

FIRST-PRIZE WINNER

Clayoquot Sound

Crashing statues of another sound
claim
a stretch of waste,
with only silence to abbreviate
the onslaught, aqueous rage ...
A desolation of insane shapes,
scarred rapture
delineates,
carving azure as if in Rorschach haste ...

The cedars,
bearded and deranged,
stand warrior-lost—
ancient claims before the fall.

Atop an outcrop rock
impossible,
a raven flies
remembering only
rogue solitudes of an imperial demise.

by Richard Grace
Toronto, Ontario



SECOND-PRIZE WINNER

Our Lives in Time

This seasonal ritual:

We set and et of the river's oolichans.

High water, high spring; Granddad, Dad, and I
at home, above the freshet.

Sixty candles—Graddad died, to savour the grease fish no more.

We buried him in deep red cedar soil to have and to hold him
tight above the river's might.

Time leaned, fledgling dove eyes—oolichan eyes—once a light, flickered, they
grieved their loved one's lives, then died their own dear deaths.

The schools let out. The oolichans wiped their slates, and kissed the kiss of
death.

In time, Dad turned to bones, to dust, to flour—as the flour in which he rolled our
vernal feasts.

The churchyard 'bove the river, poured our tears for him, through Earth to
her, a salting sepia, and Father's infinite gratitude expressed and comprised of
candlefish bone.

To restore the Lady Grey, the muddy font, this current event, our numinous
gatherer of life's origins:

The river.

Oolichan?

Na more; no more schooling!

Dribbled professor chins, their drooling science, their yes boss mewling.

Justice now, for those too dignified to howl loudly, "Why?"

Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Reclaim your songbird spirit—
your spirit river,
your spirit fen,
lest ...
we ...
be ...
sold
down
the river
again!

by *John Gifford*

Vancouver, British Columbia

THIRD-PRIZE WINNER

Come Away, Come Away

I walked from one side of the town to the other
and I counted my steps the whole way.
Maybe I just wanted it to take forever
but the numbers didn't get so high
that I didn't know the next,
and strange comfort in the strangest things
you find.

I never knew this town had so many walls
and when this water freezes
we can skate the canals
and pretend the walls can keep us here.
Mittened hands and cold noses
test the outside to see if we can make it
back, no one ever comes back.

I never believed them when they spoke
but one thought they spoke was truth.
This town is not a place.
It's the way you see the streets: yours,
and you stay here
for the macaroni at the deli down the street
and not because you don't hate yourself.

The bigger things you almost were
flaunt themselves on billboards in your head,
neon letters setting
adjoining failures on fire.
You'll give in and shield your eyes
from your own when you walk past the lake
in the afternoons when we find summer.

With so many ways out
who'd have thought I'd choose the slowest.
The only time I need is inside my head—
numbers not unknown to me
across a hundred thousand steps
and I didn't lose my place.
Not in numbers. Not in numbers.

by Sarah Poirier

Victoria, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

kerouac sunset

dance the paranoids, dance
in sticky hazardsignyellow, do not
enter,
redbrick backalley braille.

effervescent endoftheworld orange in cats'
eyes streetlightglow, skeptic
sleeping reflections,
black glass giants, the
cemetery city—dunsmuir shellshock under smoky
skies, a silent,
prickling wetness.
august is over
and the moon has moved into the sky.

between the lenses, a
panicked burning world—fell
off the end of itself, chaotic
and naïve stripped billboards, an
empty airborne pandemonium
in vacant lots,
it ends—
it ends tonight.

kerouac sunset, in
24-hour noodle hut neon
royal city, raving
creeping
in graffiti shadows, my chainlink
silhouettesarcophagus.
august is over
and the moon has moved onto the water.

broken orison blacktarred city pavement
my gasmasquerade,
embers in the distance
red like after snowfall, footsteps
soft—a desperate echo,
my 4:16AM, you and i
reincarnated in 7-11 sliding doors

angel eyes, inky calm in dunsmuir light,
twice reflected
in the cracked busstop glass.
august is over—
the moon has moved behind the trees.

by Adrien Gendron

Port Coquitlam, British Columbia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Will

When you lift your hammer
to crack the pale marble above me,
hold ...
let it fall unused
and leave my stone untouched.
No words that you may carve
could give meaning
to an age spent in wandering.
Nothing to nothing
I completed only a smile
as I cut across sacred silences.
So
let silence return for one brief glance
to those who read the unbled marble
that never knew my name.

by Denise Grieve

Port Moody, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

No Elbow Room

I want to dwell in the open country
where no tall old city houses block my view in every direction.
I feel cramps here; I need elbow room.
I am a prisoner hemmed in by rows of buildings.
My range of vision is nil.
In the spring I shall return to the old farm
where I can let my eyes wander freely
over the poplar-dotted prairie.
There I shall watch the rising sun peep over the horizon
and catch its first red beams.
In the evening I shall see the glorious colours
of the sunset reflected in the quiet waters.
I will watch the twilight steal softly over the
tilled fields, and the croaking of the frogs
will be heard from every pond.
I shall see Canada geese in their flight to the north,
silhouetted against the evening sky.
And here in the country the shy new moon will not be scared
to come right out in the open, for its tiny beams
will have no bright city lights to compete with.
The wonder of God's creation will be all around me
and this is where I belong.

by Spencer "Duff" Checkley (96 years young)
Haileybury, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Lost

She sits there ... strapped around the waist to a mobile chair
and watching from a window what is always unfamiliar.
Searching for a road to lead her home
where wait the daily duties still perceived as hers alone—
this aged mother who has lost her wits.

Betrayed by and betrayer of her children,
who thought the good sense they relied upon
would last through all the young years, and beyond.

Weeping, she calls up nonexistent stairs
to bid those long gone children hurry down.
And they are here, her grey-haired sons and daughters,
perched awkwardly around her, coats still on.

Appalled, they lie to she who taught them truth.
Willing to say anything to soothe, to make acceptable
the treachery of time.

Fragments of fickle memory appear in faded eyes,
piercing the feeble armour of excuses.
For why they aren't here more.
For why they can't stay long.

(Assured by those in charge that when they've gone
they are forgotten almost instantly).

That may be, but still she won't forget what's real to her ...
responsibilities that never end
if only she could find her way back to them.

Worry without substance.
All that's left to her. All that's left of her.

Time's rationed out in plans not of her making.
Carefully crafted hours, one like another,
structured to meet the stricture of her days.

Care and compassion are companions here.
She shrieks when they approach. She sees
cunning, conspiracy.

Jesus nailed to His cruel cross may have suffered less.

by Bernice Byers
Parrsboro, Nova Scotia

HONOURABLE MENTION

Head Injury

*Upturned
as often in your lap
my head cut air
cut air
over roadside boulder*

*Spurned
by quick-sprung hairpin turn
my head met dust
met dust
on sun-warmed shoulder*

Once I thought I'd be one to fly
off the spokes of the spinning wheel—
find a new patch to colour in the sky.

But the expansion of my mind has slowed
as if years rushed by that day,
not summer mountain road.

Your forced tires clung, but what about me—
today, confined in a stranger's head
do I somehow cling to who I used to be?

*Re-turned
through low hung cloud to heaven
my head at rest
at rest
duller on these shoulders.*

by Sharlene Tennant
Surrey, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Pacific Love Affair

wind through my dress
sun above singing with us
a captain sailing his ship

homemade cider and wine
rock cod and kelp
beach forever and small driftwood fire

meteors beyond the midnight mango
glowing fishes swimming through stardust
dancing with mermaids on our feet

waking at the ocean
cup of coffee and sand in my jeans
a board that fits perfectly under my arm

passing through fluid glass mirrors
watching the beyond roll in
listening to drips of quietness on the outside

and it rains down fresh
more loving on this coast
than salt in the pacific

by Leah Walberg
Ucluelet, British Columbia



HONOURABLE MENTION

Let Us Go to Our Secret Place

Let us go to our secret place
where the sea becomes sand,
where the seagulls dip and dive and screech,
where the winding trails lead through lush and leafy forests,
where boats, far out upon the sea, make their way to sheltering harbours, and
where mother nature's welcoming embrace evaporates the daily cares of life.

Let us go to our secret place
where we can be together once more,
where we will lovingly hold each other's hand,
where we will dance to the music of rolling waves, breaking upon the shore,
where we will look into each other's eyes with fondness grown deeper with time, and
where young love first came to us and brings us back again.

Let us go to our secret place
where we will walk together for a time,
where we shall sit in silent amazement of the beauty that surrounds us,
where we will talk and say the things our hearts have known forever,
where we shall but once more become as one within the arms of nature's beauty, and
where we will share silence yet know the strength of our love, no longer needing words.

Let us go to our secret place
where the water will whisper your name and mine,
where the lighthouse summons lost ships and souls to shore,
where waves wash and roll endlessly upon the beach,
where I may, but one more time, put in place again the lock of hair that falls across your face, and
where we may laugh and weep together, lost in time.

I am here now in our secret place
where some may think I am alone,
where I wonder why you were called away so suddenly, so soon,
where I am no longer steeled in grief because I feel so near to you,
where sweet memories now embrace me, and
where my voice can speak your name and my heart can feel you answering back.

Here in our secret place, I will never be alone.

by Sheran Barker
Belleville, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Old Man

With crooked back and hoary hair,
his gait a snail-like crawl,
with senses dulled he cannot hear,
and stumbles into all.

The young pass by with snobbish look,
the rich look down with scorn,
the pupil hides behind a book,
from tattered clothes and torn.

Who knows the past of this old man?
What brought him to this state?
Perchance someone had spoiled his plan
and prematured his fate.

We laugh and say it couldn't be,
that we will one day too
be reduced to such as he,
like us, "He never knew."

by Clive Belnavis (75 years young)
Toronto, Ontario



HONOURABLE MENTION

Freshly Laundered

Night after night
on the evening news
I see the young boys
throwing rocks and dodging bullets,
in bombings and in street fights.
This time it's Lebanon.

For as long as I can remember
I have watched this scenario
unfolding somewhere in the world.
Tonight I see something
I've not noticed before.
The boys are wearing clean shirts and clean pants.
And it dawns on me
that faraway-moms are in their homes
performing the daily domestic tasks
of family life,
just as I do.

To those moms,
and to me,
a good chunk of family life
comes down to laundry;
having it,
doing it,
keeping up with it.
Each freshly washed T-shirt
and eradicated stain
infused with love.
Needing to believe
that in keeping them clean,
we can somehow
protect and keep
our children safe
in
freshly laundered shields.

Heartbreaking ...
and hope-filled.

by Lynn Parker

Sherwood Park, Alberta

HONOURABLE MENTION

Shoreline

A human being, I might not contain much;
a bit of smell, some sight, some touch.
Nerve endings fabricate, jubilate a momentary blur;
thrills me, imprisons me, chills me straight to the core.

I once travelled far, felt the sand on my palms;
a brilliant blue sky, savoured, a hope for the alms.
Not the thought, no, but a clotted glimpse to cajole
away, away, a bomb-battered crop of one ragged thought.

Snivelling proudly, somewhere I've never known
you wish, like me, an anticlimactic win, a moan;
the gangrenous sympathy of the keeper of the Styx;
debasement gaze of despondent black eyes that weigh and rank.

Stretched taut, unbound, the soul flocks anew
to where once was safe as you've realized, too,
as you bury the shore beneath the Berlin Wall;
coaxing the frostbitten foot on your peninsula pier.

Fireworks celebrate, lovers capitulate, while I ... I segregate
a cardboard cutout of space and time into shards of slate
to be wrote and rewrote in blind handwritten scrawl
as I wander among sketches, drowning in chaos. Rewind. Remove.

And we meet face to face, ambulance weary, bleeding taupe.
A mix and match pair of excess, a busker without strings, a harlot without hope.
Your sick, slackened smile stretched tight over crescents and fens
and I ... I turn and scream, "I'm not your martyr, I die for *my* sins!
I'll beg, I'll rest when gone are my wings!"

by Gary Dobko
Calgary, Alberta

