again and it flowed. In and out. It flowed and so did I. In and out. Looking upon these stars, flattering their dreams and mine, I basked myself in moonlight for one last time. Lost in feeling, lost among rushes and absolute ecstasy in a situation requiring anything but, I floated. I lay on my back and became subordinate to my stars, to these waves, to creation, and to perpetual beginnings. And we flowed. In and out. We flowed.

Nature's rhythm took me by the hand and I relished it. I relished these moments, and I relished this breath. I relished this hand and plunged it into my wrist, and I relished its flow. The cold water and salt took me again by surprise, but I let them flow. In and out, I became reborn in the seat of all things, and just let it. In and out, I became cleansed. In and out, I took these beginnings in, and with tears running down my face, I let you out. God falling out of my right hand, I let it go. It was okay because in these waters and in this reflection, I had found him and here we were.

Again taking fate down my right wrist, I released again and screamed. I screamed for it all. I took all of the tension in and released it. I bent myself backwards, and once again floated. With myself sharing in ocean waters, I became the red upon this canvas and maybe the reflection in the stars'

eyes. In seizing fate, I became my own constellation. I changed my stars.

Warmth being something only left to my bones, shivering, I just lay back and admired. My sight becoming dark too fast, I tried to listen. My rhythm slowly became the oceans, and I found my center in the waves. Out of my wrists and onto these fingers, I became one with God upon our own painted ceilings. With my arms outstretched, he and I became. God came to me, sought deliverance, and touched creation. Body in the water and heart and its center, we became it and I wept. In passing moments, true happiness did become my own, and I basked in the light of the heavens. My life leaving me, breath weakened, I no longer felt the waters and they began to envelope me. Ascension would come in mirrored reflection. Tonight, in sinking I would only rise that much closer.

“Hail Mary, full of Grace...”

Swallowing ocean water, this became my atonement. Giving back to his sin, I let my blood flow into his sea.

Lost with sight and breath almost gone, I brought my lips to part, and brought myself to smile. Lit waters surrounding me and kingdom shining upon me, I looked higher and embraced, and I took this for everything that it was, and everything it ever could be. I reached a bit farther, and tonight I touched creation. In reflection, I brought myself lifted, and in achieving fate, I brought myself delivered; here it was. And here it was. I closed my eyes and let myself drift. With my body shutting down, I had never felt so alive. My last breaths were coming, just seconds in my making. I could hear them crashing upon the shore. Pulling my hands tighter, existence rushed out of me, and I thanked God for what I had. *In release*, I let it go, and forgave you, Cameron. *Sharing a destiny* and letting go of your fate. I sacrificed myself for our love and for the sin of our humanity. Love never dies and I give myself to you freely: mind, body, and soul. Today, I'm borne into eternity and become our own sacrifice. With

arms outstretched and body erect upon floating water, a crucifix afloat, I felt sanctity in my fingertips, and light surrounded me, anything but a halo, but our stars' destiny.

My center in, my center out. Release.

“Amen.”

“Amen.”



Lucas Walker
Arcimboldo
Interpretation
Pastel, 24" x 18"