

HONOURABLE MENTION

Waiting

She wears her headdress jauntily,
with an attitude that almost
hides the fact that she is bald.
But the drawn-on eyebrows
and lash-less eyes
give everything away.

She stares intently
at the distant TV screen
as if fascinated by this week's weather.
But everyone knows why she's here.
The same reason they are all here.
Although their cancers are different,
with differing treatments and prognoses,
they are all here to try to stay alive.
It's no "courageous battle"—
it's their only option.
Any control they thought they had
over their lives is gone.
They're controlled, instead, by the disease,
the medical people and the treatments.
They surrender (some less willingly)
to the horrors, side effects, and violations
of the prodding hands, needles, and machines.
Nothing is private anymore.

A lonely tear
rolls down the woman's cheek.
She wipes it away
with the back of her hand
and continues
to watch the TV.

by Melanie Flores
Toronto, Ontario