

WEEKLY

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OUTDOORS

Meditations on Liquidity

THE RAIN, THE DARK AND OTHER THINGS

STORY AND PHOTO BY JOHN D'ONOFRIO · WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2013



“Rush out in the rain to be soaked with the sky...”

—Rumi

In these parts, at this time of the year, the weather forecast is poetry: Rain today, turning to showers. Morning drizzle followed by afternoon sprinkles, giving way to late-night squalls. Morning mist and general, widespread weeping.

Welcome to winter in the Pacific Northwest.

We are bathed in a thousand varieties of precipitation; softly brushed by rain as light as prayer, veiled by sheets of liquid wind, and pounded by the drum-roll staccato of storms that swoop down like galloping horses. It whispers and it roars.

To live here and be happy, to endure the long, slow-motion winters, it is mandatory to embrace your inner drizzle. Without the rain we'd have the population of Los Angeles. If the sun shone, we'd be crowded, hemmed in on all sides by refugees from the south and their situation comedies. Think of the smell.

Instead we enjoy the cleansing, rain-freshened incense of wind in the cedars, a balm for these dark days that surround the solstice. The rain keeps the landscape green, energizes our splendid rivers, and rejuvenates the Salish Sea. The puddles reflect the tempestuous sky in pleasing abstractions. The clouds, roiling overhead like time-lapse photography, remind us of the ephemeral nature of our tenure on this rolling planet.

We enjoy excitement, sure, but the rain keeps it subdued, the way we like it. Visitors from other parts of the country bring their umbrellas. They do not understand. The rain cannot be thwarted or opposed. One simply must go with the flow.

The rain gives us time to think and room to breathe. It slows us down—a good thing. Plans are plans but the weather always holds the trump card. As it should be.

Winter is a good time for introspection, for gathering around the hearth. Time to tell stories. Rain—in its own peculiar way—builds community. There is warmth and light in sharing the long evenings of midwinter with kindred spirits. Our unique human light shines brighter against the darkness.

When you get right down to it, precipitation is more a state of mind than anything else. Factually speaking, Bellingham averages a little less than 35 inches a year. Seattle gets 37. New York gets 47. Forks gets 107. There, now don't you feel better?

So let us celebrate the liquid delights of winter and revel in the wet. Don our Gore-Tex and jaunty rain hats and expensive waterproof shoes. Let us dance in the drizzle and sing in the showers. And then, when the clouds scatter and the pale northern sun shines on the puddles and gleams on the water-addled trees, let us offer incantations and praise.