

In Brazil



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Introduction

Sao Paulo, Brazil. The state has 40 million people, and the city, 12 million. That's a lot of people and it feels like it. We were there, three of us from Canada, to participate in a martial arts seminar. We stayed in a bed and breakfast with a friend from Argentina and had a blast. We avoided all the other martial arts instructors and so all the nasty little comments and petit politics of the so-called arts of peace.

Instead, we explored our neighbourhood, drank a lot of beer and wine, and ate some amazing food.

Kim Taylor, September 2022

The Space Between

In Brazil
We swarmed up a street
The crowd of us
looking for coffee
looking for treats

I glanced to the right
and there between two buildings
was a space
just like a space
in downtown Guelph

I walked on by
but I love that space
between two buildings
and so I went back
to take the photograph

A ten hour flight
to find an image
of my home town
in Sao Paulo
I was happy
~~



Treats for Pam

In Brazil
is a bakery
with sweet treats
and the Pamurai was happy
and I was happy
with my espresso
as the customers came in
and went out
happy
~~



Our Family

In Brazil
Across the street
was a family restaurant
What the hell
we walked in

We had no Portuguese
They had no English
but we pointed
and mugged

And they fed us
Such wonderful food
with big bottles
of local beer

We explored
and ate at other places
but this was ours
this was family

~~



I Thought of You

In Brazil
I thought of you
of how you'd love the food
especially the fruit

I remember we always had fruit
in the apartment

I wish you had been with me
to taste the samples
the vendor gave us

~~



She Slept With Him

In Brazil
She dreamed
she slept with him
for the first time

It had been a long time
since she had slept
next to a man
Too long since that time

She opened her eyes
and he was sitting there
in a chair beside the bed
he was smiling
he nodded in greeting

She reached out her hand
and he held it
She felt his warmth
and his love

She opened her eyes
and he was looking at her
Are you too warm
he said

She looked at her hand
reaching out from the bed
holding nothing
and she smiled

Gathered him to her
and said
Never too warm
never

~~



The Dogs of Susano

In Brazil
The dogs of Susano
lay on the sidewalks
curled against the chill

They seemed more real
than the dogs of Canada
with no collars
no leashes

No owners running after
to stoop and scoop
We watched where we stepped
to avoid the poop

But I watched anyway
with my brittle bones
to guard my legs
from the broken pavement

~~



The Cobblestone Streets

In Brazil
I will remember
the wide cobblestone streets
of Susano
the tile roofs
the black powerlines
against white stucco

There were once
cobblestones in Guelph
But gone, all gone
until recent days
where they try charming
and throw in some bricks

Nice try
but the uniform manufacture
of flinty bricks
don't give me more
than a vague feeling
that I've seen the real thing
In Brazil
~~



Paradise

In Brazil
along the streets
with bits of trash around
are stands of flowers
Birds of Paradise

So many years ago
in my grandmothers greenhouse
in a galvanized tub
was a Bird of Paradise
and I gave one
to a girl

The flowers of Brazil
would have had
my grandmother's fingers
busy busy
with snippits and slips
of plant materials
smuggled back
to her rickety greenhouse
~~



Starbucks Coxinha

In Brazil
the Starbucks have
cheezy puffs
and chicken poops
a specialty of Sao Paulo
those chicken poops
as the Pamurai called them

Coxinha they are
a regional specialty
and good for Starbucks
for having them
along with every other place
to get a snack

And good for Starbucks
for having that amazing coffee
that I've never tasted
anywhere else
Well worth the wait
as Nikko drummed
on the bar

~~



The Black Swans of Brazil

In Brazil
the swans are black
but when they spread
those massive wings
you think
White!

They settle
they have each other
and the strange noises
they make

Black swans are strangers
aren't they
Outsiders speaking
in strange noises

But they have each other
and those wings

They Are
and they choose not to leave

Those black swans
in Brazil
~~



I Know Sao Paulo

In Brazil
I know Sao Paulo
The traffic
that living, breathing thing
Motorcycles sliding
between the cars
like blood in a muscle

I know Sao Paulo
the people
forty million
with their share of homeless
Forty million
jostling together
making it work

I know Sao Paulo
the food
such food
from the world
to this city
such food
as you have never tasted

I know Sao Paulo
the people
the other side
the people I meet
so kind
so happy
My cheeks hurt
from the laughter

I know Sao Paulo
A drugstore
a restaurant
an auto repair shop
Repeat
The cracked, heaving
sidewalks
Oh I know them well
the aching feet

I know Sao Paulo
the fruit vendor
who would not let us buy
until we had sampled
enough
until he was satisfied
and when we left
he shouted "Abrigado"
as he cut fruit
for another customer



Oh I know Sao Paulo
that last lunch
in the Cinderella Luncheonette
the smiling waiter
so very handsome
I was jealous
but so very kind
I could not begrudge
his looks

Yes, I know Sao Paulo
in the way that city
knows me
~~



The B and B

In Brazil
The B and B was cold
the walls in the bathroom
cold enough to rain water
after a shower
but each room had a drain

A window opened to a room
that was open to the air
Impossible in my country
where washers, sink
and a third shower
would freeze and break

In the land of no snow
it all made perfect sense
and was a delight to explore

Buildings of cement
cool for the summer heat
Our wooden structures
would be gone in a decade

I will have fond images
of that B and B
appearing years from now
Where was that place?

~~



The Trees Grow

In Brazil
The trees grow from the ground
red, red ground
like our PEI
and on the trees
grow a dozen different plants
getting along

I want to say the trees
are a metaphor for the culture
with all shades of humans
living in harmony
But being a biologist
I will resist that simple story
After all parasites and symbiotes
are not the same thing
at least not at first
says my old instructor
~~



The Power Lines

In Brazil
the power lines
and the internet lines
and the old phone lines
are strung from pole to pole
like vines
trying to strangle each other
all bundled and tied
with string

Sometimes one escapes
and hangs down low
maybe seeking to root
into the curb
maybe yearning to go under
into the tunnels under the road
But always waiting
for a car to snag them
and drag them into the parking garage
~~



The Cell Phone Rules

In Brazil
as in the bar last night
the cell phone rules
Over the sports on TV
over the people in the next seat
over concerns of that truck
heading down the road
you are about to step onto

Our lives are in there
that small box
roughly the size of the wallets
we would sacrifice
to keep those phones
which are also our mail
our calculators
our jukeboxes
our movie cinemas

God bless the wee machines
that amuse us so well
that relieve us of the burden
of speaking to each other

~~



Poor Together

In Brazil
not a single tsk
escaped my lips
as I learned of the indigenous
so cruelly treated
by the Europeans
who came to get rich

Not a tsk
while I know about our own
so cruelly treated
by the Europeans
of this country
who came to get rich

If, tomorrow
all the sins were forgiven
all the reconciliation made
all the lands recovered
we would be equals

Each and every one
subject to cruel treatment
of those of us
who come to get rich
All of us
poor together
~~



Where Are the Trinkets

In Brazil
I wandered
and I wondered
where are the trinkets
the native crafts
I so love to buy

As in our own tourist towns
so deep in native lands
Where are the native crafts
All I find are what I have
jewellery made in China
to Western design

Paintings quickly done
in China as well
where artists are cheap
Pots and pans
from Taiwan
Being captured and transported
in the new VW or Renault cars
roaring along
at 20Km an hour

In Museums
I found a few trinkets
expensively priced
and fun enough
to collect for the folks
back home

~~



At The MASP

In Brazil
at the MASP
they hang the pictures
on crystal easels
so you can see the backs
so fascinating
to look at the other side
of a Hieronymus Bosch
and see the backerboard
the stickers of authenticity
as much a history
as the Temptations of Santo Antonio
on the other side
~~



MUSEU DE ARTE DE SÃO PAULO
Revisão feita em 1956
P. M. Bardi
C. O. A. Pellegrino
L. S. Hossaka
M. G. Paiva

6. HIERONYMUS BOSCH
As Tentações de Santo Antonio

ARTHUR LENARS & C^o
Agents en douane
22 bis, Rue de Valenciennes - PARIS-VI
FINE ART DEPOT
KNO'59
New York

We Made Our Own

In Brazil
We made our own coffee
in a little contraption
brought to our table
in the museum cafe

Such fun
to pour the water
from a tin cup
through grounds
to drip into clay pots
with indentations
for our fingers

It tasted all the better
for our making it ourselves
as we ate the lovely treats
brought to our table
by our attentive hostess
~~



The Rain Came Down

In Brazil
the rain came down
washing clean the streets
We looked up
at the shiny buildings
that reflected shiny buildings

And I looked down
as we walked
at the streets that could bite me
turning an ankle
Not as spry as I once was
to jump and twist
after the event

So I saw the shiny cobblestones
the cracked cement
the heaving tile
as the trees work hard
to reduce Sao Paulo
to a state of nature
the shiny buildings
we'll do next
They seem to say
~~



From 30,000 Feet

In Brazil
from 30,000 feet
over the forest
I watched the sun come up
a blood red ball
and I wondered
how I was not blind
until I was told
the windows were tinted

I remember another flight
so many years ago
where the moon shone
down on the winding Amazon
The river
not the corporation
and it brought me such joy
I wanted to cry
(The river, not the corporation)

~~

At the Osteria Generale

In Brazil
we ordered two dishes
and four quarts of beer
at the Osteria Generale
for four of us

We went home with a meal extra
a full belly
and a warm feeling
We were too full to drink the wine
we had intended for afters

~~



We Walked Up The Street

In Brazil
we walked up the street
turned left
and down the street
to the grocery store

We were the crazy foreigners
who bought as many bottles
of wine and beer
as we did eggs
To general laughter

We ate the food
drank the booze
laughed and sang
and did it again
the very next day

~~



We Skipped the Dinosaurs

In Brazil
We skipped the dinosaurs
in the park
It would cost
a bottle of wine each
so we bought the wine

We drove around the park
in crazy tricycles
like paddle-boats
laughed like maniacs
and nobody cared

We watched the ducks
and flapped our wings
with the swans
and laughed like maniacs
and nobody cared

We stuck our heads
into holes in tree trunks
and climbed in to sleep
Made like the Beatles
across a road
and nobody cared

A big friendly fellow
jumped up on us
and tried to steal my cane
We drank from a coconut
and I had an ice cream
we laughed like maniacs

~~



With Old Friends and New

In Brazil
With old friends and new
we practised our arts
With laughter and effort
we worked toward a goal

Much as I hate travel
I was with friends who helped
so that I could be there
when we all made the effort
and worked toward a goal

Of course I will be there
for as long as I can be
For the friendship between us
for the practise of our arts
as we work toward a goal

~~



I Worried

In Brazil
I worried about my writing
I worried about my pills
I worried that the routine
would fall apart

But I have returned
to a comfortable routine
taking my pills
writing another chapter
in the latest book

All is well for me
But now I feel guilty
as the Pamurai lies sick
the fall after the stress
and perhaps more stress

She took care of me
and now I take her lunch
on a silvery tray
with many wishes
for a fast recovery

~~



The Whee-bird

In Brazil
the "Whee-bird" adopted us
Singing our mantra
each and every morning

Whee, we would think
what's in store today
what new thing
will we see
what new memories
will we make
~~



My Little Finger

In Brazil
The little finger
of my left hand
was not straight
It is supposed to curl
and keep curling
until I can't open it

Odd that I noticed it
in Brazil
where I was teaching
I generally don't see
my weakness in class
But I suppose later
after the seminar
I had time to look

As long as it stays open
far enough to teach
for as long as I have left
I will be satisfied
that all is well in the world
That I wasn't treated poorly
by my aging body

~~

That Ass

In Brazil
that apple ass
swaying in front of me
pulled my camera around
and I started to film

You saw me and laughed
swinging that ass
in arcs and circles
I sighed, I cried
and I filmed
What else could I do

~~



He Walked Past

In Brazil
he walked past
they all walk fast
Tall, lanky
milk chocolate skin
that fits so nicely
into your eyes

I followed along
nudged my friend
and nodded
"There's a model
I'd like to get
into a studio"

~~

A Reflection

In Brazil
a reflection in a window
amongst all the clutter
a woman's face

I dared not look around
I watched the reflection
for as long as I could
and she was gone

~~



The Traffic in Brazil

In Brazil
in Sao Paulo
the traffic was impossible
not bad, but impossible
yet it moved
To the beep-beep, beep beep beep beep
of the motorcycles
to the careful inching forward
and well signalled lane changes
reluctantly granted
It moved

In Canada
a truck three cars back
honked angrily as we let cars merge
and at an on ramp
further down the road
he moved into that ramp
to block cars that we might have let merge
Yet Canadian traffic is fine
it slows down, yes
But those who feel entitled
who don't allow a merge
will stop it dead
~~

Mortadela Brasil

In Brazil
I've heard it said
the Mortadela
is the size of your head
And Chopp Blackie
to wash it down
Such food

At the Suzano Mall
in the food fair
where Bumblebee danced
we had Chopp
and a hot dog
cut into four, it was so big
And a plate of sausage
sauerkraut and potatoes

Food, friends, and fun
I send my best wishes
for the country
May the future be like
a Mortadela
as big as your head
~~



There is Still Desire

In Brazil
Where there is no hope
there is still desire
The woman strides by
and my eyes follow
My heart follows

There is no hope
of a conquest as once
might perhaps be made
but I am content
in the desire left to me

Do not begrudge
an old man
his antique dreams
his hopeless desire

Stride on past
confident in youth
Take the attention
as complement
And smile secretly
~~



She Bent Down

In Brazil
she bent down
to tie my shoes
and I tried to remember the song
But failed

Only later, Tangled up in Blue,
I remembered the sound of his voice
and I remembered that in Suzano
she bent down to tie my shoes
out of kindness I suppose

And the people flowed around us
and she tied them tight
and she looked up at me and said
is that all right
It was all right

~~



Numbers

On the sixth we left
flying to Brazil
and today I look
to find it's the nineteenth

Where did September go
how did it slip
like so much sunscreen
through my fingers

I'm tired still
I'm longing for a nap
but I'm not sure I dare
a hospital trip at five
~~

What Memories Are These

What memories I have, over such a long life. I do remember my little red wagon, but so much more, I remember her. And her. All the women in my life, and they come, these memories, these women, as I near the end.

The end of the year, the end of my life, the end of a trip to Brazil, perhaps.

These are the memories of September, welcome to the women I knew, the women I know, the life I live.



Which of these are true? You're asking me what was true forty years ago. They are all true, for a given value of the memory of an old man.

I Miss That

There is a movie
and there is the hero
with a girl riding him
in bed

I miss that so much
I did not know just how much
I missed that
but now I miss that a lot

~~

Do You Know What's Right

Do you know what's right
You tell me you know what's right
but do you
Do you

Do you see what needs to be done
You say you see what needs to be done
But do you
do you

You say you're on the right side
but are you on the Right side
Are you on the right side
Are you

You say you work for the little ones
Do you know the little ones
Do you know what they need
What they really need

You seem to get what you want
always what you want
Is that what they need
Is it

Do you know what's right
You tell me you know what's right
but do you
Do you

~~

An Old Flame

Have I?
Did I?
No not once

did I meet an old flame
in a hotel room
to have sex again
after we parted

Am I so forgettable
or so hated
that there was no desire
left to be rekindled

Or am I, as I suspect
someone who can't see behind
who barely remembers
that I have a past

Well all is settled now
A broken neck
and I can barely see the sides
let alone what's behind

And chemicals have done the rest
no more sex for me
the spongy pole
refusing to inflate

So fear not my old flames
you may be overcome with desire
but you are safe, finally
with me

~~

From Pen to Paper

Ah the fantasies
I once had
The replayed love
I still watch
deep in my mind

They move now
from pen to paper
or rather
keystrokes to file
No longer finger-strokes
on willing flesh

All the love I once knew
No, rather
all the love I once desired
is now there on the page
to be read by me
like memories
of old lovers

~~

And Still Drunk

Hung over
and still drunk
I woke in a strange bed
to a strange woman

Being polite
I caressed her softly
and she awoke
stretched and smiled

Seeing me beside her
she sat up in bed
and said
"Who the hell are you?"

~~

She Walks Past

She walks past
all unseeing
all uncaring

but I smell your perfume
wafting ahead of you
and far behind
as I stride as strongly
as I am able

Once I might have turned
once I might have spoken
but now I remember
your beautiful face
and enjoy
the scent of your perfume
~~



Fleabag Motel

I remember you
on clean-ish sheets
in a ramshackle motel
somewhere far to the north

I remember your hair
spread on the stained pillow
as I came from the shower
feeling not much more clean

But we didn't care
about the tilted bed
or the broken window
We saw only each other
~~

Making Lunch

As I stand to make lunch
I wish I were making it
once more
for you

As I made it so many times
all the time we had
just a few months
and then you left

Does someone make lunch
for you now
Does he make it with love
I wish for that for you
~~



A Waiting Room

A medical week
two scans
and the shot
that unmans me

All to confirm or deny
that I live in purgatory
a twilight land
neither here nor there

Neither healthy
nor dying
Just a waiting room
with two doors
~~

It Meant Something

On a beach at night
the moon low
and shining on the water
Waves making the light
ripple and dance

We sat on a log
driftwood from somewhere
up the lake
and we pledged
to be together forever

Neither of us believed it
just a bit of stupid
between two kids
who would drift apart
in days

But it meant something
for the next hour or so
as we balanced on that log
and fucked
trying to avoid the sand
~~

I Count the Syllables

I count the syllables of your name
as I repeat it over and over
far into the sleepless night

What else can I do
but count syllables
those imaginary pieces
of a single word

What can I say
but your name
over and over again
hoping to dream of you

But it is not to be
counting has no use
your name becomes strange
and still I do not sleep

~~

She Stalked Through My Door

She never walked
into my room
nor did she pad
or softly trip
across my threshold

She stalked through my door
and pounced upon the bed
and upon my aching body
She captured me
between her thighs

No subtle lass
she was fury itself
an anger so deep
so far away from me
I could never understand it

But I welcomed her storm
that broke across me
I did my best to be a breakwater
so that she could crash
hard, loud and wet
~~

Worth It

If it took days of talk
Evenings to walk
and lunches full of philosophy
I never minded at all

You were brilliant
you were worth challenging
you were worth the wait
And once abed, worth it yet again

~~



The Comfort of Machines

Somewhere behind me
and to the left
comes the chuga chuga chug
of the washing machine
slipping down the walls

Of all the meaningless
insignificant things to hear
that must be close to the top
Yet I am somehow comforted
that someone is doing a wash
~~

Eat The Burned Bits

Eat the burned bits
they're good for you
said my Gramma

I don't know if they were
or still are
but I still eat them
~~

Dance With Desire

Such a long, long dance with desire
and you my beautiful partner

The years of joy and pain
the tears, of both again

I remember it all so very well
every long night

Bliss and agony both

But all of it so very worth
the lifetimes each we spent

~~

Lucky Man

Some days
I think I am a lucky man
to have lost you at 20
You are forever fresh
taut, full of potential
You are forever new
in my memory

Never filled by pregnancy
never a flaw
on that perfect belly
No wrinkle lines
that perfect face
save one laugh line
I never saw you grow old
~~

Not the One

She was kind to me
this woman
I was never to have
So beautiful
she frightened me
just a little

I am not the one for you
she told me once
But turn around
do you see her there
that woman who longs
for you

I looked, and looked back
but she was gone
this kind beauty
and I returned to my table
and I said hello
to the woman who longed
for me

~~

Three Cups a Day

Where once I drank
ten cups a day
there are now three
one half-decaf

A heart that trips
and stumbles
and complains
has taken me away

Away from that lively boy
who did nothing in moderation
who loved three women
at once

That boy who hoped one day
to have all three
in his bed at once
He now has three cups a day
~~

Wrong Side of the Tracks

She was from
the wrong side of the tracks
Not what you think
It was I who was poor

It was I who longed
for the girl
The girl who was from
the wrong side of the tracks

The wrong side for me
she was gentle
she tried to be kind
as she told me my place
~~

Of Course I Knew

Of course I knew
you were looking down my shirt
I didn't mind

I never understood
how this woman could love me
or why she moved next to me

We worked together
before all was forbidden
and we drifted into an orbit

Was that it?
Was it that simple?
That it was simple

There she was
desirable, beautiful
and hella fun

Was I handy
Was it simple
as simple as that
~~

On a Table Saw

I had her once
(more than once)
on a table-saw
in a workshop

Cold iron plate
against the warm flesh
of her lively ass
as I pounded into her

She would wrap those legs
so long and slim
around my waist
and spur me with her heels
~~

Her Neck

It was her neck
always it's the neck
I saw one today
thin, shaped, proud
and an old man dreamed

So very long ago
her neck inspired me
to ecstasies of poetry
each verse dripping
with unspent seed

The mind remains
if the body does not
Don't begrudge an old man
the sight of that neck
drifting lovely in the fall sun

~~



The Things We Could Have Done

There are the steps
running up to the village hall
simple, concrete steps
blessed, anointed
by her ass

There so very long ago
as she sat beside me
We talked of nothing at all
but chattered just to listen
to each other's voice

I looked aside at her often
to see that profile
and wonder of wonders
to see her eyes
looking back at me

Late, late into the evening
we sat and talked
unable, or unknowing of more
that we could have done
So late we got into trouble

For the things we could have done
~~

A Nude Beach

Once, I dreamed of a nude beach
where firm-titted girls
flaunted their pubic hair
as they soaked in the sun

But my dreams having come true
I know the secrets
of middle aged women and men
who air their wrinkles
on the sun-splashed beach

And those firm-titted girls?
Kept home, doubtless
by shame or by boyfriends
unwilling to share

~~

Has She Returned

Has she returned to me
that woman who left
so long ago

Has she come back
Have we talked
I cannot seem to recall

Was it a good chat
or something to forget
Did I forget

It seems unlikely
that it has not happened
I have not moved away

1975 I came to this town
never to leave again
she must have dropped by
~~

How Many Gallons

How many gallons of beer
have been washed through me
in the name of a woman

To forget
to remember
to forgive

I know for a fact
my liver is intact
which is, in itself, a miracle

Still, I like beer
and an equal amount
I must reluctantly admit
likely went through me
just for the taste of it
~~

You Were Almost Gone

You were almost gone
only a vague image
seen almost never
and yet, by furious effort
I have brought you back

The smell of your neck
just under your chin
the feel of your hand
sliding over my belly
and downward

The slick smoothness
of the inside of your thigh
and the hair, blond and thin
over your lovely vagina
that goal of so many nights

Why, when you were almost gone
would I fight so hard
to bring you back to my mind
is it the feeling
of that cool hand on my crotch
~~

Reading Poetry To Her

I never sat on her floor
back leaned on her bed
reading poetry to her

Instead I listened
mumbled a bit, and listened
to her tales, her trials, her tribulations

My poetry was mine
of no interest to her
or to me

but the sound of her voice
deep into the night
telling me secrets

telling me dark things
she told no other
kept me there, transfixed

Did it help her to speak
to tell me these things
who can say, it was long ago

~~

An Agreement

In she walked, early
as I had not yet moved out
a sublet apartment for the summer
and here comes her father

You must move out now, he said
you cannot stay here
with my daughter

The astonishment on my face
must have registered to her
for she took her father aside
before I could reply

You can stay here tonight
but you must be gone tomorrow
said the old man
to the one he was sure
would be ravishing his daughter

But ravish I did not
I desired nothing but to be left in peace
for my last night, in that lonely place
and so we came to an agreement
she and I

She would disappear
to her boyfriend's place
and I would have my solitude
for my last night
And so all was well

~~

I Lost the Girl

Only one ever paraded
the name and description
of a rival to her bed

Only one
and that not out of malice
but to rouse me from my own bed
and into running shoes
so to lose the belly
that was claiming my youth

I lost her to him anyway
but I thanked him for his example
as I moved down the trail
in that special place
reserved for those who run

I lost the girl
but regained my legs
which have served me so well
in all the years since

~~

Blind Hod

How can it be
that the boy who saw nothing
beyond twenty three
can be almost thrice those years
I would gladly have died
at twenty three
I had been loved
and loved sufficient
to die content

Yet here I am
nearly thrice beyond
that time of ending
deep into the black unknown
unanticipated as a boy
feeling my way forward
like blind Hod
wandering aimless
toward that long ago death
~~

No Makeup

She wore no makeup
yet was not plain
She could never be called plain
Soft eyes
soft voice
ears, delicate and carved
from rarest alabaster
Good morning I said

She gazed at me
but somewhat turned, she was
So that I saw both her nose
and that chin, a strong pair
and I fell in love with her then
on that spring morning
with the sun coming in the window
with her sitting on my bed

~~

I Saw Her

I saw her, I swear
her daughter
Walking down the street
lifting weights at the gym
Reading a book, in the cafe

Once, only once
did I ask, "Your mother's name?"
Only to be told
I was mistaken
No more do I ask

Now I look, once
maybe twice and I rejoice
that my love was in love again
that my love had a daughter
who must have been loved in turn
~~

The Spawning Grunion

Sometimes
if I begged well
and she was in the mood
she would show me
the Spawning Grunion

Forty years
since I have seen it
yet I see it still
playing on the back of my eyes
the Spawning Grunion

~~

Such a Scandal

Such a scandal
the big teacher with a girlfriend
But what we saw
was a big teacher making trouble

No, you can't change the weekend
we'll see you next year
Oh, I can make it as usual
Great, we'll see you then

And when we did, his student said
"I'm not really his student"
And we nodded, remained silent
but we remembered

~~

Old Enough

He's old enough to be your father
they said to her
and she replied, thoughtfully
But I like my father

Shocked, the old women
and young men stood, mouths agape
(I just wanted to write mouths agape)
and watched her walk away

~~

The Old Poet

The old poet's output
outlining his love of women
faded with the years
From dozens in a year
to one, then one each three
Yet he remained fond
of those women he met

As I listen to him
through his poetry, (he's gone)
I feel a bit sad
that his work dropped off
the women less often
sitting at his feet
to listen to their poem

~~

Not a Stupid Man

I am not a stupid man
I promise you
But her long, supple limbs
her high, firm breasts
and that warm grotto
between her thighs
(her pussy, to be plain)
made me lose all thought

I was never anything
but a gibbering idiot
when she was near
and she played me
as one might ride a horse
with gentle nudges
and soft clicks
of her tongue

~~

A Tin Roof

I have listened to rain
drumming on a tin roof
my whole life

As a child, a house
with no warmth
in the winter
nothing but heat
in the summer

All grown up
my house
in the city
and my cabin
in the woods
have dark tin roofs

In the rain, I hear
the pounding of each drop
through ears that have weakened
through the years I have lived
I hear the rains drumming
on my tin roofs
~~

I Walked With Her

A beautiful fall day
misty rain making it melancholy
Just the right mood
to think about her

On a day just like this
we walked together on the beach
having just met
She came home with me

And on a day just like this
she walked with me downtown
and told me she was leaving
I walked home alone

~~

Sleeping Alone Again

I often wonder
if I could sleep alone again
it has been a lifetime
more, perhaps
since I have slept alone

Yet comes the night
when it happens
I sleep more soundly
than I have in years
but I sleep strictly

I remain on my side
and when I wake in the morning
the covers on her side
are undisturbed
I twitch them into place

~~

How Many Years

How many years has it been
since a girl came to my table
at the coffee shop
and asked to sit beside me

How many years has it been
since a girl introduced herself
and asked my name
"I've seen you here before"

How many years has it been
since I've drunk six coffees
talking with a stranger
slowly becoming a lover
~~



Strangers and Lovers

While strangers might once
have admired my work
Lovers have taken it upon themselves
to knock down the man
that produced it

Is there some fault in me
that opens up the urge
to put me into the place
where all other men dwell
Once they know me

Once I have opened my heart
and given them the tools
to chip away at my pride
do I hand them a card that says
Place the chisel here

~~

By the Gods

What mysterious pathway
what glorious chance
brings her to me
Am I to believe in the Gods
for surely probability alone
cannot have guided her here

Here into my bed
I lie on my back
her head on my shoulder
my hand idly playing with her hair
I lie awake and wonder
She was introduced by him

He met her there
where she had a party
and before that she knew him
and he...
No, it must be the Gods
who have sent her to me

~~

A Big Girl

She was a big girl
with a gallon of wine
and I drank my share

We ended up
on a small beach
the bottle empty
but her mouth still full

And when she finished
I asked what she did
and she replied
I swallowed of course
~~

The Claw Foot Bath

She loved that claw foot bath
and would soak in it for hours
from the first squeek of the tap
to the draining of now-cold water

She shyly told me once
that she loved most
running the water into the tub
"If I slide down at the back
I can get right under the flow"

~~

Moisture In The Gravel

It does not pour forth from me
like it once did
this love of wonder and mystery
This love of mine
for a woman, for my past, for my life

It does not pour from me
Pour forth, like liquid honey
The sweetness of her breath
the amber of her skin
the sticky flows we once enjoyed

All seems dry, this once stream
does not pour forth as it did
but there, look there in the gravel
is that moisture, is that dank coolness
like the coolness of her hand on my chest

~~



A Lost Evening

I could, I suppose
watch a classic film
one I should have watched
many years before
But I look, and don't see much
and after all, I've watched
a lot of them

Watch one again? Read a book
that I have read, but forgotten
Write some poems?
No, I read some modern poems
and I'm not qualified
Write the chapter I lost this morning
but I don't write books in the evening

It's a lost evening
I've got no class to teach
Musashi says do nothing useless
and I've done nothing
The guilt of an old man
who wants to contribute something
before the end

Just that vague guilt
Some days I wish I played video games
Well, in an hour I take my pills
and head to the sauna
to read a bit
Hoping that I pick a good one
perhaps it's time for Pratchett
~~

Fallen Leaves

As I walked
waiting for the sun to show
over the Market
I passed fallen leaves
with dew, big drops of dew
and shivered a bit
in my hoodie and jacket
my winter hat on my head
and my hands jammed
deep into my pockets

~~

Winter Window Coverings

It has been a month or more
since I've seen my cabin
deep in the woods

It will be two weeks more
before I can visit
I will have missed
such a lot of the best season

The one where the blackflies
mosquitoes, deerflies and horseflies
are dead and eaten
by the small rustling things
that live in the cedar droppings

I will be there soon, I hope
to put the winter coverings
over the windows
the ones I swear I removed
just last month

~~

Seeing Their Long Limbs

Another rainy September day
but I shouldn't complain
The early days were hot
and the girls at the University
wore their shorts for more
than the usual first week

I know I should not say
such horrible things
but I really do enjoy
even at this creepy age
seeing their long limbs
walk by with such determination

~~

Ten Thirty Blues

I have walked to the cafe
written my chapter
and walked back again

I have delivered the cookie
upstairs to the convalescent
and posted essay and chapter

So here I am once more
ten-thirty in the morning
and I wonder what to do

I think that maybe
I could turn on the sauna
and get warm twice today

Or perhaps wash the dishes
and make a soup
something to warm the soul

As I yawn and remember
the hour or two of plot
I rolled around my head last night

I might profit
from a nap this afternoon
just before three classes to teach
~~

I Was Woke

I was woke
before woke was woke
but as woke as I was
I can never be woke
because I'm an old WASP man
Yes, one of those OWM
Old White Males
who, by definition
cannot be Woke

I understand
I really do
although I cannot understand
And so I write my words
for Old White Men
and perhaps
Old White Women
who remember a world
Before woke was woke
~~

I Want a Scrub Brush

Lots of water
and a scrubbing brush
to wash away the fallout
The radioactive dust
from the protective suits

So why, in this day and age
is there no protective suit
no wash, no brush
that will scrub away the feeling
that I get from those ones

The ones who are radioactive
the ones who wish harm
the ones who have ideology
and spew it like dust
into the atmosphere

~~

Doest Thou Live Yet

Art thou well
oh ancient pip
Doest thou live yet
breathe this air
we both share

Or gone away
to those rosy isles
so far over the sea
in a boat of silver
blown by western zephyr

~~



Slouching Toward My Heart

And I, poor broken man
barely able to sit
for any time at all
Watch in wonder
as she folds herself
this way and that
in a chair

Sometimes a leg
folded under
often both
I seem so stiff
formal and upright
while she slouches
toward my heart

~~

Outside My Window

The sound of children
outside my window
Coming home from school
they seem happy

No different than the generations
before them
who have walked past my house
Laughing outside my window
~~

A Drowned Ship's Bell

Setting my hand on her shoulder
I slide it across her back
to her neck, as I move by
behind her chair

No intent at the erotic
but as I walk on, something in my mind
rings like a long ago bell
perhaps at the bottom of a lake

Rings with the lost, barely heard echo
of love's labours long past
a remnant of life and lust
A drowned ship's bell

~~

That Long Ago Walk-up

In a walk-up
formerly inhabited by two wives
you visited from everywhere

The west, The south
Did you work in the north?
You entered my rooms

You entered my life
and I was glad of your company
your warmth, your hands

So skilled, healer's hands
fondling a broken heart
through a sad and lonely prick

And so you wandered off
a perpetual journey, your search
for your own happiness and love

I hope you found it at last
the thing you were looking for
I hope you loved your life
~~

In A Small Town

Did I ever have a woman
in a small town
in middle Ontario

Did I ever live with her there
in endless summer days
when the haze blurred the trees
across the tobacco fields

Or where the fishing tugs drove
through springtime ice
anxious to begin the year
unwilling to wait for the sun

At a stretch
perhaps I could count
a short visit with a steady
Sex in her truck on the dock

~~

Your Father Is Dead

Your father is dead
Your dog is dead
Your mother is dead

Why was I never there
to sit with them
to comfort them as they died

Too far away I could say
but that would be a lie
Too busy with life
in the city
This time not a lie
but not an excuse

A young man
a middle aged man
with a family of my own
perhaps it is meant to be
this way
Perhaps
~~

No Permission

Never
Not once
was I ever in doubt
that she wanted me

No explicit permission
progressive positive or otherwise
did I ever request
did she ever offer

I would look at her
I would smile
and she would begin
to undress

~~

A Common Language

A piece of paper
quickly ripped from a pad
a spot of sauce noted
as it was used as a bookmark

How can you treat a book that way
she said as I threw it on the desk
Like what, I said
It's a crime the abuse you cause

But the sauce was dry
and the book hit on the flat
no broken spine
no dog ears, no stained page

The gulf between men and women
is vast and mysterious
Older than the ice age
Hardly ever bridged
even with a common language

~~

The Magic of Water

On a stone in the bank
I sat and watched the water run
watched it part and join again
on the other side of a stone

I placed my hand in the water
edge first
and the water sliced around
then flat and the water pushed
pushed, then parted
to join again on the other side

She was gone
and wish as I would
thinking hard on the magic of water
we would never join again
Yet I have never doubted
the magic of water

~~

The Demon Clock

In August the tobacco
would stand tall, full
each leaf proud, erect

Then toward September
like some horrible disease
those leaves would disappear
from the largest, lowest first
until only a bare stalk
like so many stakes
geometrically placed
would decorate the bare sand

Like some sort of demon Clock
the leaves would count off the days
until school would start again

~~

Banana Slug on a Rail

The first banana slug
I ever saw
crawling on railroad iron
Was it the warmth
it sought

Why was I on a railroad track
in British Columbia
to be shocked by that yellow
on the rust red rail
I can't remember

That same shock
I was to encounter years later
as I entered a bedroom
to encounter a woman
legs spread
red crotch against white sheets

~~

A Comfort

A movement caught my eye
and I looked to see her
hands on breasts

up and down
around and around
She looked up to see me
and laughed

"I'm not wearing a bra
and I'm starting to feel it"

I shrugged, smiled
and went back to my book
but not before thinking

Once
I would have felt compelled
to make love to her
right there and then

Such is the comfort
of living together
~~

My Father's Profession

My father's profession
was not for me
No farmer
he was a light-keeper
one of the last

How many sons
are denied their father's job
as machines of light and sound
remove the need for human hands

And so we find new ways to work
new uses for our hands
No longer forced to choose
between our lives and his
the father offering his job

~~

S'mores

The box of fixings
sadly abandoned
on the kitchen table
gives silent voice
to the end of summer

~~

Pam is Working

My earphones in
I glance to the side
and she is talking to her computer
No, arguing
I can make out "why would you do that"
and "seriously? How?"

It's how she works
no sense asking what she's saying
or what's going on
And it's much, much more fun
to simply watch the show
with Mike Oldfield as soundtrack
~~

Dear D

I remember the scars
on your arms
they weren't so strange
back then

And I remember your crust
that foul mouth
and that streak of mean
They weren't so strange
back then

But when you took off your shirt
and I saw the scars on your back
I began to understand the rest
~~

Warm Enough

You came so far
to this small town
so far away
from where you were born

You came not to
but from
Still you chose this place
you said you could settle

The days grew short
and the nights grew cold
I tried, as hard as I could
but the time came

I could not keep you warm enough
and you drifted south again
back to the place you were born
Back to him

~~

I Had to Let You Go

I lean far over the boxwood hedge
and brush my fingertips
through the lavender

I bring it to my nose
and there you are
That scent you wore

You are looking at me
with sad, sorrowful eyes
telling me that yes
you really must go

I could not argue further
I said, are you sure
You said it was your dream

I had to let you go
~~

The Ring I Gave You

Do you still wear the ring
I gave you so long ago
or perhaps the charm
I gave you for your bracelet

Have they long ago gone
to a daughter
with no explanation
of what each one means

Do you glance at them
and think, where is he
Is he happy
Is he still alive

~~

My Grandfather's Ring

Somewhere around this house
is my Grandfather's ring
Jack Norton Taylor

The last time I found it
I tried it on, and it fell
off of my thumb.

They say I was a big man once
but he was a giant
and the family says
there were bigger Taylor men

Well, my son is taller than me
all he needs is another hundred pounds
and he'll be a big man too

~~



The Church Bell

Sept 30, 2022

As I walked home
the church bell tolled
Strange, I thought
it doesn't ring now
It was ten o'clock
perhaps it's ringing the time
but it went past ten

Is it a funeral?
and my legs stopped
I stood still
and I began to cry

One toll for each lost child
and each toll brought tears
I could not stay
there were too many children
and so I walked on
crying

Even when the sounds of the city
the traffic and the construction
meant I could not hear the bell
I heard it
it tolled in my head
and I cried
All the way to my home
I am crying now
I hear the bell tolling
~~



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