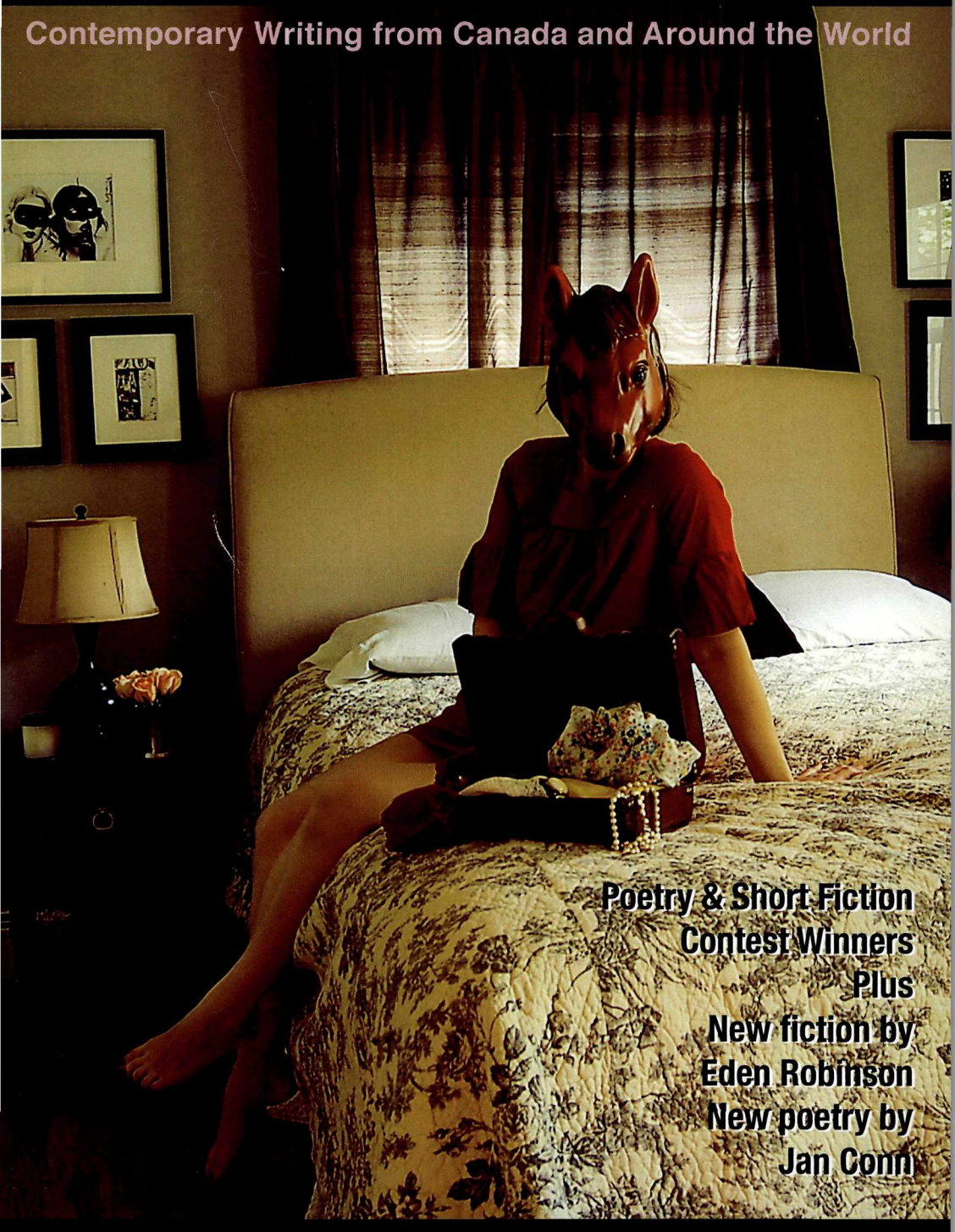
PRISM international

48:4 Summer 2010

Contemporary Writing from Canada and Around the World



Poetry & Short Fiction
Contest Winners
Plus
New fiction by
Eden Robinson
New poetry by
Jan Conn

PRISM international

PRISM Short Fiction Contest

Grand Prize – $2,000

Eliza Robertson
Roadnotes

First Runner-up – $200

D.W. Wilson
The Dead Roads

Second Runner-up – $200

Seyward Goodhand
The Fur Trader's Daughter

Fiction Contest Judge

Zsuzsi Gartner

Fiction Contest Manager

Tenille Campbell

Readers

andrea bennett
Tenille Campbell
Lauren Forconi
Rachel Knudsen
Christine Leclerc
Nadia Pestrak
Dan Schwartz
Jeff Stautz
Michelle Wright

PRISM international

PRISM Poetry Contest

Grand Prize – $1,000

Joelene Heathcote
Owl on the roof

First Runner-up – $300

Leslie Vryenhoek
Leap

Second Runner-up – $200

Patricia Young
The Big Siesta
(or: The End of Modern Warfare)

Poetry Contest Judge

Rhea Tregebov

Poetry Contest Manager

Tenille Campbell

Readers

andrea bennett
Margret Bollerup
Kim Fu
Ben Rawluk
Elizabeth Ross
Melissa Sawatsky

PRISM international

Fiction Editor
Rachel Knudsen

Poetry Editor
Elizabeth Ross

Executive Editors
Nadia Pestrak
Dan Schwartz

Assistant Editors
andrea bennett
Ben Rawluk
Jeff Stautz
Chris Urquhart

Advisory Editor
Steven Galloway

Production Manager
Jennifer Herbison

Editorial Board
Margret Bollerup
Emily Davidson
Anna Maxymiw
Sigal Samuel
Natalie Thompson

PRISM international, a magazine of contemporary writing, is published four times a year by the Creative Writing Program at the University of British Columbia, Buchanan E-462, 1866 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z1. Microfilm editions are available from University Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor, MI, and reprints from the Kraus Reprint Corporation, New York, NY. The magazine is listed by the Canadian Literary Periodicals Index.

Email: prism@interchange.ubc.ca / Website: www.prismmagazine.ca

Contents Copyright © 2010 *PRISM international* for the authors.

Cover Photo: "Equus" by Elle Moss.

Subscription Rates: One-year individual $28; two-year individual $46; library and institution one-year $35; two-year $55. Sample copy by mail is $11. **US and international subscribers, please pay in US dollars.** Please note that US POSTAL money orders are not accepted. Make cheques payable to: *PRISM international*. All prices include GST and shipping and handling.

Submission Guidelines: *PRISM international* purchases First North American Serial Rights at $40 per page for poetry and $20 per page for other genres. Contributors receive a one-year subscription. *PRISM* also purchases limited digital rights for selected work, for which it pays an additional $10 per page. All manuscripts should be sent to the editors at the above address. Manuscripts should be accompanied by an **email address**. If you wish to receive your response by regular mail, please include a self-addressed envelope with **Canadian stamps** or **International Reply Coupons**. Translations should be accompanied by a copy of the work(s) in the original language. The advisory editor is not responsible for individual selections, but for the magazine's overall mandate including continuity, quality and budgetary obligations.

For details on how to place an advertisement in *PRISM international*, please contact our executive editors. *PRISM* occasionally exchanges subscriber lists with other literary magazines; please contact us if you wish to be excluded from such exchanges.

Our gratitude to Dean Nancy Gallini and the Dean of Arts Office at the University of British Columbia. We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the British Columbia Arts Council.

June 2010. ISSN 0032.8790

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARTS COUNCIL

We acknowledge the support of the Province of British Columbia through the British Columbia Arts Council

Canada Council for the Arts

Conseil des Arts du Canada

Contents

Volume 48, Number 4
Summer 2010

PRISM Contest Issue

Essay by Short Fiction Contest Judge Zsuzsi Gartner / 7
Essay by Poetry Contest Judge Rhea Tregebov / 41

Short Fiction Grand Prize Winner

Eliza Robertson
Roadnotes / 10

Runners-up

D.W. Wilson
The Dead Roads / 22

Seyward Goodhand
The Fur Trader's Daughter / 33

Poetry Grand Prize Winner

Joelene Heathcote
Owl on the roof / 43

Runners-up

Leslie Vryenhoek
Leap / 44

Patricia Young
The Big Siesta (or: The End of Modern Warfare) / 45

Fiction

Eden Robinson
The Slums of Kitsilano / 47

Poetry

Antony Di Nardo
Fairway / 55
This poem has been modified from its original version.
It has been modified to fit this space. / 56

Regan Taylor
Dixville Notch / 57
Hoser / 58

Nathan Baker
Dissolve / 59

Kevin Bushell
Fly Dying on the Bedroom Floor / 60

John Wall Barger
Having Passed Down a Hall to a Room with Yellow Seats
Labelled "Cebupacific," a TV Squawking, Under Hissing Lights / 61
We Will Recognize Them! / 62

Jan Conn
Bloodroot / 63
Hiding the Erotic Inclination / 64
Swim Trunks / 65
The Sources of the Self / 66

Robert Gore
I Think I Dreamed of Wings / 67

George Sipos
Euclidean / 68
Castaway / 69

Peter Richardson
Linkage / 70
Gatineau Pastoral for a Gent Who Waits Table in the Rockies / 72
Cloud Puffs above a Ridge-top Barbeque Grill / 73

Contributors / 74

SHORT FICTION CONTEST ESSAY

On Caprice and the Delicate Art of Reading for Pleasure

Just now, a nanosecond ago[1] I logged off of an online conversation with some UBC graduate students about The Role of the Writer as Reader. The questions my student leading the discussion asked included: *Why DO you read what you read? Pleasure? To acquire knowledge? To walk away with a new vision of the world? Connection? Hope? Fascination with observing the world? Duty? To figure out how to write? All of the above? Other reasons?*

I have been procrastinating over this little essay, these judge's pensées, which the good people at *PRISM* have asked me for,[2] for days now. A number of false starts later,[3] it occurs to me that my answer to my writing student's questions gets at the heart of what compelled me to choose the stories I did.

What I wrote was this: "I have to admit that after years of reading fiction (and nonfiction) for work—whether for a book review, for workshops (Banff and UBC), as an editor,[4] as a moderator at writers' festivals and other events, or for research[5]—I'm relieved (and no offence to any of you, but I'm sure you know what I mean) when I can read something I'm under zero obligation to read. So that would be door number one: for pleasure.

"In the end, what is there to read for but pleasure? (Ah, you say, but one woman's pleasure is another woman's trash or, conversely, her impenetrable Fermat's Last Theorem.) It is a such a relief at the end of a long day to crawl into bed and read for a while as a reader, not as a writer or editor. (Athough, I confess, often I am too tired to achieve

[1] 4:12 pm, April 7, 2010.

[2] I'm not claiming undue hardship but simply chafing against a deadline as all writers do.

[3] Including a sorry trifle titled: A Short Primer on Lying.

[4] Here's where I shamelessly insert a plug for a book of dystopian stories I've edited, *Darwin's Bastards: Astounding Tales from Tomorrow* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2010).

[5] Or as a contest judge or juror!

much more than a fistful of 'Talk of the Town's in the latest *New Yorker*, or something by Jerome Groopman.[6] And then I make notes in my Moleskine of story ideas I get while reading...)

"That said, I do love and understand DFW's sentiment[7] about reading to feel un-alone ('This is nourishing, redemptive; we become less alone inside.') and when I am touched most profoundly by something I read it's because of this—that *something* beyond pleasure. I've never felt alone at the loneliest points in my life if I had a great book on the go."

So what is this pleasure principle, this erogenous zone of the mind? Why is it tickled pink and rosy, aroused by one thing and turned off by another? All of us have conscious or subconscious aversions when it comes to reading. For example, a story with a cow on the first page is a one-strike-you're-out deal-breaker with me. Unfair, but true. Dropped gerunds? Two strikes. Holsteins and dropped gerunds? I can't even contemplate it. A woman at her kitchen table drinking tea? Let's just say I have seasonal allergies to certain things. First person present tense? Just rubs me the wrong way. Sometimes. Again, no fair, but there you go. A woman at her kitchen table drinking tea in first person present tense? *Uncle!* Leprechauns? I'm okay with leprechauns.[8]

So now you know what you're up against when you enter a fiction contest. You never know if you will get the dropped-gerund-tea-drinking-cow-loving judge or the crazy, leprechaun-loving judge. So what do you do? You write what you want to write in the best way you can. Because you never know.

Because you might write a story in the form of a series of letters, a direct address from a sister to her brother, and send it off to a contest, unaware that the judge—in addition to having an irrational aversion to fictional cows and tea-drinking women and dropped gerunds—tends to avoid epistolary stories and dislikes direct address. But the judge is, after all, capricious, and the second line of your story, "My plan is to pursue autumn," captivates her. By the end of the first, short letter, this narrator (this Sid, Sidney, Sidster), pursuing autumn in her recently deceased Mum's lime-green MB roadster and her own pearl-coloured full-quill

---

[6] My doctor-writer crush.

[7] Another potent David Foster Wallace quote: "I just think that fiction that isn't exploring what it means to be human today isn't art."

[8] Capricious? Hell, yes. But if the *best* story, *best* book, *best* writer was so damn obvious, so unequivocal, wouldn't the same book win the Giller, the GG and Writer's Trust Fiction Prize each year? (Bet the one you liked best last year wasn't even nominated. For anything.)

ostrich skin Tony Lamas,[9] has won over the judge completely.

Eliza Robertson's "Roadnotes" is so replete with verve and personality that line after line practically leapt out of the page and kept right on going: "Larger-than-life seasonal statuary discomfort me." How great is that? Her narrator is reminiscent of Julie Hecht and Lorrie Moore's smart and neurotic protagonists, but with a sass and a mind (and a mission) all her own.

This confident, fresh, multi-layered, witty, and ultimately elegiac story was my unequivocal favourite, the kind of fiction I read with neon exclamation marks flashing on and off in my frontal lobes. A most definite kind of pleasure.

You might also write a story that involves a well-worn trope—two guys on a road trip, girl riding shotgun, lots of liquor—throw in a few dropped gerunds, call it "The Dead Roads," and send it on off to a contest. And the trope-suspicious, dropped-gerund-loathing judge just might overlook her prejudices because your language is so electric, your story's tension, sexual and otherwise, so exquisite, your characters so achingly real.

D.W. Wilson takes on the rival-buddies-on-a-tear archetype and owns it. With every muscular line in "The Dead Roads," there's the unnerving sensation that something's gotta blow soon. And it's a fine love story, too.

Then again, you might strike out on a path so utterly different that the leprechaun-appreciating judge might just be smitten by your particular brand of oddity. With "The Fur Trader's Daughter," Seyward Goodhand conjures a kind of dark fairy tale, in which the parents of the pale, "weird"[10] title character shrink while their cruelties continue unabated. Historically anachronistic, wonderfully bent, and disconcertingly visceral (the father teaches the daughter to "rinse the marrow from claw sockets"), "The Fur Trader's Daughter" is audacious and the best kind of weird.

These three stories transformed what began as a duty into nothing short of a pleasure. My pleasure, and hopefully yours.

—Zsuzsi Gartner

---

[9] That she "won from the Montreal Gazette's 'Wild West' poetry contest in 1986!" A confession: I do have an affinity for Tony Lama cowboy boots. My own pair (not ostrich skin) have a story behind them too.

[10] So sayeth the evil stepmother.

Eliza Robertson

Roadnotes

September 29

Spencer,

I have quit the library and quit town. My plan is to pursue autumn, to track the metamorphosis of deciduous woodlands. Where the leaf turns, there turn I. My first destination: the Laurentians. Mont Tremblant. La Symphonie des Couleurs. Southwest on Highway 40 to Montreal, then the Trans-Canada all the way up. From the Laurentians I will follow the colour south. The Green Mountains of Vermont, the Kancamagus Scenic Byway in New Hampshire, down down down, until pigment leaves the leaves, until winter strips the branches bare.

I have brought: a road map of the United States Eastern Seaboard, the Complete Field Guide to Fall Foliage, and Mum's lime MB roadster, which has not seen asphalt since the third impaired driving charge.

She told us that if we had two pennies left in the world we should buy a loaf of bread with one and a lily with the other. This is my lily.

Affectionately yours,

Sid

October 1

Spence,

Yes, the colours are a symphony. The yellow birch is the same shade as Mum's sanatorium death notice. Canary cardstock struck me as crass, but you can't design a bereavement palette to please everyone.

I write from a ski suburb beside Tremblant called Petit Rocher. (I found accommodation outside town because town makes me feel trapped inside a Styrofoam city plan.) We are in what is called the "first wave."

The yellow wave. Saffron leaves grope branches like a thousand rubber gloves. Which reminds me—I found Mum's lambskin driving gloves on the backseat. The ones that snap at the back of the wrist, that add a Grace Kelly femininity to ladies who tie scarves under their chins and take "Sunday spins" round the countryside. What I remember is that she never needed to remove them to count quarters for parking.

After a late lunch I poked around a Tremblant souvenir shop. They sell metal spouts and hand drills for maple tapping, and the romance of the idea overcame me. I bought one of each, then drove for an hour until every tree was a sugar maple. (There is a chapter on tree identification in my *Fall Foliage Guide.* Leaf silhouettes are showcased on the pages like inkblots.) So I pulled over and, for fear of the animal kingdom, selected a tree close to the road. The instructions said to drill on an incline for the sap to run down, so I did. Then I tapped the spout through the bark with the handle of my drill. I had forgotten to buy a collection pail so I used my Snapple bottle from lunch. (What Would MacGyver Do?) I was crouched nose-to-spout at the foot of the tree, Snapple bottle thrust under the tap, waiting for the thing to leak when I heard a cough. A Hyundai had parked behind the roadster, and inside the Hyundai was a family of three. Their windows were rolled down and they stared out from yellow, orange, and red visors. The matriarch in the passenger's seat (yellow visor) rested her elbow in the window frame and held binoculars. She told me tapping season begins in February. I am a victim of my urbanity.

The Snapple bottle reminds me of my first and last ballet class, when I needed to bring a water bottle and we didn't have any so Mum sent me to the studio with an empty mickey of gin.

Next stop: Kancamagus Scenic Byway.

From Rocher with Love,

Sid

October 3

Spencer,

On the drive to New Hampshire I tried to pinpoint the rupture of Mum's sanity. I couldn't. I think this means either A) she was a born lunatic, or B) wrongly committed. I lean towards A. Thoughts?

Reasons why A:

1. She had an unnatural detachment from loved ones (you, me), and an unnatural attachment to American naturalism (the Helga Series by Andrew Wyeth).
2. After her alumni lecture at the Art Academy of Cincinnati she burned her collection in the school ceramics kiln (minus the sold self-portrait).
3. On our drive home from the lecture series we stopped at the Texas Snake Farm and she threatened to kill herself with an asp.
4. She poached eggs in cranberry juice.

I'm in Newport, NH. The centre of town is an opera house, which I think is an idea that should prevail more in urban design.

Had to buy a fresh battery for the roadster in Montreal, but she's purred ever since. Also picked up a copy of the *Chronicle-Telegraph* and read the obituary. It's perfect, Spence. I like how you began with "Once upon a time."

Living Free Or Dying in New Hampshire,

Sidney

October 6

Spence,

The Kancamagus Scenic Byway is a three-hour drive on a postcard. I arrive with the prologue to the second wave; leaves are the colour of canned salmon. Clouds streak the sky like lawnmower tracks, and the air is warm and thick with the scent of fermented apples. En route to the byway I passed Santa's Village, which is home to an "electro-animated jingle jamboree" and a giraffe-sized drummer boy. Larger-than-life seasonal statuary discomfort me.

Do you remember the December we got the blue spruce? We returned from the ballet and she let me light the bottom candles, but when I stretched for a higher bough my velvet jumper caught fire. You came running and she watched from the arm of your chair with eyes as grey and cold as nickels. On Christmas morning she cooked ricotta pancakes and poached pears, but for herself only took a cigarette and mulled wine from the night before. And on Boxing Day, she locked herself in the

attic with the phonograph and Madama Butterfly, then emerged three afternoons later in her cotton peignoir and walked to the river bank to collect snow drops.

Honestly, Spence? That Christmas I wanted to buy her the asp.

Sidney

October 7

I'm sorry I never went to the funeral.

Sidney

October 10

Spence,

Happy Thanksgiving. It's nine o'clock and the moon is sickled enough to hang a coat. I'm in Cavendish, Vermont, which is a town entirely unremarkable save for the man with a metal rod in his head. (Phineas Gage. Railroad worker circa 1848. Google him.)

Dinner was a can of rice pudding from an AM/PM in Ludlow. The cashier had cream soda breath and Caesar bangs that bisected his forehead like saw teeth, and when I made him break a twenty he called me a "leaf peeper." I might have found the moniker endearing, had he not said it with such disdain.

I can count the number of times she hugged us in the last two decades. Twice. Jean-Baptiste Day, 1990: I successfully smoke like a lady. March 1992: you get into her old art school.

Haven't reached mecca yet. (Mecca, for leaf peepers, is the Green Mountains.) I spent the afternoon driving through central Vermont, and skipped the World's Largest Filing Cabinet for a town named Barre (granite capital of America and source for most of their tombstones). In Williamstown I toured Knight's Spider Web Farm, which is run by a bald veteran with webs tattooed on his elbows. He cultivates spider webs, then sprays them white and lacquers them to black boards. This kind of art makes me think that if you stare at the sun long enough you'll see rainbows.

Tomorrow: Mecca. Then New York.

Never moon a werewolf,

Sid

October 11

Spencer,

An hour into the Green Mountains I passed a blackcurrant bush and stopped the car in the middle of the road. The berries uneaten by birds were plump and overripe, and I peeled them in clusters from the vine. My lips and nails are violet with juice and it's the closest I've felt to gleefully carnivorous.

Some things I miss:

1. She cut apples width-wise so the core made a star.
2. She wore lipstick and never stained the glass.
3. She saved her watermelon seeds in a jam jar and tried several summers to grow her own patch.
4. She took milk baths.

On my last visit, she didn't speak. I told her you finished the last of the sunflower series for the opening next month. Nothing. I even mentioned that I still reigned supreme over the Dewey Decimal System (and since when has she skipped an opportunity to rebuke my career choice?). Nothing. You should have come with me.

I'm spending the night in Albany at a pie shop that moonlights as a motor inn. An elephantine Sassafras grows in the parking lot, and it's shedding leaves like feathers in a butcher shop. We don't have many Sassafras trees up North. Their leaves have broad, rounded lobes that are layered like a wedding cake tall enough to conceal a stripper. I'm going to lay under the boughs and see if I can't get myself entirely buried.

Love Sidney

October 13

I'm in Auburn, NY, and the leaves are black.

Except foliage sprouts from chimneys too, and roofs, and fences, and the awning of Curley's Restaurant opposite my window.

But instead of leaves, it's crows. Thousands of crows that line walls and telephone wires like uneaten caviar pushed to the rim of your plate. The concierge downstairs told me they arrived early this year. Every autumn since 1993, a murder of fifty to seventy thousand crows descends upon the ancient Aboriginal burial ground then proceeds to the town centre to roost.

They remind me of the baby crow Mum saved after Jacques-Joseph shot its mother with a pellet gun. Do you remember how she wanted to teach it to speak, so she clipped the tongue, but then it couldn't eat and starved to death? I think that incident neatly paraphrases our childhood.

The crows look finest when they fly. They take wing en masse and sweep through air like a handheld fan. And when you bend your neck back to see only up, the sky looks like paper that a child has spattered with ink. The town hates them. They tear apart dumpsters and caw 'til the cows come home. And apparently by winter the volume of excrement is a biohazard. But I think they're magnificent.

She always wanted to move back—to the United States, to Ohio. Does it give her too much credit to believe that we stayed in Quebec because she didn't want to uproot us? I suppose it's ironic that you uprooted yourself.

I think we should have tried harder for the reformatory in Maine.

Guess what? The U.S. Department of Agriculture has activated a Fall Foliage Hotline. 1-800-354-4595. An automated voice informs callers of the country's colour peaks. The leaves in the New York and Pennsylvania Allegheny Forest should be exquisite. I head there tomorrow.

Unique New York Unique New York,

Sidney

October 15

Spence,

The Allegheny Forest is on fire.

Not literally. But it's like the lightning storm that summer we camped on Kipawa Lake. Before the trees burned down, they were backlit by this glorious blaze. The trunks loomed scarlet and the image was divine. Well, the sun glows behind the hickory trees as I write and the likeness is striking.

Are you familiar with the botany behind fall foliage change? In late summer the leaf's base develops a layer of cork that plugs its veins and prevents the entrance of moisture and minerals. Our symphonie des couleurs is a tree weaning its leaves off water.

Two weeks tomorrow is your opening. I am very, very sorry to miss it. Good luck. Remember the liquor license. Don't be nervous. You are enormously talented and the collectors will line up around the block.

Your Sidster (Ha ha ha)

P.S.—I think she was the most beautiful woman in the world. I think this is what redeemed her. She lived by a wild, unreasoned, breathless devotion to beauty. And not just her own.

P.P.S.—My contact with humanity has been officially reduced to you and muffler men.

Oct. 17

The bitch stole my boots! The pearl-coloured full-quill ostrich skin Tony Lamas I won from the Montreal Gazette's "Wild West" poetry contest in 1986! The pearl-coloured full-quill ostrich skin Tony Lamas that vanished a month later, that I scoured the house for until the hardwood bruised my knees, that I just found in the original box underneath the passenger seat when I reached to find my fallen crust of pizza. I am parked on the William Flynn Highway, outside the Store Shaped Like a Stealth Bomber, and I'm fuming in both French and English translations of the word. Will write more in Pittsburgh.

In Pittsburgh. I think the worst thing about our mother was the way she looked at us. She regarded her children as she might a painting—her glance desired no reciprocation. Worse still: she regarded us as her own painting; we failed because she was venomously self-critical. And the worst worse thing: we failed because we were not consciously crafted. You and I were the dice that spilled from chromosome Yahtzee, and how could that compare with Tarbell's Mother and Child in a Boat? At

least you compensated by going to art school. I think it was my decision to stack books for a living that prompted her second relapse.

Tomorrow I try my luck in Tennessee.

Don't be bashful, Nashville.

Sidney

October 18

Spence,

I opened the trunk. Which is to say I spent two weeks in our dead mother's car without opening the trunk, until three hours ago. I was "booting it" (they still fit) down the Pennsylvania Turnpike when the roadster met its ninth hole and burst its first tire. ("Pennsylvania: where winter eases driving because the potholes fill with snow.") I popped the back for a spare and found our past. My: velvet riding helmet, patent Mary Janes, scarlet beret, flower press. Your: rock collection, private school blazer, clarinet, kaleidoscope. The buck antlers you found up North, a tambourine, and what looks to be the fourth floor of my Victorian doll house.

Kleptomania is the feather in the cap of our mother's neurosis.

The roadster's at Esso getting refurbished. I've decided to spend a second night in Pittsburgh.

Sidney

October 19

Spencer,

After two cups of Jasmine tea, a bowl of wonton soup, and three hours inside an infinity of crimson dots, I'm going to Cincinnati. (In regards to the third point—there's an Infinity Dots installation at the Pittsburgh Mattress Factory.) No more bashful Nashville, no Tennessee Waltz, it's tin soldiers and Nixon on the I-70 to Ohio. I write from a hoisin-smeared booth at Lai Fu Restaurant, waiting for the bill and picking cabbage from my teeth with the tines of a fork my waiter gave me when he saw my attempt at chopsticks.

Do you think it's naive to believe her choice of loot hints at maternal sentimentality?

The bill arrived. (Writing in restaurants expedites service like smoking at bus stops.)

John Ruskin's inside my fortune cookie. I don't know what's weirder—the quote's relevance to my travels, or the fact that an English art critic has replaced Confucius.

"Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless; peacocks and lilies, for example."

Sid

October 20

Spencer,

On the road to Cincinnati I passed three sunflower fields with petals oily and yellow and spread-eagle beneath the sun, and then I passed a dead sunflower field, their heads bowed to the dirt like burnt-out street lamps. (This fourth field would make a great finale to your set.) I passed a manor with a chimney and eaves that bled Virginia Creeper, and then I passed the World's Largest Amish Buggy, and the World's Largest Horseshoe Crab, and the World's Largest Apple Basket, and the World's Largest Washboard, and the World's Largest Crystal Ball, and the World's Largest Gavel, and the World's Largest Mortarboard Graduation Cap, and an animatronic Smokey the Bear. I alighted from the roadster at a Chestnut tree near Lancaster and collected nuts in the front of my sweater, and then I stopped for coffee and a slice of cherry pie at a rest stop a few hundred metres away. But they didn't have cherry pie so I ordered coleslaw and a burger, and the trucker on the stool to my left told me that what I had collected were Buckeye nuts, not Chestnuts, and what I had stopped at was a Buckeye Tree, the state tree of Ohio.

I spent last night at Comfort Inn Over-the-Rhine. I aimed to be at the Academy of Art by now, but instead I'm on my third paper cup of coffee.

She despised anonymity. What if they don't remember her? What if they have no clue?

Continued:

I met the academy dean who sent me to the curator of the Childlaw Gallery who sent me to the curator of the Pearlman Gallery who told the student at the welcome desk to type something into a computer. So now I have an address for the patron who bought Mum's self-portrait, which struck me as a breach of privacy, but it's amazing how far you'll get with the right driver's license and a death certificate. Our patron is "Ms. Izobel Moss" of Jerseyville, Illinois.

So. I guess I'm going to Illinois.

Sidney

October 22

Spencer,

Five hours and the state of Indiana after my last letter, I pulled into a driveway littered with auto bodies, a mile or so outside Jerseyville. At the end of the drive was a house the colour of a recycling bin. It looked freshly painted and under the sun gave the impression of melting. A chain link fence enclosed a leafless pear tree, a plastic kiddie pool the same wet blue as the house, and a two-legged picnic bench hinged between dirt and sky like a seesaw. A woman with three arms emerged from behind the tree. One swung against her hip as she walked into the shade of the trunk, the second was bent ninety degrees and perpendicular to the ground, and a third budded from that one like a flexed lobster claw. I asked if her name was Izobel Moss, and when she stepped from the shadow her claw became an owl. A midsized owl, about the height of my forearm, with plumage like tweed and a chain that tethered him to the woman's wrist. She said "who wants to know," which felt so Hollywood that I said I had the ruby slippers and she said "Well, that's a horse of a different colour. Come on in."

Except that didn't happen. She said "who wants to know" and I didn't reply right away because she stood at the tip of the tree's shadow on the grass and really, really resembled its crowning Christmas ornament. Then the owl raised his wings and flapped, flew the length of the chain and hung suspended in the air like a helium balloon, and I said "Sidney Marion. I think you bought my mother's painting. The self-portrait. She died a few weeks ago, and I wondered if I might see it." She didn't respond so I offered to show her the death certificate but she said "No need," and led me into her house.

And there she was. Our mother. In her ankle-length sealskin cocoon coat. You paint like her, though you would have been too young to remember the portrait before it was sold. It's from before they shaved her head and she wears her hair like a cape—slicked beneath a cloche hat and slung over her shoulders, the ends corkscrewed and long enough to be stuffed into the coat pockets. I remember those pockets were deep enough to fit hardcover books and tins of licorice. Mum painted her skin ashen except for the cheeks, which look rouged from the cold or physical exertion. Her eyes are cast toward the unopened umbrella she clutches with both hands, and her lips press together as if to keep from laughing. The portrait is exactly how I wish I could remember her.

I went back outside where Izobel and her owl waited for me on the porch, and without any sort of premeditation I asked to buy the painting. I hadn't planned to buy it. I didn't think I wanted to. I'm sure I didn't want to. She said it wasn't for sale. I said, "I'll pay you double." She said "I don't need the money," and I said "But she's my mother!" Then the only sound was the chortling of the owl. Izobel's eyes washed over me and she rotated the metal cuff around her forearm until her stare settled at my feet. "What size are your boots?"

I traded the Tony Lamas. Bitch steals my boots even from the grave.

I called the foliage hotline last week. Reports for the Mark Twain National Forest look optimistic. I operate the gas in my socks because I can't find the shoes I brought with me. Mum rides shotgun.

Sid

October 24

Spencer,

Mark Twain did not disappoint. Missouri's reached the Third Wave and the trees look dipped in ketchup. Sweetgum and Oak, Black Tupelo and Elm: a spectrum of red from cranberry to copper.

Last night I bought three quarts of milk from the Hazelwood Grocery. I didn't know the optimum fat percentage for milk baths, so I got one carton of skim, one 2%, and one homogenized. I filled the tub with milk and hot water and rose hips I picked from the wild rose bush behind the motel. Now my skin is silk and I feel like Marie Antoinette, or Cleopatra, or our Mother.

I miss you, Spence. If I leave tomorrow I can be home for your opening. The Lost Maples of Texas will still be there next fall. And Mum would look swell in your studio.

Time to get my drive on Route 55.

Love Sidney

D. W. Wilson

The Dead Roads

Content removed at
author's request

Content removed at
author's request

Content removed at
author's request

Content removed at
author's request

Content removed at
author's request

Content removed at
author's request

Content removed at
author's request

Content removed at
author's request

Content removed at
author's request

Content removed at
author's request

Seyward Goodhand

The Fur Trader's Daughter

For many years we lived on a lake in the woods. The sun rising and falling over a ridge of cedar on the edge of our clearing and a pocket watch my father kept on the mantle were all we knew of time. Once a month we journeyed into town for provisions. The town was an old woman with a thousand eyes. When we walked through her grey, cobbled streets dragging suitcases glutted on pelts and the stiff heads of beasts, she drew her lids shut. I could deduce glowing mirages of interior light through curtained windows but never the whole, comprehensible outline of a flame or bulb.

The market was always open when we came. My father was a trapper and a taxidermist. It wasn't only savage icons the people craved, wild boar tusk and polar grizzle; they wanted softer fare as well, items imparting luck or wisdom, like rabbit's foot or whole wood owl. They liked to pretend they came from another time and place, so they bought martin tail and ermine snout. Women said they would pluck their brows fine and buy red lipstick to go with their new muff. We sold enough to get by.

I watched traders in the market and they watched me. Most of them were townspeople and therefore different from my father and I, who had travelled from across a wide space. They hawked striped nylon socks, underwear that said "You'll Love Me for Lunch," and bowls of individually wrapped candy. There was a man who sold cheese and a family that traded in zucchinis no matter what season. Sometimes my father struck up a few cordial words with the butcher. The shoppers interested me most. They formed chaotic clusters around things they wanted, held hands, brushed shoulders, and laughed at jokes their friends made. None of them came too near where I stood because they were afraid of the bees that hovered around gaps in my cloak. Still, I could hear what they thought in grooved echoes we weren't supposed to notice.

"She doesn't look real."

"Too pale, her skin."

"It's like she's his slave. Does he lock her up? Did he burn her?"

"Hey you," my father turned and spoke if he also heard them. "Keep your chin down and don't look at anyone. Don't give them a reason to look at you."

Speaking was verboten. My father bartered with potential clients and I counted out their change, bagged their boar, antler, or bear claw, and kept my eyes on their pockets.

During one December's journey into town, my father got the flu. By the time we'd set up our stall, hissing fluid steamed from the bottom of his trousers and he'd wrapped himself in some now unsellable lynx pelts. I watched his mess melting the snow but didn't know whether I found it repulsive or not. He shivered on a stool and looked at me as though I were a fawn who refused to come to the dead mother he'd used to bait a trap. "You're so implacable," he seethed. "You don't care. When I made you I should have used more of my own soul." Finally he grabbed my arm even though it cost him all his effort. "Get me some medicine. Don't stray."

Down one of the more frequented back streets, the apothecary's kneeled snug in between a patisserie and a shop where tourists could buy imitation medieval swords. I went there while he watched me, my face passing over windowpanes that revealed nothing. Two dazed and starving drones clung to the back of my hood. It's possible that I lived in all those ancient houses, a vengeful emanation sucking air from between the cracks of broken things. Across the street a boy wearing a plastic Roman helmet pulled on his mother's hand, pointed in my direction and waved a pamphlet that advertised nightly ghost tours.

Little bells jangled over the apothecary's door. I braced myself for a surge of warmth, but instead the room was cool and dim as a library of lost scrolls. Air seeped through cracks in the floor, which made it seem as if the whole shop was elevated on stilts as high as the sky. The only other patron was an old woman who wandered across the front counter examining liniment cream. She found the blood pressure monitor and tested herself again and again.

"Is there something I can help you with?"

Although he'd been sitting behind the register, I hadn't seen the tall, elfin man until he spoke. He had a pale, small mouth that reminded me of somewhere I could fold myself away and sleep. A tawny mole cheered his neck, and I moved between it and his lips while the old woman repeated her blood pressure out loud.

"Medicine," I said. "For a man."

Finally he asked, "What kind of man?"

"He has the flu."

The woman prowled closer to us and pretended to read the ingredients on a packet of lozenges. She cleared her throat a number of times while the pharmacist went around a second counter and came back with some nectarine-coloured powder. "You may need to come back for more."

"No. I can only come once."

"In that case give me a moment."

He walked to a third counter, behind and lower than the second. I glanced up and saw a warren of ledges and shelves that were connected at parallel, perpendicular, and even acute angles. Time flowed in a cool circuit, lost and found itself again in eddies that swirled off the rims of counters. Nobody grabbed the back of my neck, forced me to stare into a triggered leg hold and asked me to describe what I saw.

The pharmacist returned with a vial of iridescent green foam. "If you mix this with the powder it will turn red and taste like fruit. Keep giving it to him until you see a change."

Later, after my father recovered and we had made our way back to our house on the lake, I stared at my palm where the pharmacist had given me my change and found a thin, smooth line, like a kitten's claw mark. His eyes were the watery colour of shore pebbles. My eyes had no colour until I mixed ash into round discs of wax and fastened them on.

One day that spring, I looked up from the raccoon brain on the end of my pliers and saw my father wobbling under the weight of his axe. In another flash of silver he'd righted himself and resumed chopping, but the fact was unmistakable—he had begun to shrink. A few weeks later he met and married his wife. She was a long, German woman named Ilse, beautiful in a flat, angular way, and he adored her. I could understand his loneliness but his sudden ingratiation to this old-world woman confused me.

A few months before she'd been married to the Algerian baker who owned the patisserie next to the apothecary's. My father stole her with promises of fur. The Algerian tried to win her back with her favourite delectations: ladyfingers, baby delights, grand-mère's thumbs, but she preferred the furs. She loved browns the best: beaver, bear, and even fox if it had been caught during the transitional period between summer and fall. Our living room became cluttered with mirrors and skins she wanted to try until it looked like a lady's boudoir in some gothic fairy tale. She delighted in finding new combinations and I think even convinced herself that she was an aspiring stylist, though she lived apart from everything there in the woods. She draped her torso with back and her waist with torso, made little hats out of beaver teeth, and framed the straight bones of her jaw with frenetically combed mink wraps. My father trapped, I gutted, and she brushed and braided the dressed fur, then unbraided it.

A week after their wedding, she waltzed into the skinning shed wearing a wolverine tail, stroked my father's slightly narrower neck as he taught me how to rinse marrow from claw sockets, and sighed, "One day

I want you to make me another like this weird girl."

April's abundance was diabetic. Bears travelled from lea to forest to lake, sucking grubs out of mulch and indulging in a sublime wanderlust. My father planted a clot of raspberry bushes outside our kitchen window where the view was good, and of course our fixed-frame hives stood along the back tree line amongst the sunflowers we'd seeded at random to attract bees. At least one bear per season lingered around the honey for too long. My father called these bears Winnies, and he said they yielded the nicest fur. Whereas the berries harassed me with thorns I would only find days later in my cheek or the back of my arm, the hives brought me comfort. It wasn't strange that I'd think of those bees as my oblivious, slavish mothers. Sometimes when the days were long and I'd finished all the tasks he'd set out for me, I stood among the hives. If I stuck my tongue out for long enough, worker bees would land on it—and once the queen!

The mother and her two cubs came for our honey on the rarest day. I'd hung two muskrats in the smoking hut, warmed some red berry compote and whisked the batter my father and Ilse liked to lick off each other's hands before spooning it into our electric waffle maker. As I set the table, Ilse meandered out of their bedroom wearing one of my father's winter parkas and nothing else. She draped herself over my shoulder and linked one of her feet through my calves.

"Are you joining us for breakfast?" She scraped batter off the side of the bowl and suckled it from under her nail.

My father came up behind her, washed, combed and boyish. "I told you, Ilse. She doesn't eat."

When I stepped outside, I found myself unwatched for the first time in my life. It was then that I realized she divided his attention, if only fractionally. Now he would only be able to notice most of me. A part would become mine to do with what I pleased. So I went to see the bees.

Sunny spotlights riddled through gaps in stagnant clouds. I stood in shade on the far side of a hive and hid from eyes at the window. When I stuck my fingers into comb, barbed sentinels swarmed my hand without laying sting, not because they were sympathetic but because my attacking limb smelled the same as the hive. I felt sad for these guards who failed their monarch. What can a creature do when the linear drive of its instinct hits an unexplained loop? Those same bees had crafted the material I was made of. They hovered and tasted traces of themselves. Then out of nowhere three shapes stared out from the border of the tree line. Each time I looked up the shapes were a bit more distinct, until a trio of brown heads poked their noses into the clearing, wondering at how I stood there without showing distress. The mother licked her snout. Her

male cub swatted his rumbling stomach and nipped her on the elbow, egging her on, while the other cub, a female, tilted her head to one side, swivelling antennae ears and listening to the silence of my heart.

After that the bears came three or four times a week. I would have shot them if my father had told me to, but he'd been so preoccupied with Ilse indoors, he hadn't. Instead I watched them play. The cubs climbed trees and dived aboard their mother, who reared onto her hind legs and sent them spinning. Whoever had to wait pounced on its sibling twirling through the air, until the surrounding bramble looked wallpapered with snagged tufts of fur. Each visit they came further and further into our clearing, until one day they stood just a few feet from the hives, waiting to see what I would do.

I broke off three pieces of comb and tossed them over.

"Hello," I said. "You're welcome."

The girl cub cantered over to me, stopped, edged a little nearer, and stopped. I pinched off a large hexagon, squeezed the contents into my hands and pressed the wax ball into my forehead. I thought of moulding myself a horn. The cub licked the honey off my palm and when it was gone she stayed. I scratched the divot between her eyes. She nibbled my thumb. When she got bored she ran back to her brother and bit him in the rear. He peed on her. Their mother sucked on a piece of comb. It was nice.

Three shots sculpted what must have been my happiness into a horrible shape.

My father floated out from behind a stack of firewood piled beside the house. Isle followed in a black and white badger scarf.

"We've been watching you," he said.

"Like a chunk of beef under a deadfall, isn't that the way?"

"Ilse's comparisons aren't exact," he stroked her rump. "Nonetheless it's been fascinating to observe. I never knew you could get so close to anything."

My cub had been shot in the leg, and she lay on the ground next to her mother and brother playing dead.

Ilse clapped her hands. "It's like Davey Crocket out here, don't you agree?" She flitted between carcasses and my father without looking at any one thing. "You have to skin them now, helpful girl, before they go sour."

The cub licked her paw.

"Ilse wants a bear rug in front of the fireplace," my father stared at me.

"And two little rug slippers."

He threw his skinning knife at my feet and patted Ilse's back to shush her. When I looked back up at them, the pile of chopped wood they leaned against was at least five inches taller.

"Go," he said. "Start with the little one. That one there."

As I knelt down I cupped her head and ran my fingers over her nose so she would know that I loved her.

By that evening my father and Ilse were the size of twelve-year-old boys.

They noticed the next morning. When Ilse stepped out of bed into a larger world, she must have felt still drunk from the vats of Malbec they'd engulfed to sweeten dinner's bear stew. Being that my body has never altered in size, I can only imagine what shrinking at that velocity must have felt like. An itchy tingle in the musculature; tightness around the eyes and in the nail beds. When she reached the sliding wainscot that partitioned their room from the hall, she might have thought that she was having a stroke. I imagine her blinking, an adolescent mole whose infant blindness didn't fade.

"Gene!" she screamed.

My father, always up before dawn, slept. He opened his eyes, saw Ilse splattered against the door like a starfish on tiptoe, and roared, "That girl. She's a curse!"

After their initial panic they spoke in whispers. They must have decided that as I only had an artificial sense of the world anyway, and was more or less forged to obey, the best thing they could do was pretend that nothing had changed. As they marched into the kitchen, hips level with the wall sockets, I was already ladling compote into a freshly whisked batter. Ilse hoisted herself onto her chair and kneeled at the table. When she couldn't reach the butter dish, I walked over from my stool in the corner and moved it closer as though that was a politeness I performed every morning. Aside from the fact that they were now three feet tall, everything was the same. Occasionally my father turned to glare at me, spooning fruit into his mouth while I stoked the fire through a protective leather drape.

It wasn't long, two days and another ten inches at most, before they hatched a plan to kill me. The afternoon was grey and slow so I took a lighter into the bathroom and sculpted myself a doe head with a single fang that jutted from my cleft.

"Stop it, stop it now!" Ilse howled when I brought them mugs of ginger beer.

Thinking it was the fang that bothered her, I returned to the bathroom and cleaved my face to look exactly like hers. They were eerily silent as I set down their bowl of nuts. Ilse could have been a tiny quiver-lipped child. She pulled her knees into her chest and dropped her head down the space between them. Suddenly my father erupted off the settee, grabbed my hips and plowed me down the hall. "What the hell are

you doing?" He pressed me into the wall. "Suddenly playful, are you?" I stared down at the top of his head. The oily bald circle smelled like a rabbit two hours after dying. He shoved me into the bathroom and slammed the door. "Get yourself back to the way I made you."

After all the crafting and reshaping, I glided into bed and fell into a deep sleep. No image brooded behind my eyes, no image ever does, but I felt a warm nose breathing wetness onto my hand.

In the middle of the night I awoke and discovered that my forehead was strapped to the bed with fishing line. Ilse and my father stood eye level with my toes, holding up a storm lantern they'd smashed apart on one side so the shards of glass looked like little girl teeth. My left foot sat melting in their makeshift oven, held taut with a belt they'd looped round my ankle and were using like an elephant hook.

My father was a master trapper and I had difficulty tearing out of my snare. Wires wrapped around tacks and pinned to the mattress at crucial geometrical nodes transferred the force of my struggle off the lines and back to my body. I bent my joints, thrashed, snarled, gnawed on wires that cut into my gums. My father tugged on the belt so hard he was standing horizontally off the side of the bed. All the while Ilse yelled, "Shut her! Gene! Shut her noises!"

Eventually, instead of trying to raise myself off the mattress, I attempted to shimmy out from under the wires lengthwise. I'd avoided this manoeuvre because it meant kicking my foot even further into the lantern, which was spitting out constellations of flaming palmitate that hazed the back of Ilse's head, igniting her hair and boring black holes into the skin on her arm. With a yowl, I thrust my leg straight through the blaze and knocked Ilse into the wall. The lantern dropped off my foot and sent currents of molten wax pulsing across the floor.

For a moment midst the fire, I calmed. My father didn't yank on my ankle anymore so much as use it to prop himself off the ground, panting like a mountain climber who'd run out of steam sooner than expected. Ilse screeched in the corner and batted back the blaze with a decorative pillow. The scene must have looked even more terrifying to them than it did to me, given our differences in size.

"Put it out!" my father bellowed.

"How?" I asked.

"That one," he pointed to one of the tacks, which I unpinned. "Now that one."

In this way he ciphered my escape. I limped to the bathroom, wet some towels and sloshed out the scattered fires.

The assault did procure one redeeming effect: the next night, as I ladled melted beeswax onto my dwarfed foot, I had occasion to stare at my hands and I rediscovered the tiny scratch the apothecary had left

on my palm during our minute transaction. While waiting for my new appendage to solidify, I fit my fingernail into the fine groove and slid it back and forth, amplifying the line.

Ignoring them became simple when they reached squirrel proportions, excepting the few times I had to disengage a coil spring trap they'd set at the bottom of the stairs, and once under the welcome mat outside the door. They didn't know it, but I liked guessing where the trap would appear next, and even made bets with myself on the back of the pharmacist's receipt, which I rolled into a scroll and kept in a chink between two log beams. After the trap became too heavy, I found them lurking together behind the toilet wielding corn-on-the-cob skewers, and I snatched them up, threw them into a garbage sack, and carried them down to the water. When I got there, I ran in up past my knees and then quit, with bag in one hand and skewer in the other, to stare at a duck floating on the inanimate water under the dock, while the mallard she hid from skimmed back and forth a few paces off, squawking for her. Without much ado I went back to shore and let them go. The duck stared at me with silver eyes while they scurried up the granite slabs we used for stepping stones and let themselves in through the cat flap.

Finally the day came for journeying into town. I scoured everywhere for them, in all the usual places, behind the fire grate, on the bathmat, aboard a dust ball I'd left in the corner of their bedroom so they would have somewhere to sleep. Eventually I gave up the search and hobbled off on my own. I had nothing to trade except some nectarine-coloured powder and iridescent green foam. The cub paw I kept for luck.

POETRY CONTEST ESSAY

An Economy of Language

Although reading poetry is a requirement of my profession as poet, I read also from very personal motivation. A poem has to have more than technical accomplishment to satisfy me—it has to leave me with something beyond admiration for a turn of phrase or a startling image. The poem also has to help me with the world. At its best, the poem can act as generous witness to the dance between objective reality and the inner workings of the subjectivity that filters that reality.

This year's winning poem, Joelene Heathcote's "Owl on the roof," engages the reader in this way. The woman who is the poem's subject is delineated as particularly vulnerable to external forces. Her central action in the poem is to take out the garbage in the rain—can there be a more mundane and thankless activity? With an economy of language, Heathcote outlines the underlying narrative. The woman's loneliness and regret can be read as neither mysterious nor general, because the author sets up their source with a single detail: the woman is wearing her dead husband's slippers. Heathcote takes a delicate and nuanced approach to the pathetic fallacy of Romantic poetry, the assumption that nature reflects and sympathizes with the human subject's emotional state. How wise is the owl of the title? Initially, it offers no consolation for the woman's predicament, merely reading her back and telling her that "of all/ the grand things a man can do, dying/ is the easiest, the most/ self-serving." It does, however advise her to look to her own inner resources, and to find within herself the capacity to "make the family/ whole again." The closing touch to this poem, given its wry stance towards Romanticism, is its reference back to a model from nature, the spawning fish's struggle against the current, as an image of tenacity and survival.

This year's first runner-up, "Leap," by Leslie Vryenhoek, uses a vivid and engaging voice to present to the reader not only St. John's harbour, but the delicate social substructure underlying the city. Visitors are contrasted to residents: they see only the picturesque surface of place, while those who truly inhabit the city recognize the gritty underside. A cheeky knowledge trumps the willing ignorance of those who access appearance but not substance. The local's leap of faith claims the landscape in a way the tourist cannot.

The compelling couplets of Patricia Young's "The Big Siesta (or: The End of Modern Warfare)," this year's second runner-up, seem at first a light-hearted proposal for a solution to one of humankind's greatest ills. The soldiers' exhaustion can at first be read as simple weariness, but as the poem progresses, it takes on deeper meaning. While their youthful, innocent sleep intimates and echoes their possible deaths, it also expands into their possible resurrection as, three days after their plunge into slumber, a possible awakening is invoked.

—*Rhea Tregebov*

Joelene Heathcote

Owl on the roof

It came here to watch you
take out the garbage in the pouring rain. The
staccato of loneliness pelting your shoulders. Dog
in the night lunging like the kickback
of a shotgun. To read your spine's regret
as you trudge back to the lit kitchen through
mud, your dead husband's slippers
reluctant. It wants you to open
to what you already know. Let
it out—name everything you suspect
as being true. It says of all
the grand things a man can do, dying
is the easiest, the most
self-serving. It came
here to punctuate the dark
with disappointed eyes, and coo. One
child fast asleep
in your bed, the other trying
to fill the house with voices.
Now the wind lifts its feathers
like the collar of a coat, blows the rain
sideways as you stand with the back door
open to the house digesting laundry
and dishes. It says, keep the dog for the kids,
says go in and lie down between your children
in that place where you found their father
and like spawning fish
in a shallow river, make the family
whole again.

Leslie Vryenhoek

Leap

Up on the Harbourside Trail
everybody's got a grin
ready to pull from their pocket
and put on for visitors, lint
and creases be damned
on such a beguiling St. John's afternoon.

A day like this once had you
hoodwinked, too, but you've turned wise
to what the harbour puts on:
its Caribbean turquoise trick, all glinty
and hinting there's warm sands nearby.
You know what's up
underneath, understand the attraction
for all those damn birds—but hush,
there's tourists afoot; let's keep our effluent
to ourselves.

Down in The Battery, bric-a-brac
colours catch the sun, lupins
wave their conical blooms and the word
quaint
hangs off passerby lips
like it was a peel-and-stick
from the guidebook. The trail's too crowded
this time of year, the smooth upside of
lowerdown houses too tempting, so near
you could mount the rail, balance, then
leap—
land like a cat
on a hot tar roof.

Worth the risk
just to look back, see their maws
split wide, call out
Sure, that's how we do it here.

Patricia Young

The Big Siesta (or: The End of Modern Warfare)

On Tuesday night all the soldiers in the world fell
asleep and didn't wake until two days later when

they blinked twice and said, *Hell, we're in no mood
for fighting,* then fell back asleep. And the marines

and the navy seals and the snipers on rooftops, they
all groaned, *So damned tired.* And the newest recruits,

the peach-faced boys, lay down their weapons and
plunged into a slumber from which their sergeants

could not wake them, no matter how they barked
and kicked and threw cold water over the boys'

sleeping faces. Electric shocks zapped a few eyes
open before they closed again, heads sinking into

pillows and fields seeded with uranium pellets.
And the generals gathered in bars and canteens

all over the world to compare medals and shining
careers and also to rage against all the lazy mother-

fuckers under their command. If word got out,
their five-star asses were gonna be toast. But after

a bit the generals grew sick of hearing themselves
fret like old women who couldn't find their bus

passes. How tedious their schemes of death—
what wedding party to blow to bits, where to

drop the latest bunker-busting, daisy-cutting,
phosphorescent bomb? The generals knocked back

one last whiskey, then stumbled into parking lots
and foreign hotels, muttering, *The wars, the wars,*

the beautiful wars, while the soldiers sank deeper
into a sleep more profound than the arch of a

bridge or a girl's sandaled foot, boys who babbled
unintelligible sentences as the fax machines whirred

and the phones started ringing and the emails shot
through cyberspace with orders to get back to it, but

the sleepers slept on, hands slack at their sides, fore-
heads smooth as water, every rank and file soldier

having closed his eyes and ears to the petulant howls
of the leaders of the free and not so free world, yes,

even the hot-shot pilots in their high-tech jets, even
the gunners inside their explosive-resistant tanks

turned off the ignitions and voices yammering inside
their headsets. Slumped forward, cheeks pressed against

control panels, they slept like newborns for three more
days and nights, and then it happened—all the soldiers

on earth rolled in unison onto their backs like a flock
of starlings changing direction mid-flight then dropping

as one onto bare winter trees, the branches now trembling
with leaves that only moments before did not exist.

Eden Robinson

The Slums of Kitsilano

A car honked. I was daydreaming at an intersection and the light had gone green. I waved sorry, then started off, wishing I'd worn something vaguely waterproof as I pedaled across the intersection and started over the Burrard Street Bridge. The rain intensified, pounding off the concrete.

Once off the bridge, I turned right onto Cornwall and then right again onto Laburnum. I lived at the end of the street in a large, mint-green two-story house with a dandelion-infested lawn. By comparison, the neighbour's lawn was regulation golf green short. Their shrubs were tufted like dog-show poodles and their flowerbed was a sharp diamond with a circle of drooping red flowers forming a bloodshot eye. In response to her neighbour's pointed comments about her lack of formal landscaping, my landlady, Mrs. Saunderson, had erected a discreet sign out front: "This lawn is entrusted to the care of the Good Lord. Please forward your complaints to him."

A gravel driveway on the north side of the house led to the separate garage that everyone used for storage. When they were home, my roommates usually parked their grey Toyota Tercel in front of the garage, but since it was Sunday afternoon, they were probably grocery shopping. The garbage cans were lined up beside the side door. I'd forgotten it was my turn to take them to the curb and they'd have to wait until next week's pickup.

I unlocked the door. The garage reeked of cat piss. Two of Mrs. Saunderson's four cats looked up from their naps, inspecting me as I parked my bike against the wall. They scurried deeper into the tangle of old furniture and boxes.

Mrs. Saunderson fostered cats. She let her grandchildren rename them at a tea party she held for each of the new arrivals. Pikachu, a dirty yellow cat with one eye, was the friendliest of the bunch. He'd let you pet him, but growled and hissed while you did it. Sailor Moon was the least friendly, but with a missing tail, missing ears, and burn marks patching her fur, her skittishness was understandable.

Our apartment entrance was on the south side of the house, sunk below the ground. Six cracked concrete steps led down to a paint-blistered door. Yesterday, Mrs. Saunderson had herded two of her cats downstairs

and announced that she would be holding a shower to celebrate their upcoming nuptials. I hoped she was joking. Otherwise, it did not bode well for our golden days in 1392 Laburnum. I'd talked to the various developers that the landlady's son had sent to drool over our prime Kitsilano property. The minute her son got power of attorney, I suspected we'd all be ass-cheeks to the pavement faster than you could say leaky condo.

"Anyone home?" I said as I walked in.

I threw my keys in a bowl by the door. The answering machine light blinked rapidly. The red numbers said that there were fifteen new messages. Ed's voice said, "Mabel. I'm still waiting to hear back from you." The rest were hang-ups. I erased them all, yawning.

I stripped off my clothes as I walked down the hall to my bedroom. I threw my dirty clothes in the hamper by the door and then rummaged around the closet floor for a relatively clean nightie. I cut some pot onto the back of an old magazine then rolled two joints. I lit one and stuck it in my mouth. I lay down on the mattress on the floor and stared at the ceiling.

The results were in. My mid-term grades sucked ass. I was thinking of dropping out. I wasn't sure if I could make it out of bed every day and the tuition was killing me. I had a TV, money for pot, and enough willpower to get out of bed to piss in the toilet instead of pissing in a can by the bed. I wasn't sure that was going to get me through the second semester. It didn't seem like a recipe for success.

I examined my ungroomed reflection emerging as the steam evaporated from the medicine cabinet's rusty mirror. I scrubbed my face hard with cold water. The shower hadn't helped. After a four hour nap, I still felt like a zombie. I was never going to make it through my shift without a major caffeine injection. I'd have to pick up a double Americano somewhere.

"Phone for you," Bubu said, banging on the bathroom door. He was wearing his party duds—shiny, dark blue, Nike basketball tear-aways with a matching XXL jacket and a freshly bleached wife-beater. His curly black hair was slicked straight.

Who? I mouthed.

Bubu shoved the phone into my hand. "Take a wild guess."

I took the phone. Took a deep breath. "What."

"Don't you fucking hang up on me," Ed said.

"Fucking get a life, you fucking drama queen."

"Oh, that's fucking rich coming fro—"

I pressed the off button. In less than a minute it was ringing again. Bubu stared at the phone. I wished Bubu would leave the room. The whole situation was humiliating enough without witnesses. "Don't answer it."

Bubu stuck his hands deep into his jacket pockets and rocked back and forth on his heels. "What's up?"

"Nothing."

The phone rang and rang. It would pause when the answering machine picked up and then it would start ringing again. I sighed. I sure knew how to pick them.

"You up for some fun?" Babu asked.

"Can't tonight. I'm working," I said.

"You're working? On Halloween?" He snorted and waved his hand. "Blow it off, man."

"You're going to pay my bills?"

"Yeah, well. Speaking of. Loan me twenty?"

I searched through my wallet. "How about ten?"

Bubu pocketed the money. "Any weed?"

"Screw you. That's all you're getting."

"I'll trade you."

I had to laugh. "I'm not selling you my own weed with my own money."

Bubu grinned. "You're going to be sorry if you don't come."

"No moola," I said.

"I can loan you a tenner."

I stuck my foot on the lip of the bathtub and bent down to tuck the right hem of my slacks into my socks. For the Kopy Katz staff, the uniforms were Seventies-orange shirts and matching slacks with shit-brown piping. I was thinking of wearing one of those plastic pumpkin goodie pails as a hat, but then decided sartorial irony was probably against company policy. I looked up and Bubu was still waiting. "I really have to work."

"So you get fired from a shit job. There're tons of shit jobs out there. Come on, Mabes, live a little."

I slung my backpack over my shoulder before I pushed Bubu out of the room. "Dude, I need to get ready."

We walked down the narrow hallway to the kitchen. Ginger and Katherine were pumping their going-out music, something spastic, bass-heavy and industrial. Bubu jumped up on the counter and swung his legs. Gin and Kath were sitting at the kitchen table, feeding each other KD and wieners with their fingers. Gin's lanky paleness and kinky red hair contrasted sharply with Kath's cocoa skin and close-cropped black hair, but they were at that stage in their relationship where they liked to match. Tonight, they were both wearing pink mini-tees, low rider jeans with the same pink thong peeking over their hips and identical belly button rings.

In a few hours, my roommates would be blitzed on ecstasy, dancing and laughing like maniacs, not giving a fuck about anything in particular

until the E wore off sometime later tomorrow. When I was with them, I'd sit in the hotbox smoking up until I was so stoned my vision jittered. Bubu kept trying to get me to do E so I'd relax, but I suspected even the faintest encouragement, much less an E-induced petting session, would make him unbearable. My watch beeped twice, marking ten p.m.

"How much skill does it take to make a photocopy?" Bubu said, blocking my exit through the back door. "For Christ's sake, they can grab any bozo off the street to do your job."

"Can I use you as a personal reference? Can I? Can I?"

"I didn't mean you're incompetent. I just meant that no one would miss you if you took the night off. I mean, no, not—it's just—everyone's going. We're all going, right?" Bubu looked over at Gin and Kath for support.

"And then we're all jumping off a bridge," Gin said.

"In our lame wanna-be-a-gangsta clothes," Kath said.

"Jealous?" He leaned in close to me. "You got to come."

"Have fun," I said, pushing past Bubu.

The rain had stopped, but the evening air had a bite, and I considered going back for a thicker coat. But I didn't want to go back inside and get hassled. The ride would warm me up, I decided.

The garage door was ajar. I gritted my teeth. This was Bubu's first attempt at living in a non-gated community. You could remind him and remind him about security but he would never believe we'd actually get robbed. If my bike was missing, I was going to make Bubu pay for a new one.

"Excuse me," a deep voice said. "Excuse me! New employee."

I licked my fingers, pinched the joint out and stuck it in my pants pocket. I waved the smoke away, coughing as I straightened up.

"Hi," I said, hoping my eyes didn't look too red.

My supervisor—who preferred to be called by his full name, Patrick A. Hanson—pushed aside the dumpster that I was hiding behind. He had an army-style high and tight and was so blond his eyebrows disappeared into his face. I guessed we were the same age.

"Mary Juana," Hanson said, squinting at my nametag.

"Uh, it's Mabes. Mabel Martin."

"Why does your nametag have a different name?"

"Oh. That. The woman doing nametags was sarcasm-challenged."

"So it's not an alias?"

I laughed and then realized Hanson wasn't joking. I carefully composed my face. The world seemed to have an overabundance of the sarcasm-challenged. "No. It's not an alias."

"You are not allowed to smoke within twenty feet of any company

entrance."

"Seriously? But it's the service entrance."

"Those are the rules."

"Good to know, dude."

"I am not your peer. I am your supervisor. You will speak to me with a tone of respect."

Do not roll your eyes. Don't do it. "Ooookey-dokey."

He leaned in. "I'm watching you."

My eyes rolled all by themselves.

"With that kind of attitude, you will never amount to anything." He did a diva stomp back into the building.

"I didn't know you were psychic!" I said. "Hey, what colour is my aura?"

Slam.

Yup, I know all the best ways to kiss ass.

The night was slow and the weed was lame. I might as well have smoked a regular cigarette. Hillary was such a poser. I should have never bought any shit off her. Her prices were way too good to be true.

I heard Ed's wheezy Pontiac Grand Am before it rattled to a stop in the handicap parking space by the door. His black-rimmed eyes, set deep in his goth-pale face, glowed in the darkness.

"Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck," I muttered.

Ed shoved the door open and scanned Kopy Kats until he found me behind the cash register. He slammed the door shut and stomped inside, his Doc Marten rip-offs clanking against the tile.

"You fucking give it back, bitch," he said.

"Go to hell, you useless shit-for-brains," I said.

I wish I could witty-up our fights, but it was mostly swearing and insults to each others' love-making ability. This went on for some time: Ed spitting his words in my face as he approached the counter and me spitting my own right back at him. I'd seen him in bar fights so I knew there was little danger he could actually pound my brains out the way he was threatening.

I was so involved in our stellar repartee that I didn't notice Patrick A. Hanson emerge from his office until he slammed Ed's face against the counter and held him there by his neck. Hanson twisted Ed's arm up his back and leaned.

"I am hereby making a citizen's arrest," Hanson said. "I am charging you with uttering threats, disturbing the peace and—"

"Stealing Billy Idol's peroxide," I added.

"Fuck you!" Ed shouted, squirming. "Fuck you!"

"Mabel," Hanson said. He gave me a look my father gives me when I've annoyed him long enough. "I have security surveillance and eye

witnesses to back up my claims and will now phone the proper authorities. Mabel. Please dial 911."

The eye witnesses abandoned their photocopying and edged towards the door.

"This is my shit," I said. "We'll take it outside, dude."

"Is he your partner?"

"Ex."

"Fucking right we're done, you harpie," Ed muttered.

"I cannot condone violence towards women. If you won't phone the police, then I will."

My co-worker, Gita, pushed her headphones back and yawned. She casually reached for the phone.

"Got it," she said.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa," Ed said. "I just want my fucking ring back."

"No freaking way," I said. "It's the only decent thing you ever gave me."

"You gave her a ring," Hanson said slowly. "And now you want it back."

"We got a label interested," Ed said. "We need a decent demo. Mabes. Come on. Please."

I used to brag about Ed to all my friends. I'm dating the lead singer, I'd say. Come out and hear the song he wrote for me. They mostly did crappy covers and played for beer. My friends kept dropping hints he was a loser. And here we were, being surveilled by Patrick A. Hanson and random people in the awkward throes of a petty breakup, the nadir of all the lame decisions I'd been making lately. Everybody who said it would end badly, raise your hand and get in line to tell me you were right.

"Whatever," I said, pulling the stupid ring off my finger and chucking it on the counter.

"It would be prudent to press charges," Hanson said.

"And give him street cred?" I said. "Please."

Hanson took down Ed's full name and driver's licence, banned him from Kopy Katz, and warned him that if he continued harassing me, Hanson would pursue official charges. Ed and I stared at each other, and then he stomped back to his Pontiac and wheezed off.

"Let's get you drunk after work then take advantage of you," I told Hanson.

He blinked at me—rapid, unsettled blinks like he was about to drop to floor and start convulsing.

I nudged him. "That's my way of saying thank you."

"Oh. You're welcome. But, um, I think our relationship should remain strictly professional."

"Suit yourself, dude."

Hanson sent me home early—more to get me out of his hair, I think, than out of concern for my mental state. The cherry on top of everything was the dove-grey Bentley parked in our driveway, which could only mean a) Bubu was still home because b) his dad was visiting. Bubu's dad had all the charm of a public toilet. He tended to perch on our furniture like a nervous virgin and wipe his hands on a hanky if he touched anything. I didn't know what they were fighting about and didn't care. I'd had enough drama, thank you very much. I sat on the front steps and hugged my knees.

A group of tall, thin girls turned the corner. The loudest wore a Union Jack bathing suit and a bright red wig. They were using designer totes for their trick-or-treat bags, and would reach in and grab eggs and pelt houses, cars, and mail boxes. I checked my watch. Almost five a.m. The neighbour's automatic sprinklers hissed to life, ratcheting over an already damp lawn. As the wind picked up, a candle flickered in the jack-o-lantern across the street. The maples lining the sidewalk shed limp, brown leaves.

"Hey!" I hissed. I ran after them. "Girls! Need any weed?"

They paused and considered me. I'd guess they were fifteenish, but it was hard to tell under all that glitter.

"How much?" the red wig said.

"You see the grey car? I want you to egg it in five minutes."

"Where's the weed?"

I pulled out what was left of my baggie and threw in the half-smoked joint for good measure.

Red Wig snatched the baggie from my hand and they took off, hooting and laughing.

"Cunts," I said.

Bubu and his dad were in the kitchen. Bubu leaned against the counter and his dad hovered close, their heads bent together.

"Hi," I said.

His dad didn't look up, but Bubu did, frowning and hunching further into himself.

"I think someone's checking out the Bentley," I said.

His dad didn't take the bait. He turned and stared at me. "Do you mind?"

"Lots of break-ins this time of year. But, hey, it's your car."

"We're having a private conversation."

"Don't mind me. Just here to get some grub."

I puttered through the kitchen, humming as I pretended to decide which cereal I wanted.

"Let's continue this in your room," the dad said.

Bubu said something but it was lost in the sudden blare of the Bentley's

car alarm. I've never seen anyone move so quickly. Babu's dad sprinted past me, out the door and, cellphone to his ear. I grabbed Bubu's shoulder to stop him from following his dad.

"Did you know that every time a car alarm rings, an angel gets his wings?" I said.

"What?" Bubu said.

"It's a wonderful life."

"What?"

"You know. The Christmas movie."

Bubu raised his eyebrows. "Are you stoned?"

We went to stand on the porch and watch his dad jump up and down around his egged Bentley like a cartoon character, and I smiled and thought the day might turn out better than I expected.

Antony Di Nardo

Fairway

One summer it was all whites and sneakers, wine by the pool, the sun, the moon all the same smear of light, tongues meant to excite day or night and illustrate what else can be done when hands are free, if only for a savage stroke.

Some time we had, that time beneath the maple and the car still running.

Now it's awash with winter, and lost in the rough, best pulled up like weeds and wildflowers mixed in early spring and left to wilt for weeks on a table set for one.

The grass lay low that year, a year on the green in combat gear stalking dandelion leaves before they claimed a victory of Roundup proportions.

The hedgerows, an inch from their lives, remained un-swallowed by the ever-crawling, everlasting sand traps next to the final hole, sun-commanded from above, orders coming down in shadow plays of light, not light.

We were an archipelago of leafy shade in the dying hour, those final moments when we were left alone.

And when we closed our eyes it was to fumble for our favourite parts like when we dug through pockets to look for keys that took us home and elsewhere.

We foraged, aroused not like animals but wilder because of hands and tongues, wild and lubricated.

We wouldn't eat for days, stole the weekends to drink each other in behind the motel curtains that made it night all day.

I could read your face just listening to your breathing, the sudden gasp not searching for air but asking for more of what it was you were losing as you jerked your body into mine, the sudden loss of altitude, par for the course we had set, par for the game we stopped to play.

This poem has been modified from its original version. It has been modified to fit this space.

Of all the people sitting here I wouldn't want to be the bearded man across from me whose dark eyes reflect the stick he used to beat his kids and family dog for walking on the living room carpet that cost him an arm and a leg.

I couldn't stand to have an argument with the long-haired beauty whose throat was on fire because the flight had been delayed and continues to purse her mouth like a fish that only swims to stroke its fins in the fullness of the ocean's scented bath.

In the darkness of my eyes when shut, I think I could be in a dream escaping like a speech bubble from the lips of the woman sleeping next to me and if I woke her up right now she'd say good morning, husband, and put her hand to my cheek

and I would feel like booking another trip on a plane with padded seats lined up all in a row of twos and threes and one behind the other front to back in a fitted metal and plastic case with wings and fins such as this one

flung at 800 kilometres per hour into an atmosphere where we don't belong, actually inhospitable to human life, but entirely acceptable for the hours it'll take before we all get to where we're going, and, God willing, only after the movie ends.

Regan Taylor

Dixville Notch

It isn't the ballroom in The Balsams quadrennially lit
for video, for seventy-eight or eighty citizens at midnight-
oh-one to drop their votes in a box and smile at the chance.
Not half-inch New Hampshire headlines or bellwether villagers
blithely re-enacting *live free or die* on the evening news.

It's just the sawtooth of Route 26 between Sanguinary
and Gloriette, upsurge and fallout, that gut-knot Gravol can't undo.
Admonishment from the front seat to forget the bile
creeping, esophageal, and *just enjoy the view*: greenly
to the west, Vermont. Everywhere timid flumes and lichen,
leafy silhouette on granite, mountains shouldering the lake.
Pedal boats from the the grand hotel. Red-capped minarets
on the shore like old men quibbling distances around a pitch.

No politics or primaries; all I know is vegetable
and mineral and vista, tiny conifers made to scale
on the cliff face, and that heave-ho road that left me
hollow in the wildflowers, vomiting into the ditch.

Hoser

for JM

Don't say rolled toque and stratified plaid—
clothes are for keeping the weather out

and hell, you'd know him just fine without looking.
He smells like a gas bar or sawdust

or cardboard boxes left in the rain.
This one is all guy. Note his thumbs-up,

the accumulation of scruff on his cheek, the beer
in his blood, beef in his stride.

He knows fast ways to get drunk
and the secret to mowing a downhill lawn

with the help of a rope and two trees.
Keeps what's personal in the back of the pickup

he won't pay off before it gives in
to shit luck and one more Laurentian freeze.

Those forties of 50 help with the lockouts
and layoffs but not especially

with getting laid.
It isn't stupidity (a cell-loss

someone called *grain-doped*);
it's fine-tuned: a malt-scented slackness

perfected, perfect for pulling
the tarp over weeks that go bad.

Nathan Baker

Dissolve

a bellstroke's lustre wearing off
over the water still as a hand steadying
out to level in the night plane a face
smoothed beneath a stranger's gaze
the moon palming the murk like a pearl

memory in the swift carriage of the dusk
this sifting black sand
for a fallen note among the shells
lifts a white nightgown at the top
of a blind staircase to step back
among the dark booms of the pines

Kevin Bushell

Fly Dying on the Bedroom Floor

You who can cartwheel onto the ceiling. You who can deke from standstill the swatting hand or newspaper. You who can turn verb into noun through feats of flying cannot, for the life of you, fly now.

I hear your distress, a buzz-roll on the hardwood, and recognize in its rhythm of fits and pauses a plea for three-dimensional space. When it weakens, it becomes the snore of my sleeping, shadow self, the one who wants to fly, to *be* fly, to be dark, diseased, dangerous. Is this your song, the punk version of Flight of the Bumblebee? Unplugged, but amplified by the dark, it could be the perfect accompaniment to a panic attack, night terror, or the dream in which I can't remember my name.

I imagine you, probably caught under the curtains, spinning on your back like a manic breakdancer. Or perhaps you are carving geometric shapes, figure skater on amphetamines, wearing a costume woven entirely from hair. This must be the long program, the one in which you eventually die of exhaustion at the end of a climactic, blinding spin, striking a pose, legs extended in the air, on the final note for eternity.

If my dog were here, he would reincarnate you as worm in his stool. You would become intimate with his entrails. He would lift you clean from my bedroom floor and deposit you at the park. But he has preceded you to that place you are going, and now that you have reminded me of this sadness, *musca domestica*, I want you out of my house. I want sleep to knit up the sleeve of care you have unravelled with your spinning. I will put an end to this, even if I must heave myself from bed and hunt, bare-assed on all fours, for what's left of you.

John Wall Barger

Having Passed Down a Hall to a Room with Yellow Seats Labelled "Cebu Pacific," a TV Squawking, Under Hissing Lights

you spread peanut butter & jam on six
consecrated slices of white bread, three on each thigh,
with a toothbrush-end. Shy, feeling love
but utterly alone. Have you been this person
all along? Your consciousness comes to,
the foolish detonations you have repeated
like an amnesiac on a suicide mission.
A fat boy with huge earphones breakdances,
fearless, heart in his teeth like a pearl-diver's knife,
& through his legs on the tarmac a tiny tabby
prances by, tail raised high & broken in two places,
so grey in the dusk he is almost gone.

We Will Recognize Them!

An evening past good & evil. A cold bench,
south entrance to Central Park. A woman like a beat-up giraffe
limps by, munching chestnuts, trying to disguise an all-purpose terror
under her soiled white muffler. A preacher
in a ragged trilby rages into his bullhorn, "*Jee*-sus say,
By their fruits we will recognize them!" I think I have a smile on my face.
Turned the other way, Lady Liberty—
a busker in silver-green tights, posing for takers—shivers.
A little blonde girl in red scarf trots over, holds up high for America
the foam-red flame: mom cheers & clicks a digital pic:
dad drops a bill in the box. Lady Liberty, fatigued or uneasy,
peeks around, even cranes to see who I am, then
makes a call on her cell, causing a family with mammoth Xmas bags
to laugh merrily. Quite the dog-&-bone day! Me, I often feel this way.
Frazzled, learning to take my pleasure
slow, counting five on my fingers in irregular patterns
below the posh 59th Street apartments, empty telescopes in windows,
abandoned panopticons. Lady Liberty, now hunched beside me,
slips out of headgear & one-piece torso like pre-Grendel Beowulf.
I strike up a conversation. "Good money today?" "Yes, quite."
Turns out she is a small Peruvian man, polite, from Cuzco, in a torn parka.
Round face cracked with gentleness. Slow to anger.
A farmer, not a bullfighter. Work over, he helps his brothers
tear down the tiers of unsold *I Love NY!* t-shirts.
They labour off, rolling the old wood cart into the park,
chatting in Spanish, as streetlamps stammer into consciousness.

Jan Conn

Bloodroot

The stripper goes on an outing
to count the eyes of forest creatures.
Frost glitters in the short-cropped fields.
They are not her fields but she claims their souls.
They are not under any sky.
        At rest among the bloodroot she admires
the only thing in view—her
unencumbered arm, now a queer, cold tone
of green, as though reflecting commingled conifers
and spirits. The other arm, encased
in leather, sets off vivid memories of the glove factory.
She'll die alone,
the residue of a photograph. At her side
is a pile of dusky plums, plundered by wasps.

Hiding the Erotic Inclination

Throughout one overcast day symbols appear
on my upper arms. Occult revival, must be.

I take refuge in a minaret.

I'm too busy hiding the erotic inclination
to evaluate even this closely-held air.

Cuba is burning, sings Ibrahim Ferrer. Perhaps it is burning
because I wondered if it could. If I could. Set fire from afar.

I begin a serigraphic monologue about daily life,
boring in large doses. I can't stop.

I don't want anyone else to speak for me.

Yesterday I spent kicking a half-empty soda bottle
up and down a mountain.

Most nights I explore neighbourhoods, near and far,
gather bundles of plastic and newspaper.

I no longer stay in the bombed-out Ritz:
too many ashes in the swimming pool
and the lack of laundry services.

Swim Trunks

He's wearing pitch-black, low-slung swim trunks.
Breath sucked in so the ribs can be counted.
His face is the colour of smashed green peas,
his avatar's a drunken mermaid
clinging to a barnacle-studded rock.
He chews the fortunes from the Chinese cookies
hoping for absorption of meaning.
How will I conduct my life?
Is torture always completely, absolutely barbaric?
Aren't I erotic (enough)?
The strings tied to his wrists are frayed, easily
snapped, yet they maintain his integrity.
The grey of his hips is his old-man self,
waiting, watching.
He's unsure if he will give up his legs for a tail and scales.
Posturing in front of the photographer makes him vulnerable
How can I seduce you?
Air swirls around his punctured skin, flickers
at wrists and ankles, nearly pornographic.

The Sources of the Self

Arms crossed, I lean on the tabletop.
It's a public place and I'm really hungry
but I hate eating in front of others.
It's either squish the food down in two or three bites
or try to chew each mouthful one hundred times,
a feat I've only managed once, on mescaline,
with an apple. All the while a human
might be watching. If I were invisible
I would crave being noticed.
Since art carries no straightforward message,
it can always mean the opposite.
When I was in grade school a family friend
would exhort me to be what I wanted. If I said explorer,
he would wink. Whereas if I said writer, he would
throw up his hands and leave the house.

My room has a mahogany door and shuttered
windows. Beyond the veranda,
the painted concrete emulates a lawn.
Even so I want to lay down on it with a grass stem
between my teeth.
When I finally force myself to go out the door,
not vault over the window sill,
I've run out of oranges.
The sky clouds up, the stars are invisible.
It feels like infinity
could take up residence in me, some rough place
like my liver, that won't see daylight.
Where are the sources of the self? I need to find mine
and give them a good shaking.

Robert Gore

I Think I Dreamed of Wings

Yesterday, I got through the day
like most others
without killing anything.

I've only murdered twice this week—a moth,
impatient with its fluttering,
and an angry moment with a silverfish.

I regret the moth. I think I dreamed
of wings, but can't be certain. A tiny
body fell and curled

where life went out. A long day
behind closed windows
is dangerous to anything you come home to

though why the ladybug I saved tonight
and carefully took outside
should be higher up the ladder than the moth

is a question I can't answer. Ladybugs
are pretty carnivores. Moths are pollinators
and sweater-eaters. Silverfish

are swift and often hard to kill.
Fleet and paper thin, ancient
and transparent, they'll be here

when the hallway light goes on
and the shadow's edge
is all that's left of me.

George Sipos

Euclidean

Three steers chew beyond the fence,
their backs turned on each other at the
apex of either dissent or indifference
with the studied nonchalance
of a circular theorem. They weigh ideas of space
anyone would have thought
already digested. Fuss with a compass
and pencil. Mumble terms like *scalene*
and *gastric.*

Spring grass in the dead space among them
can't make up its mind
whether to grow or hedge its bets—
risk a linear logic, or merely repeat
the axioms of chlorophyll. It thinks
meadow, as a question, without end.

Nor any help from the sky—
clouds so low between the hills
you could mistake them for mist,
a diffusion of particles finer than drizzle,
less defined than rain. Something
phonemic only, you'd want to say.
Something beyond mind that precludes
the geometric—were it not for the cattle,
the way they move their mouths,
how they prevent your tongue from
shaping itself
    (the taste of acid and grass
    dissolving words)
to the proof.

Castaway

No empty sea
but one too full—albacore and hake and
god knows what else
below zones of plankton—
no blank stare within the horizon's
round retina but rods and cones of coral
beyond a circumference of sand.

Navigation has brought you nowhere
but to an island deserted of everything you
thought you knew, dreams of thirst
parching the heart, flares of the ordinary
signalling above the palms,
the ocean thick with rehearsals of rescue.

You imagine a shore at night,
the moon a white dinghy floating on the tide,
clinker built and oarless.
You lean your head on the thwart,
open your eyes and drift out to sea.

The stars overhead are numberless,
but too few even so.
If they constellate, you turn away,
listen to water beneath the hull
insist on nothing.

Wonder if you could live this way forever.

Peter Richardson

Linkage

Prodigal despoilers of tiles and linoleum,
this pair—tongues lolling out behind you
on your shoe mat—waiting for call-up.

Springer spaniels? No. Cut-rate Kodiaks
worn through to their under soles which
bleed a corrupt version of outer rubber.

You'd want them to last forever and streak
floors in every house you chanced to visit
if their initial owner could somehow be

resuscitated as you progressed, and you,
his stepfather, could harp on the dumb
luck which enabled you to happen by

with a voodoo bag full of medical skills,
untying his presumed-to-be-inert body
from the cold water pipe in his cellar,

where later your ex, his mother, would
point to coat, gray felt hat, and boots,
saying: "Go ahead. Take something

although I think his coat is spoken for.
Anything else you want. Boots? Yeah.
I don't think it's odd at all. Take them."

And you wore them loading airplanes,
the tatter-prone laces accruing knots
like an Incan tax collector's abacus.

Now here they are beside your sandals,
six years elapsed. You lower yourself
to the maintenance of smudged tiles,

willing to glower for as long as it takes,
erasing, in stocking feet, the diary
of foot travel: quarter-turns and stops,

the linkage from one day to the next,
inked with the weight of your body
over hallway slates and hearth bricks.

You spit on a rag to save getting up
then duck-walk over your calligraphy,
whistling from scuffmark to scuffmark.

Gatineau Pastoral for a Gent Who Waits Table in the Rockies

A pale long-necked veteran changing fishing grounds, circling
from errand to errand, a frail-ribbed entry in a job lottery
involving aerial side-trips to known

hotspots for frogs, semi-hermitic, unabashedly in favour of staying
put till December and being a stand-in coat-of-arms
for anonymous outer city swamps,

may be the same kind of bird as me, driving my nine-year-old
daughter in her ballet finery home for a snack with
her prompted to look where I look,

down a shared habitual sightline towards marsh shimmer, towards
a gray smudge which sometimes reminds me of John,
my middle brother, in his rented trailer,

frying eggs, while I and my daughter, who has never met him,
and wouldn't know him walking down a street
or chalking specials on a menu board,

neck-check a line of bulrushes between subdivisions to see if
the standoffish tutorial-giver in subsistence living,
the slough's vice-rector of shortfall,

the feathery uncle down there—friend of outrageous fortune—still
grips his clay-bottomed preferment, weighing ice pellets
against what can be gotten in slanting light.

Cloud Puffs above a Ridge-top Barbecue Grill

Since it is not my custom to want less than the small bird
working hard with her curved beak above our cedar deck
to sate an appetite whetted by constant hunting, therefore,

oh, shining dragon that longs to soar over the white pines
in rattling flight, your metallic sides further heating the air,
disembowel a vulture for me, and from one of the conifers

above my triangulated, codified, over-surveyed backyard,
throw its bones onto my land as I toast another June day,
saying to myself: I will live this solstice in the present.

I will break it down into nanoseconds and savour each
as the Merlin hawk savours the goldfinch on a hemlock,
plucking its yellow breast feathers aside before dining.

Contributors

Nathan Baker lives in Toronto. Recent work of his appeared in *Ox Family*, Spring 2010.

John Wall Barger's first book of poems, *Pain-proof Men*, was published with Palimpsest Press in Fall 2009. He is presently working on translating a book of Pier Paolo Pasolini's poems into English.

Kevin Bushell was born in Etobicoke, Ontario, but now lives in Pointe-Claire, Quebec. He works as an English teacher at Vanier College in Saint-Laurent. His work has appeared in *The Fiddlehead*, *The Antigonish Review*, and *Exile*. The poem published here is from *Birdmen,* a manuscript examining flight.

Jan Conn's most recent book of poetry is *Botero's Beautiful Horses*, Brick Books, 2009. Her work has appeared recently in several anthologies and literary journals. She lives in Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

Antony Di Nardo is the author of *Alien, Correspondent* (Brick Books) and *Soul on Standby* (Exile Editions), both books released in 2010. His poetry appears widely in journals across Canada and internationally. He divides his time between Oshawa, Ontario, and Sutton, Quebec.

Zsuzsi Gartner is the author of the story collection *All the Anxious Girls on Earth*, the editor of *Darwin's Bastards: Astounding Tales From Tomorrow*, and the fiction editor of *Vancouver Review*. Her new collection, *Better Living Through Plastic Explosives*, will be published next year by Hamish Hamilton Canada.

Seyward Goodhand has published short fiction in *The Queen Street Quarterly* and *echolocation*. In 2007, her short film, *The General's Wife*, competed in the Woodgreen International Film Festival. She has just started her PhD in English at The University of Toronto.

Robert Gore's work has been published in *The Antigonish Review*, *Arc*, *Event*, *Grain*, *Pottersfield Portfolio*, *Canadian Literature*, *Contemporary Verse 2,* and *PRISM international*. His poems have also been published in three anthologies: *Vintage '95*, *The Anthology of Magazine Verse*, and *Mocambo Nights*. His first chapbook, *The Code Between Us*, was published by Frog

Hollow Press in 2002. Since leaving Vancouver in September 2005, he has been living in Los Angeles where he works as the Visual Arts Librarian at UCLA.

Joelene Heathcote is a writer and teacher living in Victoria, BC. She has won awards for fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Her collection of poems, *Inherit the Earth*, won Rubicon Press's Midwinter Chapbook Award. She has little boys and is glad to be back in the game.

Elle Moss is a photographer from Saline, Michigan. She is mostly self-taught and creates self-portrait and still life images that have a dreamy, nostalgic quality achieved through props, color, and natural lighting.

Peter Richardson has three books with Vehicule Press. His most recent title, *Sympathy For the Couriers*, won the Quebec Writers' Federation A.M. Klein Award for 2008. He lives in Gatineau, Quebec.

Eliza Robertson studies creative writing and political science at the University of Victoria. Her work has appeared in *The Fiddlehead* and *The Malahat Review*, where she currently serves as an intern on the fiction editorial board.

Eden Robinson is a Haisla/Heiltsuk author who grew up in Haisla, British Columbia. Her first book, *Traplines*, a collection of short stories, won the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize and was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year in 1998. *Monkey Beach*, her first novel, was shortlisted for both the Giller Prize and the Governor General's Literary Award for fiction in 2000 and named a notable book by *The Globe and Mail*. Her most recent novel is *Blood Sports*.

George Sipos lives on Salt Spring Island where he is Executive Director of ArtSpring, a visual and performing arts centre. His first collection of poems, *Anything But the Moon*, was published in 2005 by Goose Lane Editions and was shortlisted for the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize in 2006. His second poetry collection, *The Glassblowers*, was published in 2010, also by Goose Lane. A third book, *The Geography of Arrival*, a prose memoir published by Gaspereau Press, also appeared in early 2010.

Regan Taylor is from Hudson, Quebec, and currently lives in Vancouver. Her poems have appeared in *The Malahat Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Event*, and *The New Quarterly*. Note on "Hoser": the phrase "grain-doped" is borrowed from Karen Solie.

Rhea Tregebov is the author of six critically acclaimed books of poetry. Her seventh is forthcoming from Signal Editions (Véhicule Press) in 2012. She is Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia. Her first novel, *The Knife Sharpener's Bell*, was released by Coteau Books in September 2009.

Leslie Vryenhoek is a St. John's-based writer whose poetry, fiction and nonfiction have appeared in magazines and journals across Canada and internationally. Her work has won several awards, including most recently the Winston Collins-Descant Best Canadian Poem. Leslie's debut collection of short fiction, *Scrabble Lessons*, was published in 2009 by Oolichan Books; her first book of poetry will be published in 2011.

D.W. Wilson is pursuing his MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, in Norwich, UK, where his classmates regard him like the King of the Wild Frontier. His fiction has appeared in *Prairie Fire* and *The Malahat Review*, and his story "The Elasticity of Bone" won the silver award for fiction at the National Magazine Awards last year.

Patricia Young won *Arc*'s Poem of the Year Contest in 2009 and 2010, and her work was shortlisted for the CBC Literary Competition in 2009 and 2010. Her tenth collection of poems, *An Autoerotic History of Swings*, will be published in Fall 2010 with Sono Nis Press.

PRISM international

prose poetry and micro-fiction issue

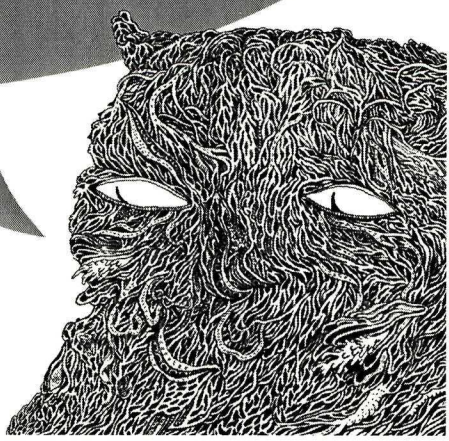
Calling all y'all with gnat-sized attention spans!
PRISM international's Winter issue will be micro-fiction- and prose poetry-themed this year. Check out our genre guidelines and definitions below, but don't freak out if you're finding your footing interstitially. Keep on the path, friend. We're into genre-bending.

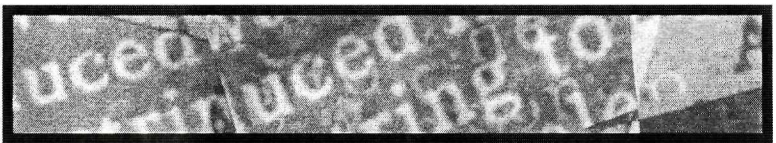
Micro-fiction
Alternatively referred to as postcard stories, short short stories, and flash fiction, micro-fiction is like fine dark chocolate: effective in small doses. For the purposes of this issue, the cut-off is 1000 words.

Prose Poetry
Prose poetry usually features full sentences and no forced line breaks. The difference between prose poetry and micro-fiction is up for discussion — generally, prose poetry focuses more precise attention on language. It's less narrative than micro-fiction, and asks readers to make larger jumps than micro-fiction might demand. Our word-count limit for prose poems is 250 words.

Check out our submission guidelines at **prismmagazine.ca** and send us your best small works.

Deadline for submissions: August 31, 2010.





The Creative Writing Program at U.B.C.

The University of British Columbia offers both a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing. The M.F.A. degree may also be taken by distance education. See our website for more details.

Students work in multiple genres, including: Poetry, Novel/Novella, Short Fiction, Stage Play, Screen & TV Play, Radio Play, Writing for Children, Non-fiction, Translation, and Song Lyrics & Libretto.

Faculty

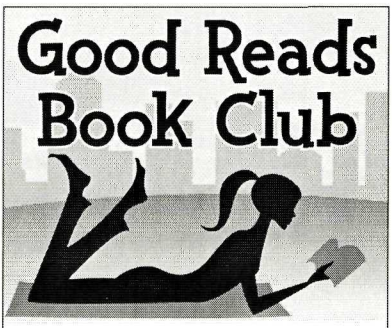
Meryn Cadell
Keith Maillard
Maureen Medved
Andreas Schroeder
Linda Svendsen
Peggy Thompson
Rhea Tregebov
Bryan Wade

Online Faculty (M.F.A.):

Luanne Armstrong, Gail Anderson-Dargatz, Brian Brett, Sioux Browning, Maggie deVries, Zsuzsi Gartner, Terry Glavin, Wayne Grady, Sara Graefe, Stephen Hunt, Susan Juby, Peter Levitt, Susan Musgrave & Karen Solie

www.creativewriting.ubc.ca

Good Reads Book Club



Buy 10 General
(non-course) Books
at the regular price and get

20%

of their value
off your next purchase of
regular priced General Books.

No time limits.
No membership fee.

Includes books in-store
and online.

Join at
www.bookstore.ubc.ca
or at any in-store cashier.

(604) 822-2665

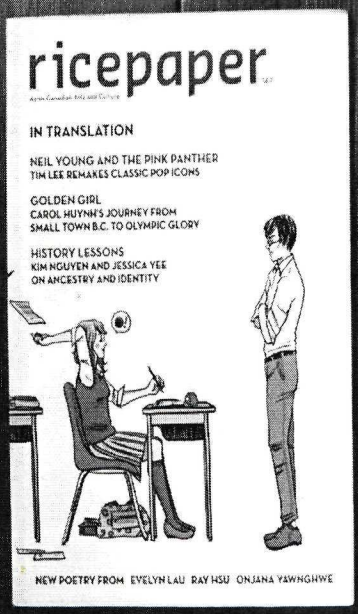
UBC BOOKSTORE
www.bookstore.ubc.ca

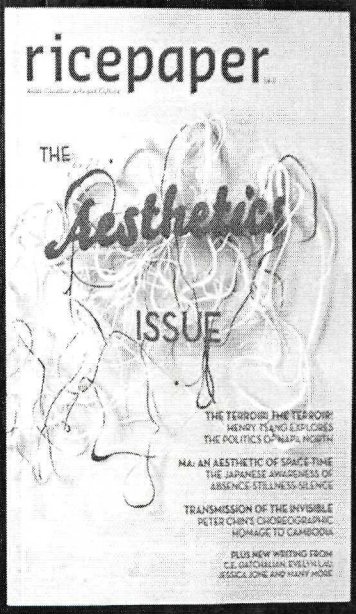
Pt. Grey Campus
6200 University Blvd.
Vancouver, B.C.

Robson Square
800 Robson St.
Vancouver, B.C.

RICEPAPER MAGAZINE

OVER 15 YEARS OF ASIAN CANADIAN ARTS & CULTURE





ONE YEAR [4 ISSUES] FOR $20
TWO YEARS [8 ISSUES] FOR $35

www.ricepapermagazine.ca

contact info@ricepapermagazine.ca

Sign me up for a free trial!

Snail mail or email me your information to us for a copy of a sample issue

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY
PROVINCE
POSTAL CODE
TELEPHONE ( )
EMAIL

subTerrain
3 CATEGORIES • 3 CASH PRIZES • 1 DEADLINE
FICTION • POETRY • CREATIVE NON-FICTION
subTerrain's annual
LUSH
TRIUMPHANT
Literary Awards Competition
Deadline for Entries:
May 15, 2010
Fiction:
MAXIMUM 3,000 WORDS
Poetry:
A SUITE OF 5 RELATED POEMS (MAXIMUM 15 PAGES)
Creative Non-fiction (Based on fact, adorned w/fiction):
MAXIMUM 4,000 WORDS
Entry Fee:
$25 PER ENTRY, INCLUDES A ONE-YEAR SUBTERRAIN SUBSCRIPTION!
(You may submit as many entries in as many categories as you like)
$3,000 IN CASH PRIZES
The winning entries in each category will receive a $750 cash prize (plus payment for publication) and will be published in our Winter '10 issue. First runner-up in each category will receive a $250 cash prize and be published in our Spring 2011 issue. All entries MUST be previously unpublished material and not currently under consideration in any other contest or competition. Entries will NOT be returned (so keep a copy for yourself). Results of the competition will be announced in the 2010 Summer/Fall issue of subTerrain magazine.
All entrants receive a complimentary one-year subscription to subTerrain.
Lush Triumphant, c/o subTerrain Magazine
PO Box 3008, MPO, Vancouver, BC V6B 3X5 subter@portal.ca
MORE INFORMATION AT www.subterrain.ca

PRISM international

Contemporary Writing from Canada and Around the World

Send us your words!

Literary Non-Fiction Contest - 1st Prize $1,500
Entry fee: $25 for 1 story, plus $7 for each additional piece
DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 30th, 2010

Short Fiction Contest - 1st Prize $2,000
3 Runner up Prizes of $200 each
Entry fee: $25 for 1 story, plus $7 for each additional piece
DEADLINE: JANUARY 29, 2011

Poetry Contest - 1st Prize $1,000
2 Runner up Prizes of $300 and $200
Entry fee: $25 for 5 poems, plus $7 for each additional poem
DEADLINE: JANUARY 29, 2011

All entrants receive a one-year subscription to PRISM international. All first-place winners will be published in PRISM international. Please visit our website for contest entry guidelines.

www.prismmagazine.ca

Place
Stamp
Here

PRISM international
Creative Writing Program, UBC
Buch. E462 – 1866 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z1
Canada

Place
Stamp
Here

PRISM international
Creative Writing Program, UBC
Buch. E462 – 1866 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z1
Canada

Subscribe to PRISM international and save!

- ☐ Two-year subscription (8 issues): $46.00 (GST included).
- ☐ One-year subscription (4 issues): $28.00 (GST included).

Residents outside Canada please pay in U.S. funds. U.S. POSTAL money orders are not accepted. Please make cheques payable to: PRISM international.

Name:_____

Address:_____

City:_____

Province/State:_____ Postal/Zip Code:_____

Email:_____

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later

VISA/MC:_____ Exp. Date:_____

Signature:_____

Subscribe to PRISM international and save!

- ☐ Two-year subscription (8 issues): $46.00 (GST included).
- ☐ One-year subscription (4 issues): $28.00 (GST included).

Residents outside Canada please pay in U.S. funds. U.S. POSTAL money orders are not accepted. Please make cheques payable to: PRISM international.

Name:_____

Address:_____

City:_____

Province/State:_____ Postal/Zip Code:_____

Email:_____

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me later

VISA/MC:_____ Exp. Date:_____

Signature:_____

PRISM is Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Translation & Creative Nonfiction

48:4

Short Fiction & Poetry Contest Issue

Fiction Judge's Essay: Zsuzsi Gartner

Winning Entry: Eliza Robertson

Poetry Judge's Essay: Rhea Tregebov

Winning Entry: Joelene Heathcote

Tammy Armstrong
Nathan Baker
John Wall Barger
Kevin Bushell
Jan Conn
Antony Di Nardo
Seyward Goodhand
Robert Gore
Peter Richardson
Eden Robinson
George Sipos
Regan Taylor
Leslie Vryenhoek
D.W. Wilson
Patricia Young

GENUINE CANADIAN MAGAZINE

prismmagazine.ca
$10.00

04
7 25274 86361 7

Cover Photo: ***Equus***
by Elle Moss