on the musqueam reserve
by the flag shop at burrard and fourth
at bayswater and point grey road
out by jericho beach
down by the grandview superstore
undercurrents fishy beginnings
the upstream ladder
move from salt water to fresh
what the city covers it also
remembers
anadromous
symbiotic
scrambling latin to find real beneath estate

— Larissa Lai
Approach the dream like a lover, scrubbed and empty, hands open:

lie down with blessings, pray for light, a good dream,

one that wakes you in the night with a clear voice, your own,

not one that leads you down a path you have already been on and learned nothing.

Are you ready? Have you bathed in cool water, brushed the day from you, dressed in clean robes?

— Barbara Pelman
Vuillard Interior

Against brown walls, the servant bends over the coverlet she mends — brown hair, brown flocking, a dun hand under the lamp, the servant bends over the coverlet she mends draped across her broad brown skirts; knotting, nodding, the servant blends into the coverlet she mends.

— Elise Partridge

Reprinted with permission from: Chameleon Hours by Elise Partridge, © 2008, House of Anansi Press
There was this girl on the food-floor at Woodwards who studied Fine Art. I used to take my groceries to her till and chat her up. Katie, her name was. I drove Katie to North Van and showed her how work was coming on the bridge, two spans inching closer by the hour. Very dramatic, she said, removing my hand from beneath her blouse. Then she began to describe a painting on the ceiling of a building in Rome, a sort of pointing-match where a whole lot of energy crosses over between the outstretched, almost-touching index fingers of God and Adam. Sounds to me like the sparks in an arc welder, I ventured. For that, she replied, you deserve a kiss. A promising start, I thought, something to build on. Katie read my mind.

It takes more than the laws of physics, she said.

— Gary Geddes
from I Cannot Read All the Purple Books

I cannot read all the purple books yet left, nor can I manage the green ones, the blue ones the slim red volumes that speak an author’s innards as if he’s taken a penknife… but I will not give away the secret endings of the yellow and yellowing more old tomes stuck in rows that make me think here at last is life, better life that life itself I lay them upon my chest as I lie dreaming in the world

— David Zieroth

Reprinted with permission from: The Fly in Autumn by David Zieroth, © 2009, Harbour Publishing

A project to celebrate BC poets published in Canada
I was ten years old the year Chernobyl burned, the very same year that Expo ’86 came to Vancouver and the city changed forever. For I will always think of China, the China pavilion to be exact, each time these years later I pass the China Gate at Dr. Sun Yat-Sen’s Classical Chinese Gardens. We were moving then, all of us, from one place to another. Now, I’m haunted by the SkyTrain doors’ perfect open fifth, then that smooth electronic contralto programmed to reassure one rides the Expo Line to Waterfront Station. That line stretches out behind us: concrete contrails left over from ’86. Eighty-six, the year Chernobyl burned hot as the centre of the earth, the sun, and men hurried in.

— Elizabeth Bachinsky

Reprinted with permission from: God of Missed Connections by Elizabeth Bachinsky, © 2009, Nightwood Editions
You wake up your son at two in the morning so the boy, the dog and you can leave the city drive to the beach just out of town where you lie on the sand to watch the night sky.

Your three heads touching in the dark.

— Kelly Parsons

Reprinted with permission from: I Will Ask For Birds by Kelly Parsons, © 2008, Sono Nis Press

A project to celebrate BC poets published in Canada
At Carrall St. she eases into the seat beside me her bulk of leather and scarves, heavy with the scent of wet concrete. From her purse’s folds she pulls a pencil and notebook, begin to track each lurch of metal and flesh, marks the time against a schedule, tallies passengers, shopping bags, redheads. There are names that she checks twice against faces fading into cotton, soaked wool, linen. She snaps her fingers, licks the eraser tip, but no. They’re all but lost. Her ledger will not balance. The bus turns: the downtown skyline, visible, and then hidden. Before we reach Mt. Pleasant and the greener ascension she reaches her page’s end, packs up, steps down into the streets and finds her place among them.

— Sachiko Murakami

Accounting

Reprinted with permission from: The Invisibility Exhibit by Sachiko Murakami, © 2009, Talon Books Ltd.
the babe in my belly feels just like a great idea burgeoning, taking shape swelling up in my mind taking up more and more space until all that remains is the urge to express—but we’re not there yet:
I am singing Our Name laughing with a great idea growing in my belly

— Joanne Arnott

Reprinted with permission from:  
Mother Time: Poems New & Selected by Joanne Arnott,  
© 2007, Ronsdale Press

Project sponsors:
A project to celebrate BC poets published in Canada
We eluded beauty and went right to the truth, evaded happiness and went for the weeping. I loved you with the fierceness we save for those who can break us in all the broken places. Never mind the lies, the promises you couldn’t keep. They are small mysteries, like the blowing milkweed silk.

— Susan Musgrave


A project to celebrate BC poets published in Canada
A project to celebrate BC poets published in Canada

This girl’s gonna ditch her rustic frolic, this girl so wants back
to bright light big box open late lurchy bus people shout car siren
city siren three a.m. car car six screen butter popcorn new release
people people busker nightschool swim class take-out pizza art
show book club bike lane Chinatown wants to sit down Friday
night half-caf latte frothy lip foam run mouth poet in every chair
at the open mike read to me read to me read to me café.

— Rhonda Ganz

from You can take the girl out of the city

Reprinted with permission from: Rocksalt: An Anthology of Contemporary BC Poetry,
ob. Mona Fertig & Harold Rhenisch by Rhonda Ganz,
© 2008, Mother Tongue Publishing
summer, like a lover’s knot, 
ties us in daisies, 
eyes open, stems green—
like a lover’s knot, eyes 
open, summer befriends us, 
philadelphus, syringa, snowpetal daze—
eyes open, like summer, 
syringa mocks us, but gently, 
weds us to oranges, stammering sweet—
gently, like blood, mock orange 
opens, teases the summer, stumbling lovers, 
lingering green in fumbles of snow—

—W. H. New
I want to ask poetry where it was for all those years. Where was it when I chain-smoked my way through Vancouver bingo parlours and where was it when I traded my Penguin classics for True Crime stories? I want to ask it about waitressing in Chinese restaurants and slinging beer in Indian bars and about hitch-hiking and smoking dope and seeing the prairies for the first time. I want to ask about underground rivers and the homelessness of rain and how it knows what it knows and why it knows so much more than I do. I want to ask poetry where it goes when it disappears and if it was there when I shot pool and crashed in cheap hotels in small towns across the country. I want to ask it why it drew me close and then let go and if it led me to the dying as a way to keep me alive.

— Eve Joseph
this knot of the 50s – undone by a love that wells up for, as if from, the city on occasion, by surprise. as if the insistent views that keep us separate fade to thin air’s embrace my heart lurches in, widening out to apparitional mountains in the haze, the close-up glittery smile of False Creek, its towers, its tugs, its 1930s bridge with glass flambeaux above the sea’s old smell of bilge, of used-up sand. gull cackle. rim shriek.

— Daphne Marlatt
What has three legs, never walks, but transports you, has no arms but embraces hundreds at a time?
What single key opens eighty-eight different doors, is black and white but blinds you with its colour?
What silent visitor sits in your living room and sings?

*Burlesca* is an Italian word meaning “musical joke”.
The answer to the riddle is a piano.

— Kate Braid

*Reprinted with permission from: A Well-Mannered Storm: The Glenn Gould Poems by Kate Braid, © 2008, Caitlin Press*
When you are thirteen
the world is a small room.
A bedroom.
A locker at school.
A box.
Gym socks, combination locks.
Four walls and a roof.
For every difficult problem: a proof.

— Jennica Harper

Reprinted with permission from:
What It Feels Like for a Girl by Jennica Harper,
© 2008, Anvil Press

A project to celebrate BC poets published in Canada