

WORDS FROM THE STREET

Sunday June 26, 2016

Jacob Alderdice – 6th prize

WHAT WISPY TENDRIL HOLDS ME FAST?

I don't know if it was the sound of a train in the distance that put me in a melancholy mood, or if I was already feeling blue and the trainsong only underscored my mood of loss and loneliness, but in any case there I was, a useless, staring, lump of blah, searching through the evening-time window as if in the twiggy tree branches out there I'd find the answer.

But the branches held nothing for me. All they held was a shredded white plastic grocery bag. It jerked sluggishly at the end of a maple twig. If that bag were me I'd do the same; I'd be all "What's the point," I'd give up fighting. Maybe a bigger wind would come and blow me free, or maybe not. I wouldn't care. What could I do about it? As I stared into the twilight evening, the shadows on the limp plastic bag took form, and as the bag twisted at the end of its twig it looked a little like a disembodied head, with deep-set eye sockets, a low, beetled forehead and a downturned mouth agape, whether in anguish or pain I could not say.

Then a breeze lifted the bag just a little, and I felt its face turn toward mine. I felt it looking at me, its bleak eyes locked on my own.

What was it thinking, that lifeless sac? The train whistle lowed from the city line and empty boxcars clattered across a long high bridge, and did this plastic bag of nothing, stranded atop a maple tree outside my window, did this bag look back at me and wonder what wispy tendril held me so fast? Did it pity me as I pitied it?