



2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER

POETRY CONTEST



*Kitchener Public Library, with support from
the Kitchener Waterloo Community
Foundation, is pleased to present the
winners of the
2021 Dorothy Shoemaker Poetry Contest*



2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

About the Dorothy Shoemaker Awards

The Awards began in 1967 as a Centennial project, created by Dorothy Shoemaker, Kitchener Public Library's Chief Librarian from 1944 to 1971.

In 1996, when government funding for the awards was eliminated, Ms. Shoemaker made a significant personal donation to ensure the awards would continue. In 2000, Ms. Shoemaker passed away at the age of 94; however, her legacy of support for aspiring writers continues today through her ongoing endowment. The contest is available to individuals living in Southwestern Ontario



About Our Judge

Molly Peacock is a distinguished North American poet and biographer, author of seven volumes of poetry including *The Analyst: Poems*, and *Cornucopia*, New and Selected Poems from Biblioasis and W.W. Norton and Company. She is the founder of *The Best Canadian Poetry* series and the co-founder of *Poetry in Motion* on New York's subways and buses. Her poems have appeared in leading literary journals such as *Poetry*, *The New Yorker*, *The Malahat Review*, *The Women's Review of Books*, and *Plume* and are anthologized in *The Oxford Book of American Poetry*.



Candice Ferreira

Writer and performer of the one-woman show in poems, *The Shimmering Verge*, she is also the author of *How to Read a Poem & Start a Poetry Circle*. She has written two books about creativity in the lives of women artists: *The Paper Garden: Mrs. Delany Begins Her Life's Work at 72* and *Flower Diary: In Which Mary Hiester Reid Paints, Travels, Marries & Opens a Door*. Peacock teaches online for the Unterberg Poetry Center at the 92nd St Y. Her newest poetry endeavor, *A Friend Sails in on a Poem*, is forthcoming in Fall 2023 from Palimpsest Press. This book will collect her essays about poetic form and describe her decades-long writing friendship with poet Phillis Levin.

Molly was previously a poetry judge for this contest in 1999, and we are pleased to return to support this long-running contest.

Kitchener Public Library thanks the Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation for their ongoing financial support of this long-running contest.



2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

YOUTH WINNERS

under 18

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

BEST YOUTH

Just a Raindrop

Fedor Kuznetsov

I paid no attention to the rain drops
That were silently falling on the window of my car
Until a specific drop somehow caught my eye
Gleaming like a perfect silver star

They taught us the water cycle back then
When my confidence was as high as the sky
It's an interesting and strange thing
But now it's helping my imagination fly

This droplet is probably very ancient
Perhaps it has seen the extinction of dinosaurs
Heard their horrific last shrieks before their death
And the droplet has witnessed many wars

This droplet has been in a lot of places
It probably landed on the famous Big Ben
Slid down from the tall Mt. Everest
There's too many to write with a pen

But that's not the most surprising thing
Turns out that this droplet is older than me!
This water droplet is 4 billion years old
It's so mind-blowing, I can barely agree

A small water droplet can send you on a journey
Of endless wonders, mysteries, and questions.
It's funny how a small and unimportant thing
Can make you think deeply.

One of the exciting aspects of poetry is the capacity of this art to make us feel wonder. How does that work? That feeling of wonder partly happens because of a paradox of poetry: a tiny thing can conjure up a vast world. I chose "Just a Raindrop" as the winner of the 2021 Dorothy Shoemaker Award because this poet uses an almost insignificant phenomenon to link vast events in the world. The poet connects a raindrop on a car windshield "gleaming like a perfect silver star" to billions of years of history. Poems also sometimes have intricate patterns of language. Here the poet created quatrains (four-line stanzas) and a rhyme scheme. It's difficult to attempt a structure like this to hold up an idea like the significance of a raindrop, yet the poet managed to put wonder into a pattern. That's a bit like skating an Olympic routine—worthy of applause.

— Molly Peacock

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

RUNNER-UP PRIZE

The memory of pain

Louise Kraemer

It's teeth are hard,
They feel like they're barbed.
Sinking so fast into my flesh
The feeling so fresh.
So fresh, so permanent.
The idea of pain infecting my mind
Paralyzingly, terrifying, unable to find
a way out, a way through, a grounding rule
Just trying to fool
My poisoned mind.
The poison of the past
The poison of history
How it left me such a shell of my past,
Is the mystery.

The vivid visceral language of this poem is electric. Here the poet uses metaphor to describe something we all have felt: physical pain. The poet personifies pain with "hard teeth" that are "sinking so fast into my flesh." Concentrating on defining one thing, this poem opens up a world of feeling.

- Molly Peacock

YOUTH HONORABLE MENTIONS

under 18

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Blue Winter Jacket

Louise Kraemer

In the dark-dull hallways brimming with student traffic,
I spy.
A man in a blue Winter jacket,
Giving life to this dark-dull hallway.

The man in the blue winter jacket,
He stands out like a zebra in the lion's pride.
He's light, I am darkness,
Total opposites.

Blue here.
Blue there,
Blue everywhere but NEVER near,
Me...

These dark-dull hallways need to stay dull,
For him to stand out.
We can never unite,
For two ends should never meet.

This poet has used a single image to illuminate a romantic attraction, making a "blue winter jacket" into a shining image for a glimpse of an impossible relationship. By the end of the poem the repetition of that blue winter jacket becomes unforgettable—as is the romance that cannot happen.

— Molly Peacock

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

C

Amanda Braam

Water Laps Upon the Empty Beaches
You immerse yourself in colour
illuminating
the morning sky
draining
ever so slowly of stars.

You approach the rocky edge where sides collide
and reach your hands into the water.

Shivers run up and down your spine.

A woman does the same.
She piles rocks up until there are mountains.
Fragile tears drip from her marble eyes

off into the ocean.

She's married to the dark.
It's all she's ever been; it's all she knows.
There's a hole between her fingers
where a ring should be,
now lost into the sea.

"It's gone
yes, all I've ever been is gone."

Your words of sympathy halt in your throat
for she'd never even know.
You were here
willing to build skyscrapers of stone.
Until sand
alone
would touch the bottoms of her feet.

As you think of your wife
you never really love calling her name.
Though you'd see a worthless band of gold,
to the glass-eyed woman it would all feel the same.

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MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

You slip the ring off of your finger and place it in her palm.

“This belongs to you; I’m so sorry to say that I took everything away.
I’ve watched you here since dawn, and I must say I’ve wasted my time
sitting around to wait for you.
I’ve got better things to do.”

She fills the space where her ring would lie
and walks away.

After all the lies you’d told,
everyone’s gone one way or another.
You sing,
“May we meet again when we sleep in stone, though for now I’ll sleep alone.”

There’s a hole in your chest where a heart once beat
and you feed yourself to the sea.

This poet has attempted a long narrative, a challenging task in poetry, and has succeeded in creating a view of a relationship through a powerful image: the circle of a ring.

– Molly Peacock

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Ever the Romantic

Rachel Willow Garritsen

Christmas trees dangle from the streetlights,
and the fountain lights shift to red.
I see pieces of you in the artisan shopkeepers,
in the laughing children,
in the dancers
the best pieces are in the stars
but they are splintered beyond repair.
I am splintered beyond repair.

I was ready to drown in your honey-sweet words.
I gleamed like a polished mirror.
Even when I look away,
your ghost stands behind me now.
Your words are bitter now,
burning my skin and making my eyes water,
now I crumble into dust
and gag on once-bright silver
each time I hear your name.

Of course you'd be here.
And though you walk across the square,
our shadows are as long as the nights I remember,
and again they intertwine.

You,
and your carefree nights
stretching long past the first glow of the streetlights
because you were afraid to let them end.
You who resold yourself to me each morning,
you who choreographed the hugs and the whispers,
the cracks in your voice and the glasses,
so I wouldn't let you go.
You,
who marked my body
and me,
who marked your ever-changing words.

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MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Me,
and my despicable heart,
ever the optimist to believe it could piece my back together
ever the romantic for refusing to let you go.

Did you look at me?
Or was that your ghost shimmering in the fountain light,
was that your shadow reaching for my hand?
Did I hear your voice,
whispering you loved me?
Or was my scheming heart putting on a show
not here,
but all those nights ago?

This poet addresses the poem to another person as well as creating a passionate situation in metaphor with lines like "I was ready to drown in your honey-sweet words. / I gleamed like a polished mirror."

The evocative poem takes its place in the great tradition of love poetry, as do the two following poems I'd like to single out:

- Molly Peacock

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Dandelion Lady

Megan Haas

He stood in fields with gentle flowers that surround
And picked Dandelions up from the ground
He brushed the pollen across my cheek
with soft closed eyes I hear him speak
How beautiful you look with the kiss of a dandelion
My Dandelion Lady
Golden glaze that match your eyes
I blow on the petals that drift in the skies
If I could brush my lips across your heart
And leave a kiss with which you'll never part
How beautiful you look with the kiss of a dandelion
My Dandelion Lady
Pollen smeared on finger tips
Brush them gently across my lips
Leave me entranced with your enchanting gaze
Leaving my mind in a fog filled daze
Dance with me in this field
Dance until your heart is healed
How beautiful you look with the kiss of a Dandelion
My Dandelion Lady
Yellow stains sit on white pure dress
Grass and weeds sit in hair a mess
But disorder and chaos is so pretty with you
Because a mess is better when there's two
The fields have lost their yellow glow
Now they sit under a blanket of snow
How beautiful you look with the kiss of a Dandelion
My Dandelion Lady
Glittering ice sparkles in your eyelashes
Eyes as blue as seas, loud enough to hear the wave's crashes
Pulled from the pocket of evergreen corduroys,
You have a little dandelion of grace and poise
Last alive to hold the winter
Fractured slightly from an icicle's splinter
Brush across my cold rosy cheeks
Dandelion dust that will last for weeks
How beautiful you look with the kiss of a Dandelion
My Dandelion Lady

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MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

You close your eyes and say goodbye
Dandelion dust flakes when I cry
You promise to return, when Dandelions sprout from the grounds again
I'll hear your voice in a babbling brook, deep valley or murmuring glen
I'll feel your kisses on my cheek, dandelions sitting at my feet
Waiting for the time we'll once more meet
I will see you again.
I am your Dandelion Lady

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Rose Queen

Rachel Willow Gerritsen

Little rose queen
How could you know
When they voted you girl of the town
That they'd carry you round on their shoulders then drop you
And blame you for letting them down

Your tiara was polished
But they couldn't be bothered
To line it up straight on your head
They gave you the keys to your kingdom then asked you
To lead them through right to the end

You had smiled, you had waved
In your dress and your makeup
You were smart and determined
You had earned all your praise

So when they chartered planes
And built you a gilt carriage
You agreed to the ride
And you led their parade

Had you walked on the street
Then you wouldn't have seen
Everyone who'd missed your coronation
But from up on your coach they were well within sight
And you wanted so badly to save them

You had only two hands
No one had time to spare
So they drove you off into the night
And time eased its grip as you laughed and you sipped
But it never relented and they never saw light

Sure, you asked what to do
But they shrugged and they moved on
For making change was something that couldn't be taught
What a task, to be queen, to let down your subjects
Your smiling face led the massacre, and they never forgot
Little rose queen,
You never forgot.

ADULT WINNERS

18 and older

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

TOP PRIZE

I wish *Uninspired* was a more sought after quality

Sheila Brewster

My head is

Foggy

like a swamp cloud in a stained glass chimney

or

a snow globe forest fire

Slow

like rotary phone dial-up

or

an iceberg monologue

Heavy

like chainmail eyelids

or

concrete groceries

Ugly

is a lazy word for *unexpected*

Sorry

Is a dodgy sentiment

I apologize if this is a bad time

but I have trouble discerning

between burning

and burnt

I'm indecisive

when you ask me where it hurts

I'm still learning

my body

of work

I'm still learning

for all

my body's

worth.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

When I searched for a winner among this set of splendid entries, I looked for both passion and transformation. Poetry takes heartfelt emotion and transforms it, through surprises of language, into a kind of wonder. One way a poet can accomplish this is through metaphor and simile. Comparing one thing to another gives a poem a shock of surprise that can make the everyday extraordinary. When I found "I Wish Uninspired Was a More Sought-After Quality," I discovered those shocks of comparison, passion, and transformation. Here the poet describes brain fog "like a swamp cloud in a stained-glass chimney." Emotional heaviness becomes like "concrete groceries." The weight of depression becomes slow as a "rotary phone dial up." I found a distinctive voice proving that words in a new order give the world a fresh vision—even when the subject is a heavy emotional experience. "I Wish Uninspired Was a More Sought-After Quality" presents a truly original vision.

-Molly Peacock

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

RUNNER UP

Refugee

Maša Torbica

A perfectly good house gutted
and set aflame. Dolls turned to ashes.

Afterwards:

Cold winters in cramped, rented rooms.
My mother squinting to thread a needle.
Tattered black coin purse. Buying dry bread.

Day terrors. Dragging tears back up the throat.
My father cleaving the costly treat of an orange.
Each bite salted by the scorn or pity of strangers.

I learned to think of myself as one of the blessed.
Knocked down by a war which blew others apart,
soon able to crawl away alive and unorphaned,
later allowed to leap over an ocean and land
here on firm ground. Now free to blend in
and walk around with no one noticing
the one limb slightly
askew.

One of the qualities of a memorable poem is extreme emotion with attention to detail that can make a reader really see into an experience. This crisp description actually creates a vision. Here the poet's vision of a house burnt and the poverty that follows is concentrated in a "tattered black purse," "dry bread," "dolls turned to ashes," and "the costly treat of an orange." The brilliant specificity lets us understand something universal: the feeling of blending in, yet carrying the past like a body with a limp. This is a galvanizing and moving poem.

-Molly Peacock

LONG LIST SELECTIONS

18 and older

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Host Death
Allison Coole

Death is having a party.
Nobody is invited,
But everyone shows up
In their best with worse excitement.
Death himself is tardy.
Everyone holds their breath,
Anticipation on their tongue with
Contemplation where he's going next.
Death stumbles in drunklike,
Liquor dripping from his glass.
The patrons huddle and pray in
Circles hoping to be welcomed last.

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MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Living Takes Time

Matalin Yee

Growing up was mulberry trees and pointed ribs
and pink roses at the side of the house.
Nervous first dances and lemon meringue pie
and barefoot races across the school yard.
I don't know exactly when I started to get bored
of the things that once inspired wonder.

We watch the night descend gently,
and you kiss my temples and the curve of my spine,
trace your fingertips across the inside of my wrists.
You say tomorrow will be a lovely morning,
sun warming the concrete swimming pools
of simple endless summer.

So maybe I'll drink that blue gin
and tell my father I've changed my mind.
Or I'll undo reason from the inside out,
follow the glow-in-the-dark arrows
made to guide me towards the exit.
Maybe I'll recover the years from my eyes,
see the dirt underneath my fingernails,
finally fight for a place at the table.

Because I am waiting for this winter to pass,
leaning into you while tulips unfold
in the dew drop mornings.
My wings are tucked in tight.
I don't have to know it all, you say,
so I allow myself to breathe. Exist. Defy definition.

I promise you I'm trying:
trying to love with the whole of my heart,
trying to live like I want to be alive.
(Please tell me that it just takes time.)

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

S.O.S

Tofunmi Akinlalu

For most of this year I was carefully trying
To hide fresh bullet wounds
In a pristine white house
Stuffed to the brim with kindhearted friends.
I tried to apply pressure,
Tucked the bandages under my sweater,
Tried to tell myself to keep it together,
To be stronger,
To be better,
To not be such a burden.
I've tried my best to control the red seeping out from my chest.
I've told myself I just needed some rest.
I've told my friends that I was just tired
Because I was tired.

But I don't tell them that I'm tired of dodging friendly fire from my family.
I am tired of pretending my scars are just stretch marks
And my trauma is just sensitivity.
I don't want to be like the women who've gone before me,
The ones who would rather die than let their loved ones see them bleed.
The mothers who would set themselves on fire
If it meant that everyone was warm.
It scares me because as much I don't want to be
I am just like them.

I take the weight of the world upon me
And learn to make it look pretty when in reality
I am my mother's crockpot packed to the brim with a wide assortment of emotions.
When I was younger they would bubble to the surface in an instant and shoot out of me,
But these days
I slow cook for hours and hours,
For weeks and weeks.
I wait for the pressure and anger to build up inside of me
Until my rage starts to whistle a deranged high pitched symphony
And the drums of my heart beat so quickly that it gets impossible to breathe.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

But terrified to let anyone see me broken,
I put up walls covered in spikes
And hurt those I love with my hedgehog tendencies.
These days I'm dealing with the debris.
I'm frantically trying to clean up my mess,
So that no one else gets cut by the sharp edges
Of my broken heart

It turns out "Black does crack...
After all."
It turns out people's opinions could make this larger than life girl feel incredibly small.
So I lower myself to the ground,
Brush and dustpan in hand.
I sweep up what is left of this fragile jar made of glass.
I decline all help.
"I'm just tired" I say "I just need rest"
My mind says "Speak now or forever hold your pieces."
I don't.
I choose their peace instead.
I gather up the shards of my broken heart and head straight to bed.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Student Housing

Hanna Scott

I have my own house now. I share it, but it's mine. I feel it when I wipe down the kitchen counters and pick pieces of hair out of the lint tray. There is something hiding under the sink and behind the badly painted walls and it follows me around affectionately. It sings me unsettling lullabies of my independence and it won't tell me where the fruit flies are coming from.

The dryer broke yesterday. Today, the washing machine flooded the basement. I waded through old water and dead bugs until my socks were soaked. My roommates used a mop to clean it up. The basement is mostly dry now, but it smells like the bottom of a puddle.

I am always sneezing. When I get into bed at the end of the night the soles of my feet are stained black, though I don't remember stepping in anything in particular. Each panel of wood beneath me groans like it's saying hello. The front door closes like it's saying goodbye. I can't explain how I know this, but the house is mine. I feel it when I lie on the floor of my bedroom and close my eyes. There is something beneath the dirty carpet and it is happy I am here.

* * *

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Small Town Immigrant Kids

Elfie Kalfakis

We all had 'different' names,
So we stuck together,
And we could connect with others,
Who, even though we were 'different,'
In their own way,
Had a similar experience,
And all we could do was,
Be mortified by our upbringings,
The weird way we were taught,
To dress, to speak,
And how our parents never,
Really trusted 'them,'
The best way to cope,
Was to laugh and joke,
About all that made us 'different,'
And we all secretly knew,
But there was nothing wrong,
With us,
We even had a word for 'them,'
That's why we banded together,
At lunch, at the same table,
We know that very very well,
We don't need explanations on,
Community, because we had to,
Rely on the little one we had,
In order to survive.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Implicit Understanding

Emily DeVries

There used to be a lizard
That lived on our bathroom ceiling.
He only ever came out at night – or the occasional rainy day,
Sometimes I would look up from my shower,
Or turn my gaze skyward as I made my 2am, 4am, 6am bathroom visits,
And there he would be.
Rarely in the same place as the night before,
It would become a sort of search and find game
As I scanned the canvass of the plaster ceiling for my stealthy comrade.
Sometimes I would silently converse with the lizard.
I would ask him how his day had been, tell him about mine.
Though I never expected an answer – never needed one.
I would thank him for eating some of the insects that gave me the heebie jeebies.
I would thank him for staying up there – on the ceiling – not too close, but never too far away.
Some nights, he wouldn't be there – on the ceiling.
I would sit and wonder where he might be hiding – what he might be doing,
But he always came back.

We left the house for a few months and just got back this week.
Today, while washing my hair with shampoo that smelled like those hard, red strawberry candies with
the gooey fillings that grandmas always keep in their fancy, glass candy dishes
And without thought,
I looked for the lizard.

He wasn't there.

In his place, is a long, spindly-legged spider.

I guess he might be there a while.
Spiders do eat the same sorts of heebie-jeebie-inducing insects as lizards,
But he just doesn't have the same sort of appeal.

I think the spider is pregnant now.
I want my lizard back.

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MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Emulsify Hate

Ashley Grundy

I want to hate you,
But it is not my business to hate.
It is not my business to know why.
People don't wake and choose misery
They don't wake and choose to lie,
hurt, steal and make others cry.

These are the wounds
Ones we will never understand
We've bled onto others without remorse
or the ability to comprehend the source

So it is not my business to hate
Because hating the hurt will only recreate
the environment that led us there.
Bleeding, in pain, begging to be saved.

So it is not my business to hate,
It is my responsibility to be the difference,
To be the change
And forgiveness

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Swimming in my Bones

Teresa Malone

I seek the women swimming in my bones
each one fallen through a crack
in iron pots,
in tea leaves of early morning,
in the bruises
left by husbands
crawling in the dark of night,
in the low hum of sewing machines,
in wedding dresses
boxed in the back of closets,
in the silence of things forgotten,
there is one of us
who hears all in the room
and turns away,
there is one of us
seeking silence in glass jars
pickled in the basement,
there is one of us
eating peaches,
the accident of pulp left
in the corner of her lip
is lapped up with secret lust,
I seek the women in my bones
breathe words on this page
hoping to set things right,
my hands stretched out to them,
they tread water
just out of reach
in that place where breath warms
but waves bring nothing back.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Exorcism

Teresa Malone

Open photo album, emptied,
the living room a collage of memories
where he is reduced to
a hand on her waist,
a fragment of his purple silk shirt
in the background of a party,
a flushed cheek and the profile of his nose
beside an image of her she wants to keep
cause her hips curve just so,
and she likes her lips that shade of pink.
The rest of him lies under soiled kleenex
and this morning's coffee grounds.
She wants to remember love
without the lover.

Cranks up the stereo
playing lonely heart LPs
but she doesn't need the words
to shake away the feel of him.
Sweat making ribbons
down and down her back,
pooling round her breasts.
She breaks open the bag of confetti
left over from her sister's wedding
and dances in the turquoise rain,
body catching every sequin
she will use as stars to navigate the shape
and space of a body she barely remembers
without his fingers tracing it.

Late night quiet curls around her, pulls her
to the bed where she holds herself foetal small.
Aching to stretch out,
but still fearing the detritus he's left behind.
She has changed the sheets four times today already.

She begins to understand Ophelia's desire,
not to drown, but to spread herself wide
across new landscape, redefining the horizon,
Willow, willow, she sings.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Last October
Idiris Kabel

When I drowned last October
The sun knocked on my door
Go away I said
This is a funeral. This is no place for light.
She stood her ground. Wouldn't leave.
Leaves stayed green
Birds cancelled their flights
The Great Sadness bowed his head
The whole world lied in bed with me
And we pushed through it together
This must be the greatest lesson of my life
To take heart and push through

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Affinities of a Teacher

Anbrin Naqvi

I am like an abstract painting
with no clue of its purpose or meaning,
an image quietly screaming
to decode its deeper meaning.
Packed in coats of coloring,
plus, facts below the covering
Known only to the creator,
The psyche of a Divine Dreamer
Unknown to the abstract extract.
Projecting an innocent act,
unaware of its powerful impact--
upon all those who may interact
And make eye-contact.
Like a preacher that attracts,
lost souls with tact.
And in fact, points and directs,
towards a tract few have sought.
Packed with the correct info
They crack the secret code
Thereby fulfilling
The purpose and meaning
Of a lost abstract painting.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

There Is a Galaxy Between Us
Isabelle Weigel-Mohamed

The other side of the bed
Is a thousand light years away
The sheets between are a dark and impenetrable universe
To touch the absence of skin
To touch the cold shoulder of obscurity
(You, you are certain and you are warm and that is all I ever asked for and now)
Sallow moonlight drips through shutters
Leaves the fine sparkling gloss of a long forgotten ghost
Of a milky way traced in freckles
Of a kiss as ardent and transient as the sun
A flash that flickers and floats in glorious colour behind retinas
Of a poem that has never been written before but has been written a hundred times
On mars
In heaven
In the lonely place among stars where love is born and love goes to die
A thousand light years away.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

The Girl with Shine for Eyes

Peter Piluk

i can remember your coy smile
that moment before you kissed me
your lips sweet with the taste of tea
once strong now long gone cold
when we talked it was deep into the night
thinking we knew the secrets of this world
your hair falling over your face
hiding the things I already knew
you never returned after you fled
even still i see you in every shop
how i long for it to be you
the girl with shine for eyes

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Unknown Language

Canan Bulgay

I was singing my song
To earth, sky, and a heart
I was telling
In an unknown language.
Missing from life
With words from the heart
But in an unknown language.
Day passes,
night passes,
life passes.
Nothing said comes from the heart
I am in an unknown language.
I was singing my song
To earth, sky, and a heart
I was telling
In an unknown language.
Missing from life
But sincerely
In an unknown language.
The day goes,
night goes,
life goes,
The word does not go from the heart.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

I Abide

Corey Hernden

Train whistle sigh
Time is a fish
One a line that snaps
I can't keep pace
With your butterfly changes
Your rolling hills
Once empty pastures, now filled
With the churning and buzzing of life
And I, like faded laundry
Blown around your Spring front clash
Your bloom stings,
It's scent curdles in my nose
Boils in my belly, all distended
Air versus insides
You were my bug in a jar
All holes punctured top
And torn grass bed
All warm and seized
But, I acquiesce
To your demands for release
Never again will there be
A bug like you
On this brittle bark tree.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Tw

Kate Urquhart

tw: occasional cardinals – unreasonably red when seen against snow newly settled on
cedar bushes – may trigger irrational and joyous sense of being within a holiday greeting card.

tw: providing help to any person whether stranger or friend - unasked or not – may
cause unintended feelings of connection and hope regardless of most everything else seeming
to suck.

tw: tiny successes like bothering to floss or clearing enough of the counter to wipe it
clean may bring about previously misplaced motivation.

if you can spiral down, you can spiral up too.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

The Accident

Evan Simic

the rubber of the transport truck's wheels leaves
perfect parallel lines stretching
several metres down the road until
the lines stop
at a tipping point,
and the transport,
weighing approximately thirty-six thousand two hundred eighty-seven point thirty-nine kilograms
lurches,
and with her bulk heaving to one side,
capsizes,
spilling her guts across the tarmac.

in the roar of traffic, the squeal of her brakes was nothing
compared to the screams of her livestock.
previously, all crushed together in the bowels of the transport,
they are now a meal vomited up,
partially digested
warm wet meat smeared in a stinking mess under the heat of the summer sun.

above the wreck, a lone vulture circles the scene,
soon joined by another, and another,
each called to a feast by the wailing of the swine,
whose ceaseless cries are joined in hollow echo
by the sirens of police, and ambulance, and fire trucks.

the cleanup is a mess.
a few uninjured animals flee into the ditch while
some, with shattered ankles and entrails hanging from their bellies,
drag themselves around through gravel and glass
as if running from their agony.
others, too badly hurt to move, only breathe in shallow gasps,
with their heads tilted back and swollen tongues lolling out,
before the click of a captive bolt pistol relieves them of their suffering.

the screams stop, one by one,
until all that is left is the hum of highway,
and a dark smear staining the road,
and the vultures
circling high overhead.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Alliteration Anarchy

Ravi Gandhi

A flawed ferociousness and feebleness flurried.
It was freakishly frenzied in its feverish fury.
This fully fueled, a furious furor to frolic for food.
Fallacies fanned the flames, for a fickle family feud...

between brothers and sisters, blood began to boil.
Beneath broken bones, their bonds broiled.
Bodies badly beaten, brutally black and blue.
With bewildered benevolence; a belligerence brewed.

No listening or logic; it's liquorish law of the land.
A lack of livelihood; no lifting up or lending a hand.
Loathing lives lacerated by lies, as more lividness loomed.
Low levels of liberty and love, and lots of lust for loot.

Each grabbing and getting a good enough grip;
grappling to gain ground, and gnawing it to a grit.
It got grotesquely greedy, as the goodie grasping grew.
A gorging generation, gone grossly doom and gloom.

Entangled and embroiled; each exhausted to empty.
An expeditious erasing of etiquette; the extinction of empathy.
Erratic emotions engulfed ethics, and an explosiveness ensued.
Like enormous, enraged, and egotistical elephants in the room.

Their tall trunks and tails tangled, and totally twined together.
Teasing, tattling and taunting; their toes tumbled and tethered.
Travelling them toward a testy turmoil, through and through.
A terrifying temper tantrum, and a tyrannical tirade that turned to...

a colossal conflict, that caused children to be corrupted.
Clobbering and crying; a chasm of chaos erupted.
Could it be, a cornstarch candy, this commodity, callously cued...
a clash and commotion, that catapulted and caused a coup.

Seemingly sweet souls, swiftly soured as a subsequent.
They sailed into a spiteful squall; a soon to be swallowed sunken ship.
A stormy spectacle of spoiled, scuffling, siblings, sinfully spewed.
A spiteful, sadistic, sorry, and shocking state that stewed.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Ravenous, raging, and riled up; the rascals rejoiced in retaliation.
A radical and rampaging rift; resulting in a refuted ratification.
Reserving rights to rations, reached a raucousness that resumed;
ridiculous ramifications for resisting and remaining resolute.

A tenacious and tumultuous tiff; a tussle tooth and toenail.
This is a tricky tongue twister, and a tough telling tall tale...
of two tiny toddlers, toiling over twizzlers, toys, and what to do;
tantamount to today's tug-of-war, over toilet tissue and the truth.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

unpredictable

Ana Horta

i feel a lot, i feel intensely
and that scares me — feelings do
more often than not i don't know what to do with them
so i stuff them into a metaphorical balloon
i think stored somewhere within my ribcage.
when it reaches critical stress
because it always does at some point
and my heart is jammed against my breastbone
and my lungs shrink
to accommodate such an overwhelming volume of unspoken emotions
that's when the snake of frustration sinks its teeth into the tight skin of the balloon and
slithers out and into my system
squeezing and gliding through organs like poisonous gas
my throat becomes a site of injection molding
where the snake assumes the shape of my tongue
sometimes i bite, sometimes i hiss
which one it's going to be
i don't know.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Ineffable

Rylan Skelly

Have you ever tried on a pair of pants
That you really wanted to fit
But no matter how hard you tried
They just wouldn't button or zip?
They looked so good on the rack
It seemed more than a little unfair,
But fortunately, you could swap them
For a better-suited pair.

Have you ever attended a dinner party
Saw a plate of assorted desserts
Looking so sweet you might pass out
Didn't know which treat to eat first?
You took a chomp in mad excitement
Understanding quick you'd chosen poorly,
Fortunately, you could spit it out
And redeem what you choose prematurely.

Have you ever kissed someone's lips
After hours of deep conversation?
Teased and flirted, increased the tension
Moved affectionately closer without hesitation?
Till your gravity tugged toward destiny,
Disappointingly you had no chemistry!
Fortunately for you, it was only a kiss
And you can keep swinging even if you miss.

Have you ever gone about your day
With all your clothes turned around?
Have you worn your right and left shoes reversed
For a night out on the town?
Of course you've never done that!
It would feel gross and most chagrin:
Fortunately, you never have to find out
What that feels like inside your own skin.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Have you ever felt it?
If you have, you might comprehend
It's not a matter of gender roles,
Fashion choices, or grooming trends.
It's a matter of apples and oranges
The one is just not the other
And while we may pick our fruit
We don't choose if we're sister, brother,
Or someone in between

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Manic Longings

Emaan Sikander

We watched with childish wonder as the sky bled orange, then yellow and red.
The night silently crept alive as acres of blue-white stars lit up the sky and watched the meadow fall asleep under the shadow of the blue moon.
We blew out our glowing lanterns and buried our necks in the soft dewy grass
as the night sky cast silver patches of starlight on our backs.

Morning rose slowly and the two-faced daffodils turned their solemn faces towards the sun in mourning,
as if they had forecasted the day's hurdles.
We woke up one by one and rubbed our weary eyes with our scrawny fingers.
Then, one or two men called out from the other side of the springy fields that they heard the unforgivable rushing roar of a waterfall nearby.

Each and every one of us lunged forward
as we longed to feel a splash of cool water caress our bodies.
We followed a stream of mist-blue water up a relentless hill whose peaks stretched to the dusky white horizons until we found a majestic waterfall behind a shield of jagged rocks.

We cried with joy and leapt into the golden water,
so still and clear that we thought we had slipped inside a god's mirror.
When we rose from the lake, we glistened with divine radiance
for the moon sighed in envy and the grass curled at our feet.
It was then, in the blinding silver moonlight,
that we realized part of us was lost,
drowned.

We were no longer us and our body felt too large for the one left inside.
No longer were we whole, no longer could we recognize ourselves.
It was at this moment that we became foreign in our body and took on the shape of a lonelier creature,
one that was misplaced and so wholly afraid – "I."

On the edge of this weary white cliff, I believed I was fated to be swept away by these icy blue currents.
As the sun moved eastwards and my eyes welled in longing, I prayed to be scattered to pieces by this mighty immortal wind.
This body does not belong to me and I do not belong to this body.
If I was broken to thousands and thousands of pieces
and carried to the distant corners of the earth,
the bottom of each unyielding ocean
and all the hidden, forgotten, abandoned cracks and crevices of this world,
then I might finally be able to find all the selves I've lost.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

I lunged forwards but the angry winds pushed me back.
I fell on my bruised knees and wept in frustration.
I brought my fists to the ground repeatedly until a cut opened across my palms,
teeming with dark blood.
The sun hid behind the solemn clouds, bowing her head.
The daisies and the marigolds turned away too and I cried harder.
I was desperate to hear a voice.
The voice of something – someone -- I cannot comprehend.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Climbing for Wisdom

Tom Friesen

Today
I went
for a walk
with my son
I thought I'd impart
my wisdom

Instead
we climbed trees

And I
was
made young

Thanking my son
for his wisdom.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

A Meal
Tom Friesen

What is in a meal
it is made
consumed,
then
no more.

A meal
is Artwork;

Destroyed
upon
presentation

and so
all our days
are
as
meals.

So then with passion
I will make one
and another
and
another.

Some will be so
magnificent
they will be savoured

Most
will be
average.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Some
will be
Terrible
or
bland.

All these
sustain us.

Let's join together
Feasting

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

eternal flowered fabric
Hannah Gardiner

after *La chambre bleue* – Suzanne Valadon (1923)

eternal flowered fabric
caressed the crevasses
of her form, where her out-
line
met the world &
 fragmented
it self
 over
it self
 like linen.
hushed wallpaper lulled
behind blushed cheeks.
her ashy warmth
rose like a ghost
out of
cigarettes and books.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

The Final Gift

Cindy Wei

1. The classroom is cold when I first meet the cohort,
2. a generation of future doctors, scholars, pharmacists,
3. silently acknowledging the privilege of being in my presence,
4. of learning from myself and fellow teachers.
5. Some were uneasy meeting me for the first time.
6. We've since grown familiar.
7. They don't think I listen—I always listen—to their conversations:
8. mnemonics for complex innervations and actions
9. frustration and encouragement about exams and coursework
10. their futures in preventing workplace injury and enhancing quality of life.
11. I'm proud to teach them,
12. watch them learn,
13. wonder if they talk about me outside the classroom.
14. Before being surrounded by keen students
15. and offering my heart,
16. I lived a different life,
17. One full of nail trims, x-rays, satisfied owners.
18. Years ago, that was.
19. Summer comes,
20. and I'm honoured alongside fellow educators,
21. thanked again and again and again for our contributions,
22. by administrators, students themselves,
23. we celebrate a year of teaching,
24. my family attends,
25. and my friends are here too.
26. I'm given a lot of flowers.
27. *Bittersweet,*
28. I think,
29. *how everyone will move on to new things.*
30. I return to my cold,
31. cold classroom,
32. gaze, for the last time, at the metal plaque above me—

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

33. STUDENTS: YOU ARE IN THE PRESENCE
34. OF THOSE WHO HAVE DONATED
35. THEIR BODIES TO MEDICAL SCIENCE.
36. Then I'm separated into pieces,
37. 'prosections' they call them,
38. my arm wrapped in yellowed cloth and stashed on a shelf,
39. my brain extricated, relegated to a small bucket,
40. though they keep my pacemaker
41. and my nail polish on.
42. Eight new cadavers arrive,
43. wheeled on carriers, and I wonder:
44. will they understand,
45. the way I do,
46. how gratefully received their final gift will be?

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Walking in the Public Gardens After Rain

Rae Crossman

see how the roses
so carefully tended
have been beaten down
by the heavy
rain

the ground is covered
with a patchwork of colour

see how the men and women
asleep on the grass and park benches
are wet and dishevelled

let us pull this quilt of petals
over their beautiful shoulders

before we perish
from the cold

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Skin
Emily Lott

My skin is a cloak —
too big
it slides off
my bones, swaying
through my legs as I walk.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

A Sister's Love

Emily Lott

My sister loved
too much — her love
crawled down my lungs
like cigarette smoke. Sticky
It stuck to my skin like tar
on the spoon I found
In her room — her love frothed

from her mouth; foamed
around her lips, leaked
between her teeth — rabid
her love shuddered
down the walls to the floor
to the hidden holes we claimed
when the world shook

around us. Like the time
I returned home, the sound
piggy trailing behind me
earthquake, tsunami all from the lips
of a man leaning out the window
of a black sedan. I was eight.

She shook the house with her
fury. Upside down she flipped
the walls as coins rattled from
the furniture the cupboards,
my mother's purse. From
her lips, a promise: *I'll take care*
of it as an earthquake
thundered in her wake.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

A Pianist to her Piano
Sruthi Amalan

"You're a mirror of the soul, a black and white truth
A resonance that echoes beyond walls,
And transports my heart back to the spring of youth."

"Your sound brings the specs of dust to life –
I look at them, waltzing to the colourful music
And listen happily as they tell tales of innocence and strife"

"You watch, as the garden of heaven and the gates of hell
Welcome me with open arms,
To make me confront the blessings and sins that lie in every cell
Of my being."

"The more I give to you, the more you take from me.
I fear I've made a pact with the Devil,
For of my emotions, I've become a Giving Tree."

"From your keys to your scores, all you give me is black and white
And for that alone, I offer myself to you –
A mere limb to the sacrifice."

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Sumatra, 1945

Nathaniel Voll

When you were young and still trafficking memories
that follow dream-logic (nightmarish indeed),
you'd squint through the blinds, and you'd watch as the foreigners
trample on history, too loyal to see.

And as you recount with your books and your flashbacks,
I wish I could save you like you have saved me.
So hide in Sumatra, and do what you're told, or they'll
scatter you, Oma, out over the sea.

Now look beyond Holland, past boys draped in violence,
throw out the binoculars. Blinding? Don't see.
You're overused, beautiful, grasping at minor chords.
You're an antenna too focused to see.

For as the sun shatters bright, gay, and traumatic,
off aeroplanes painted red straight over me,
I'll think of you, old-soul, as energy plummets.
I'll speechlessly listen, unsquintingly see.

Now sign the book, Oma, and cast aside difference.
Set fire to the trauma and break me in three.
Save one for yourself and give two to the memories.
As for the rest? It belongs to the sea.

For I am a friend who has broken his promises.
I am a man who has sinned upon thee.
And I am a child who cannot understand
the subtleties nestled in your tragedy.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

untitled

Akke Stretch

It's not the warmth of your early morning body

Nor the soft smile of recognition

It's the tangle of boots by the door

The creak of the old floor boards

It's the crumbs on the sideboard

The ferns weeping for water

The snarl of unsorted socks

The dryer rumbling below

It's the landscape of the unmade bed

This is the air I breathe

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Dream

robert r. harth

I think of you and the cello plays
Symphony on four strings play
When I think of you... and meand the strings
Soft melody begins my sway
And In the wood of the lathe
Incredible play
I think of you and the cello plays
The wood of old
And a sound too cold
Could it be the work of my heart strings
Desperate the wood dies.
I think of you and the cello plays
Years gone by and the instrument is aged
Strings not yet fade
Old song in verse to a voice that is curse
Please continue to play

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Character Witness Reference

Ryan Boggs

O:

Returning shells from autumn (abandoned)
Coming out of that slack concussion
The plum Lir and the claw vivisection
Have left me
Scared, scarred.

Are you free to see me, to breath together
In our private bubble
as we await the results?
Everyone wants
To leave this casting call commercial

After Jester gives Gus the gears,
I'll plug in the bridge holiday lights
For the drum machine, your pom-pom and the dream pulse implied
By locks and shackles
The wake after the nightmare, broken sudden, strewn sheets
Forgotten forgiveness cards
Found as the sound settles
In swirls above me.

The asking mask replies:

Returning shells and rope to the Avon lady - Oh, Ophelia,
The swan feathers in the old factory elevator
Are like letters appearing in an unfinished nursery rhyme
The future assembles in murmurs
Chaos expanding into the infinite hush

So we sew
loose theoretical nets and armpits
On children's winter jackets
Just to slow the lost loss

But what if we remember
the receptionist danced (choiring in her chair)
With our help

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

The wheels and gears flawlessly flowed with perfect performance
And she raised
Suspending
Like an angel or an actor
Until she evaporated into
A witness belief
Branching out into
The all-embracing never ever after?

So please take these fragments in return
They couldn't be used to pattern
A necklace, a bracelet or any other kind of adornment

The emptiness was too small to thread
And the rope frayed with every attempt

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Fairly Odd Parents

Ayden Elworthy

I want to write a song
About the way, I watch *Fairly Odd Parents*
How I don't even watch it
I just stare at the T-V wait for it to flash by
And then I sit on my bed and I wait for eight am
And then I sit on the bus and wait for you to say hi

How I look out the window,
Past the Loblaws, to your lawn
How I sit on the bus, and I hope you'll sit with me
Hope that Carly is homesick, or that Ryan doesn't see
Because I just wanna talk about that T-V show and be

I want to write a song
About how I'm 20 years old
And it'll be all about how I don't remember your name
How days go by faster now than when I was younger
Now I don't count down the seconds
Like I'm doing right now

Poppie white and lilies green
All around this troubled scene
Deja Vu brings in focus
How Nikki Nikki Nine doors, was always my favourite game
Because I know that sometimes you'll always feel you say the same

I want to write a song
And I want it to be loud
It's all about the past
And how you are way too proud
Of neighbours and sprinklers
Cats mice, dogs and frogs
All of the good things

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

I'd hate to see it be God
I want to write a song
About the way, I watch *Fairly Odd Parents*
How I don't really watch it
I just stare at the T.V wait for it to flash by

I want power chords and bad drums
Someone once told me that I can't sing
Something so loud that when you play it on your speaker
Your mom will yell to turn it down and ask you what it was
Maybe you'll just shrug it off and say that I don't care

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Porches

Perry Gasteiger

Shadows sneak along streets tucked in to sleep,
wondering where the time went
as we look through glass bottoms at a bleeding sky.
Slinking between fading street lights
as the world stirs to groggy bird songs
we sigh softly, returning to back doors and cold beds.
Burnished souls cry out for reprieve,
staring at their reflections in kindred minds,
saving grace in the arms of the silver night.

Hollow bones echo with starshine tears
my atoms sing to the vibrations
as I wade through streetlight pools,
at once whole and scattered across
a thousand and one nights,
I am addicted to these moonaches;
the early morning sunrise kissing tired eyes,
and the soft ache of a mind deprived.
Slipping between the cracks
like moonshine on chapped lips,
shaken awake
I can't help but wonder
why I love sleeping on porches...

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Pure O

Kate Stericker

I sloughed off my compulsions over time—
Learned to let the rot sown by my left hand
Fester on doorknobs, uncleansed by the brush
Of right-side fingers; learned not to rewind
The passage of my eyes over a page
Or first step through a threshold. Even still,
the barbed thoughts ricochet around my skull.
'Pure O,' it's called, like brand-name oxygen
In some sci-fi dystopia, or else
A euphemistic way of promising
Orgasmic pleasure. Realistically,
It means the tendrils of anxiety
Drape over my brainstem like hanging vines,
Constricting to the pulse of sick what-ifs.

My lover, also haunted, doesn't try
To exorcise obsessions. As I shake,
She'll sink her fingers softly in my brain,
Pick through the pulpy mass to find the prick
Of seeds half-sprouted, fill her hollowed palm
With wet mounds of the malformed greenery.
She'll raise her handful to the windowpane
And, when the sunbeams strike it, I can see
Leaves browning as they wilt towards her skin
And thorny stalks turned soft or dried to dust.
The choking growth may creep back every time
But can't blot out the image of her face
Lit up and smiling as she stares at me
Despite the smudge of dirt still on her chin.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Be Small

Melissa Hughes

Be small, be small, be small, be small, be small, be small, be small.

They found a new hiding place. Trying to keep their limbs pulled up tight is like trying to put the toothpaste back in the tube. They succeed in the impossible.

They have to.

Because HE's home.

Be small, be small, be small, be small, be small, be small, be small.

They hear crashing and stompy footsteps. They used to be at school when HE got home. They never used to have to hide every day, just some of the days. They don't want anyone to get sick, but they really want to go back to school.

Be small, be small, be small, be small, be small, be small, be small.

They hear their name SHOUTED out by HIM. They close their eyes tight and pull their knees into their chest even more. Their six feet apart friend couldn't play in the empty parking lot today and so they hold their breath and wait to be found.

Be small, be small, be small, be small, be small, be small, be small.

They hear the welcome thud of a large human falling onto a bed. They open their eyes. They ooze out of their sanctuary and scurry out the door.

Maybe school will be open tomorrow

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

I Wear You Around Like Lingerie

Hayden Lawrence

I put a lot of thought into the underwear I wore this morning.
Hesitation brought me to a pink waistband
Stretched out over twelve years of custody.
My mum bought them for me
In the children's section of Wal-Mart.
You handed me a down-payment last month
In an attempt to strip them of their history.

Walking around for the rest of the day feels as if
The fabric is wedged as close to my right leg as possible.
Like I'm wearing a pink dress, though mine is clearly green.
Walking around today at eleven a.m. feels like
Our two a.m. trip to the convenience store
Where I questioned your logic in buying a small pack of cigarettes
When you knew I'd smoke them all before sun-up.

The fabric on my hips feels fleshy
Resembling your hands
As you forced it off of me.
The itch of the tag at the small of my back
Is the texture of your voice
To the panic in mine, responding lovingly:
"Oh, but you're making it so hard not to..."

So clear in my memory is the morning of
Pinning safety pins to the gaping areas of my dress
Only for you to impose that sentiment onto the rest of my outfit
In taking it off of me.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

You claim I said yes, and I won't disagree with you there.
But you must realize
One subtracting one leaves you with nothing
And as soon as 'no' entered the equation
The result should have been just that.

Over text, you insist you never learned basic math
I was affectionate and generous with my donation,
I couldn't have it back.
But you must realize
Even if you had been willing to return it
It's destroyed anyway.

Nobody wants to accept my 'yes' anymore
Because a woman who revokes her wish to fulfill her responsibilities
Was never a woman to begin with.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

The Wilding Fox of Napanee

Ajay Mehmi

Bullet hail; the death o'me
for the wilding fox of Napanee.
Bury me near Addington, with about ten-grand Canadien.
I am god and money means nothin',
one last grip 'for I've gone rotten.
Owed in folds - rolled up in sleeves,
you can't thief what's ill-gotten.
What's mine is any man's now to be.
Highway 7's crown commands
its jewel be placed upon yer head.
Descend to Perth n' burn this land,
I am he who takes revenge.

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Son to Sun

Justin Carpenter

1.

The mirroring sky's impossible;
Visions while meditating, aware

Between sleep and uptake, sky's
Architecture, liquid in a crystal

Bowl sipped over time, swirled;
The anatomy of serenity, moon

Listlessly hovers, limpid beams
Light the path we have to take:

Always knew he walked alone
Amongst the unpressed olives,

The Garden of Agony drying
With purpose, unintendedings,

Negation by the will of Law,
Truth's slightly bent arrow:

Denied thrice before the end,
Quivering; rejecting: betrayed.

2.

We know the shades surround
But never could put to ground

The suspicion that stars fade
To never return, rocks shape

Into form by no other hands
But the passing light of dusk;

What code of Men could stay
The hand of so settled course

As the bidding of the Universe?
What's the primary formulation

Which one could render against
Nature into sunlight's weavings?

None. He, alone as all end; One.
Love of the teacher not enough

To pave any altar; acceptance
Making the garden; son to sun,

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Passing

Brinton Gould

Do I not embody a contradiction?
Allow me to explain the ways I
Get lost in this maze of haze and
Questions

My skin is brown and tanned to match
My jet-black hair of considerable
Length and yes it sucks to wash it
And tie it and toss it and dry it
But it's my own

But these signifiers are outliers for
How I was raised. half of me and
Thus all of me
Shadowed

Metis is what I am and it means a
Mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous
Inquisitive for the insidious who point and say

"You're not Native"
And to that I say
"Maybe you're right"

I say maybe the man

Who goes to church away from
Trees of birch to hear the words
That caused much hurt
Is not Indigenous

Who was raised by a
Eurocentric
Independent loving
Mother, who is seen as too white
In skin tone to atone to those who
Believe that looks come first,
Is not Indigenous

That lives in a tower of
Concrete and power with
Hours to devour the beauty
Of the land but sticks to the
Streets and the sheets on his
Bed is not Indigenous

No, he just looks it

Maybe I am. maybe I'm not. I guess I'll
Know when this depressive oppressive
Mess of a state tells me so.

Thank God

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

Green Honey in July

Sydney Austin

i have never liked a thing that i cannot pick up and carry
furniture terrifies me
there's got to be something in that

something like

you

or something like that
i buy the honey lip balm, just to be prepared
that way it'll be halfway to holy if you ever kiss me
if God is everywhere, then he must also be in you
somewhere between the sky and your mouth
some judgement is made

your hands,
i don't know what i'd do
i've seen it happen so many ways
you wouldn't even do it on purpose
but your fingers would press into the wounds
is this still holy?
would it be good enough?

is still a feeling
at least your fingers are still a part of you
i'd marry you just to see you in green
fogged-up windows and painted walls

bleary mind and socked feet on wooden floors

i never tried to pick you up
but i certainly can't carry

with me
half-sour

oh, here, i'll apologize
confess everything
tell them what i never did
but dreamed of so many times
i'd thought for sure
it'd happened
if i ever find

i'd do it for you
do it because at least the burning

just to—
i work more hours than i don't
these hours i spend

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS
MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE

i watch those videos on my phone now
he picks me and he turns me around and—

what i mean is
my house is on fire and i can see it from the beautiful view at the top of your stairs
my socked feet padding down your wooden stairs to a cold basement with pictures of your
parents up on the walls

the tiny green bathroom had a liquid soap, milk and honey scented, and i almost laughed

truly
if my house was on fire
would you put it out?
would you weep in the front
lawn?

i can't keep grieving these little things
the widow is always too hot in the sun
and besides

my house is on fire
and i have to get home

2021 DOROTHY SHOEMAKER POETRY PRIZE WINNERS

MOLLY PEACOCK, JUDGE