

# Three Days In May



## Table of Contents

Guelph.....	1
A Downtown Apartment.....	1
Old World Sheds.....	2
House Wren.....	4
Dogwood.....	7
Gordon/Norfolk Footbridge.....	9
Beside Macondo.....	12
New Trains for Old.....	13
Copper Mine.....	14
Our Lady.....	18
Armoury.....	20
Northumberland Apartment.....	24
Via Rail.....	25
Spur Line.....	27
Lauren.....	30
Arboretum.....	31
Jacob’s Ladder.....	32
Dappled Sunlight.....	33
Deadfall.....	34
A Very 60s Sculpture.....	35
Sisters.....	36
Spray.....	37
Zen Waves.....	40
Nature Raw.....	42
Split Rail.....	43
Park Bench.....	48
Ghibli Corner.....	50
Jarring.....	53
Walk.....	54
University.....	55
Everyone Wins.....	56
Out Of Touch.....	57
Young Man’s Lament.....	58
Pathway.....	59
The Great Fish.....	60
Waves.....	61
East Residence.....	64
Empty Parking Lots.....	66
Worth the Extra.....	67
Sumac.....	68
What’s Down There.....	70
The Search for Answers.....	71
Room 210.....	73
Room 302.....	77



Great Zimbabwe.....	79
Powerhouse Lane.....	80
The Way Home.....	83
Rumble Strip.....	85
Twenty Years Ago.....	86
After Class Rituals.....	87
Crop Science.....	88
Brutalist.....	91
Gas Tanks.....	93
Organic.....	95
The Bullring.....	98
Shademaster Locust.....	100
Alumni House.....	103
Fragments of the Past.....	106

# Guelph



## A Downtown Apartment

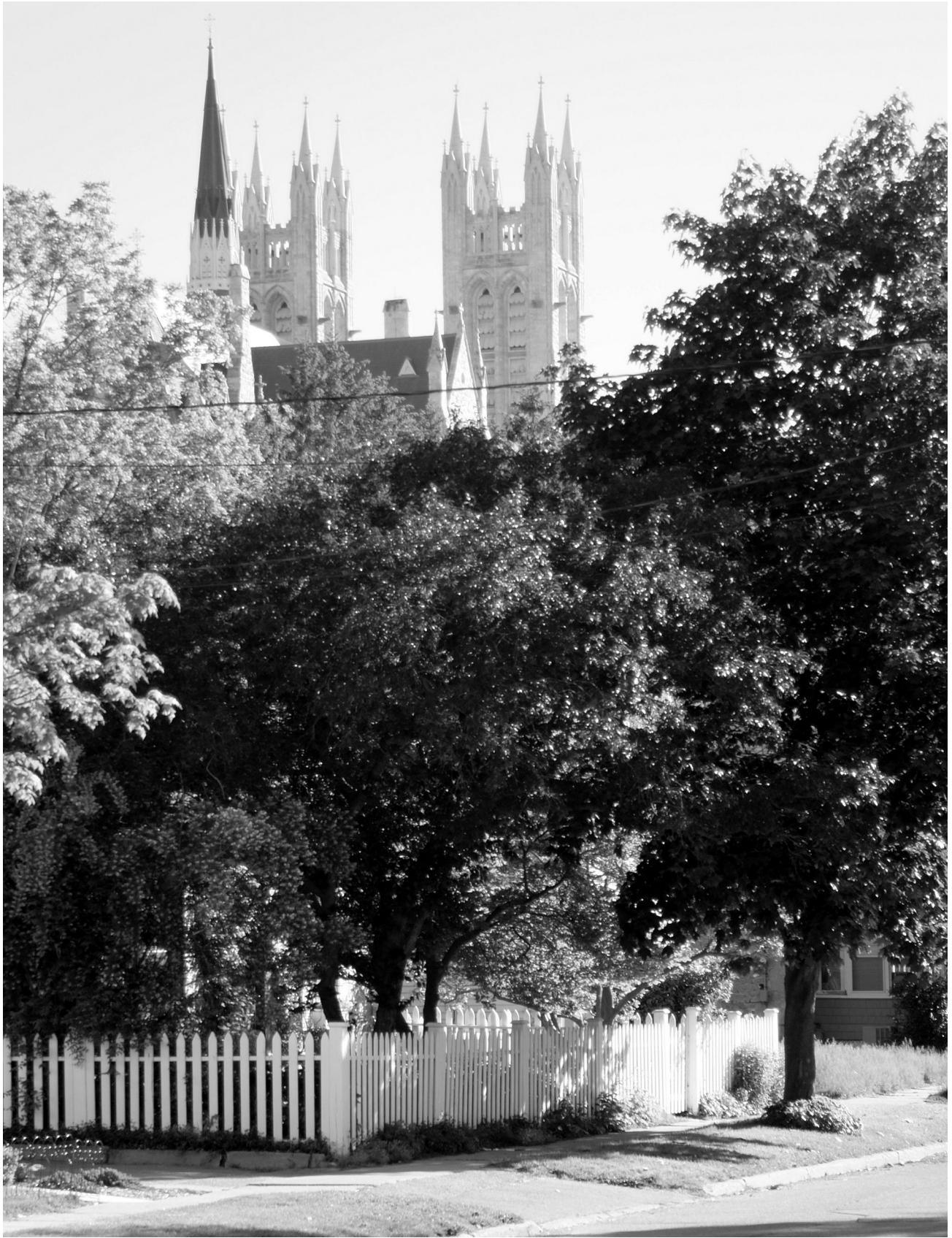
To get from any point in downtown  
to any other point  
it is only necessary  
to think a moment  
Perhaps walk a block  
and you will have a straight shot



## Old World Sheds

How much longer  
are the old world sheds  
going to survive  
in a city under siege  
by property developers  
and those moving out of the big city  
where they can't afford to live

After all  
we can subdivide that lot  
and put another house there





## House Wren

A house wren  
on the fence  
enjoying the morning sun

Warm after a long winter





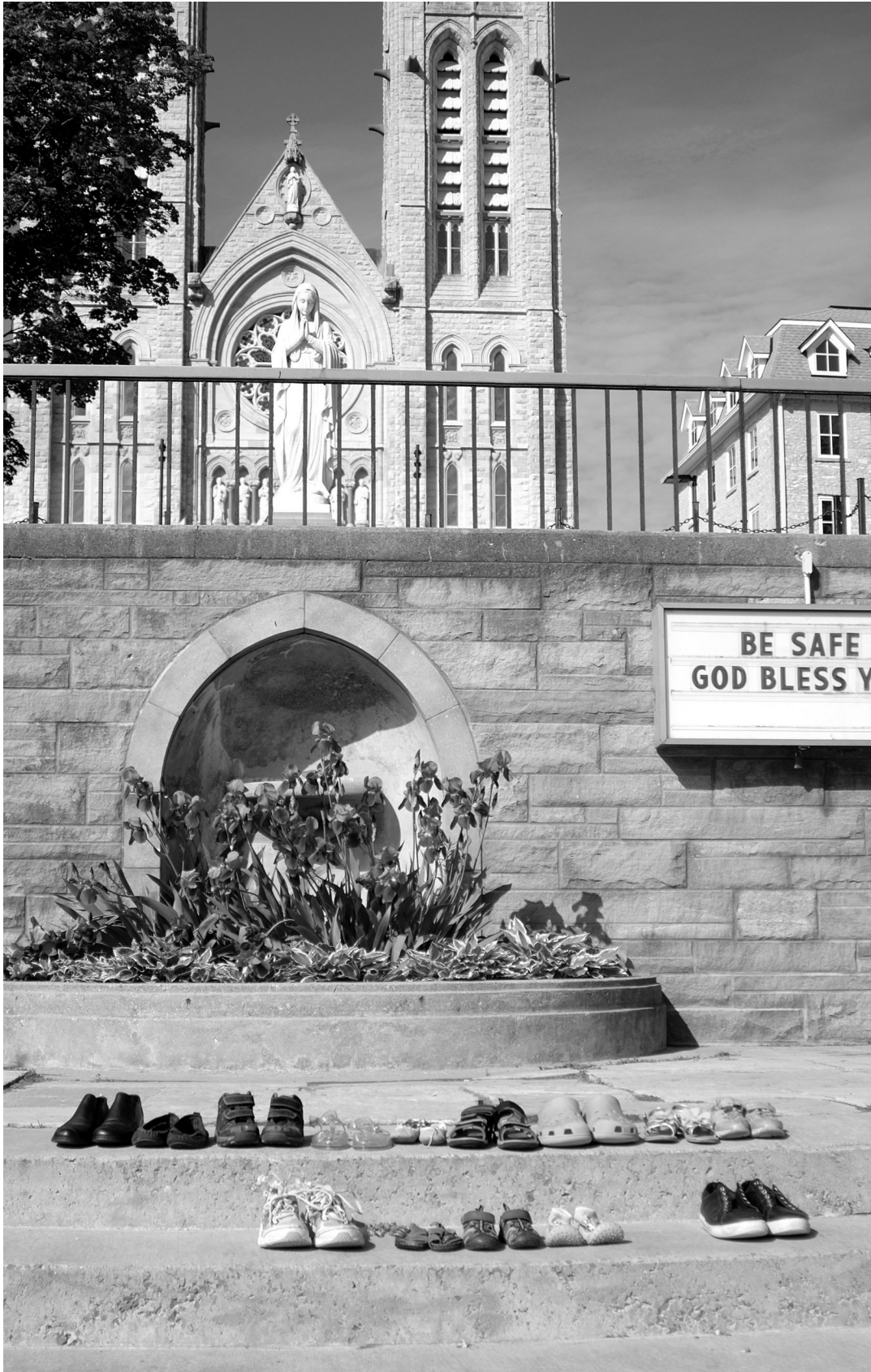




## Dogwood

Some kind of dogwood I think  
not having my phone  
in my hand  
I would have to put down the camera  
and pull out the internet  
to know for sure







## **Gordon/Norfolk Footbridge**

There is a footbridge  
from my old apartment  
on Northumberland  
to the Albion Hotel

How many times  
did I stagger across that bridge  
heading home after closing time

Wait, none  
That's a new bridge  
When did that happen









## Beside Macondo

The used book store  
where I used to hang out  
is no longer there

Then again  
neither is my library  
my thirty feet of books  
Most gone now  
replaced by a tablet

and Macondo is replaced  
by a bubble tea shop  
Being an easy walk  
from the farmer's market  
it will probably do well



## **New Trains for Old**

The doubled track  
was removed  
when everyone bought a car

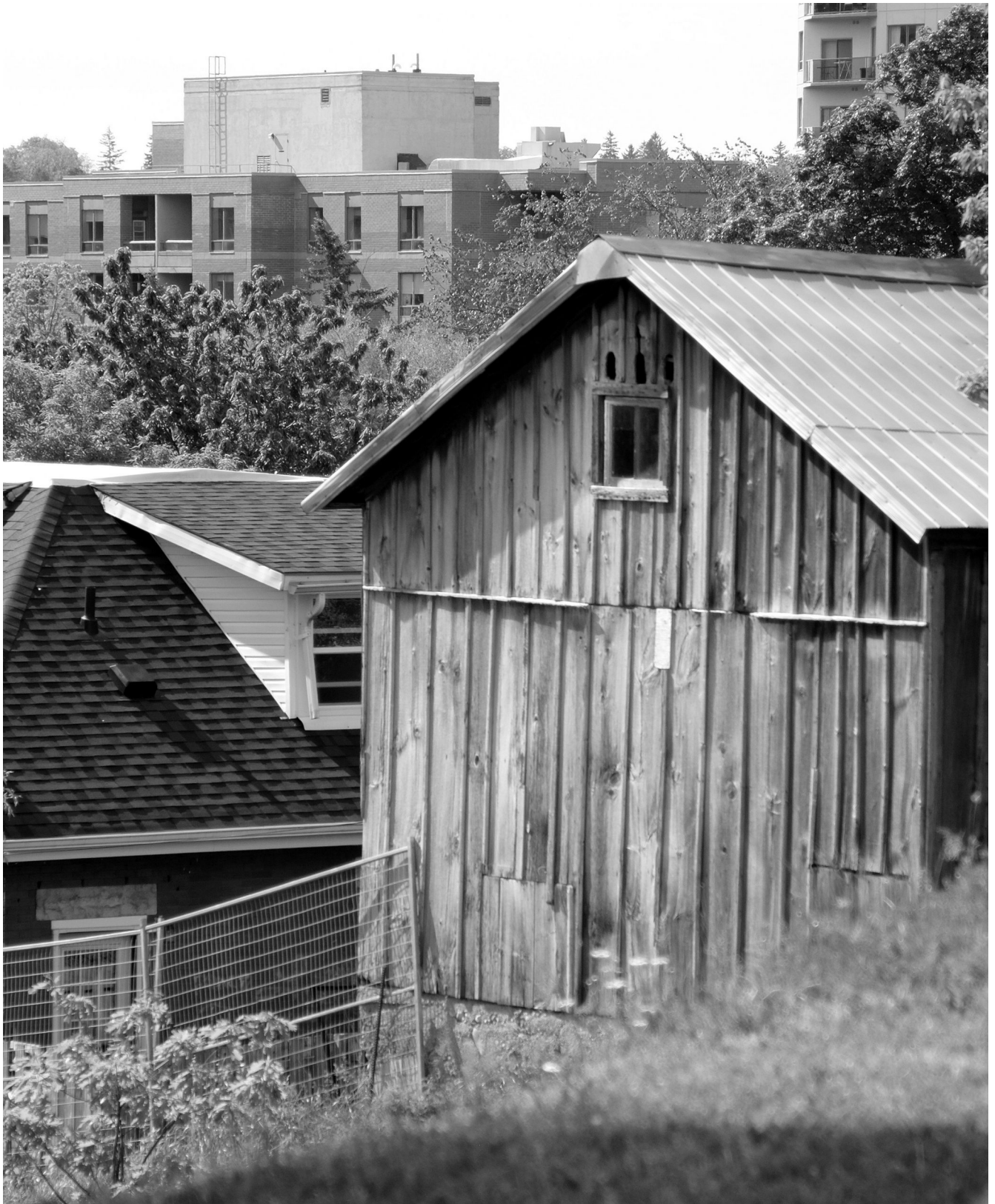
Now they are doubling the track  
so the commuter trains  
can run all day



## Copper Mine

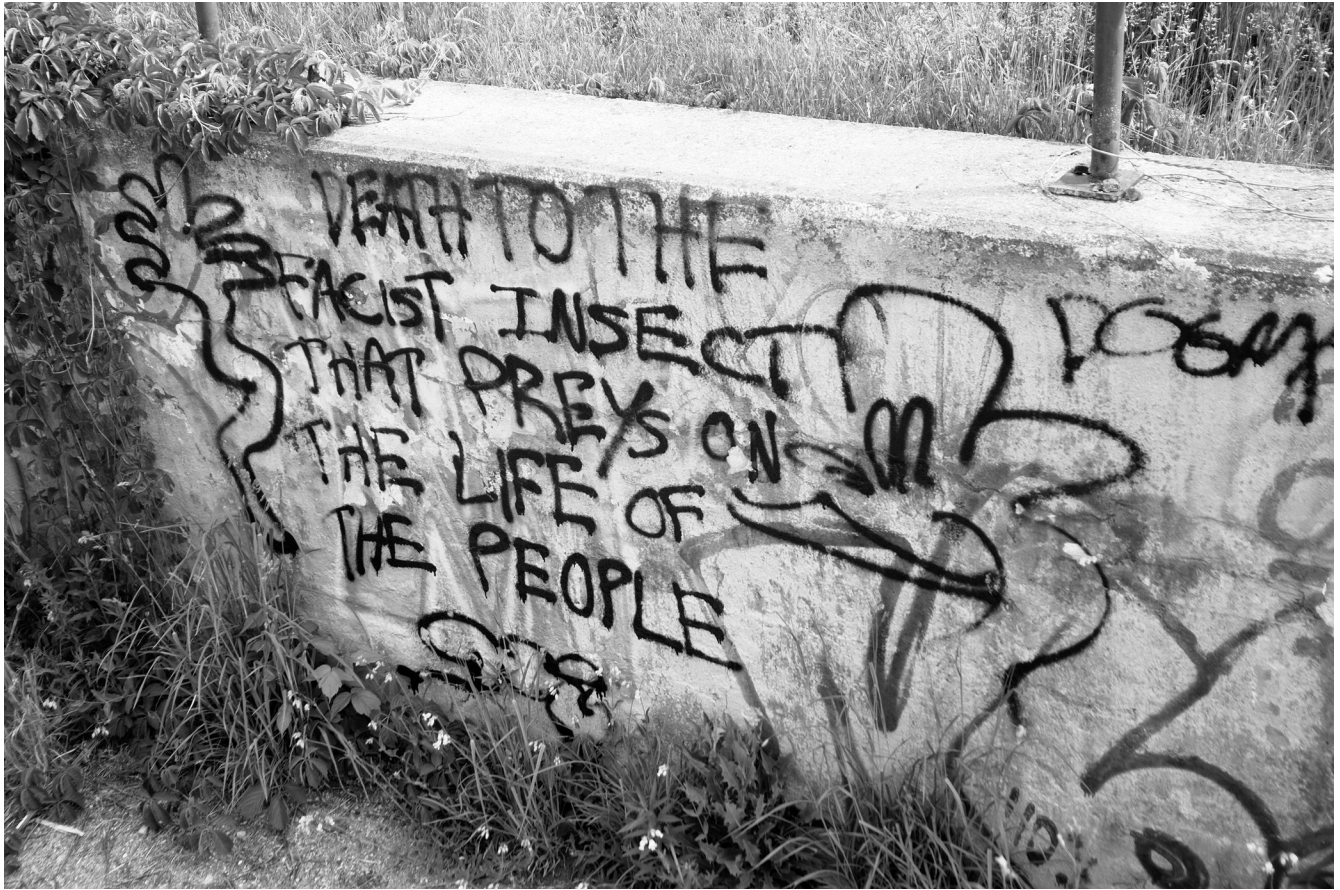
The telegraph poles  
with their glass insulators  
and their miles of copper line  
are slowly being stripped

The insulators are about five dollars  
at the antique store  
and the copper price fluctuates  
when it goes up  
the lines come down











## Our Lady

The Church of Our Lady  
is now the Basilica of Our Lady  
The name becoming harder  
while the congregation becomes smaller  
Easier to see  
is the loss of the sightlines  
once treasured in Guelph  
now covered with condos



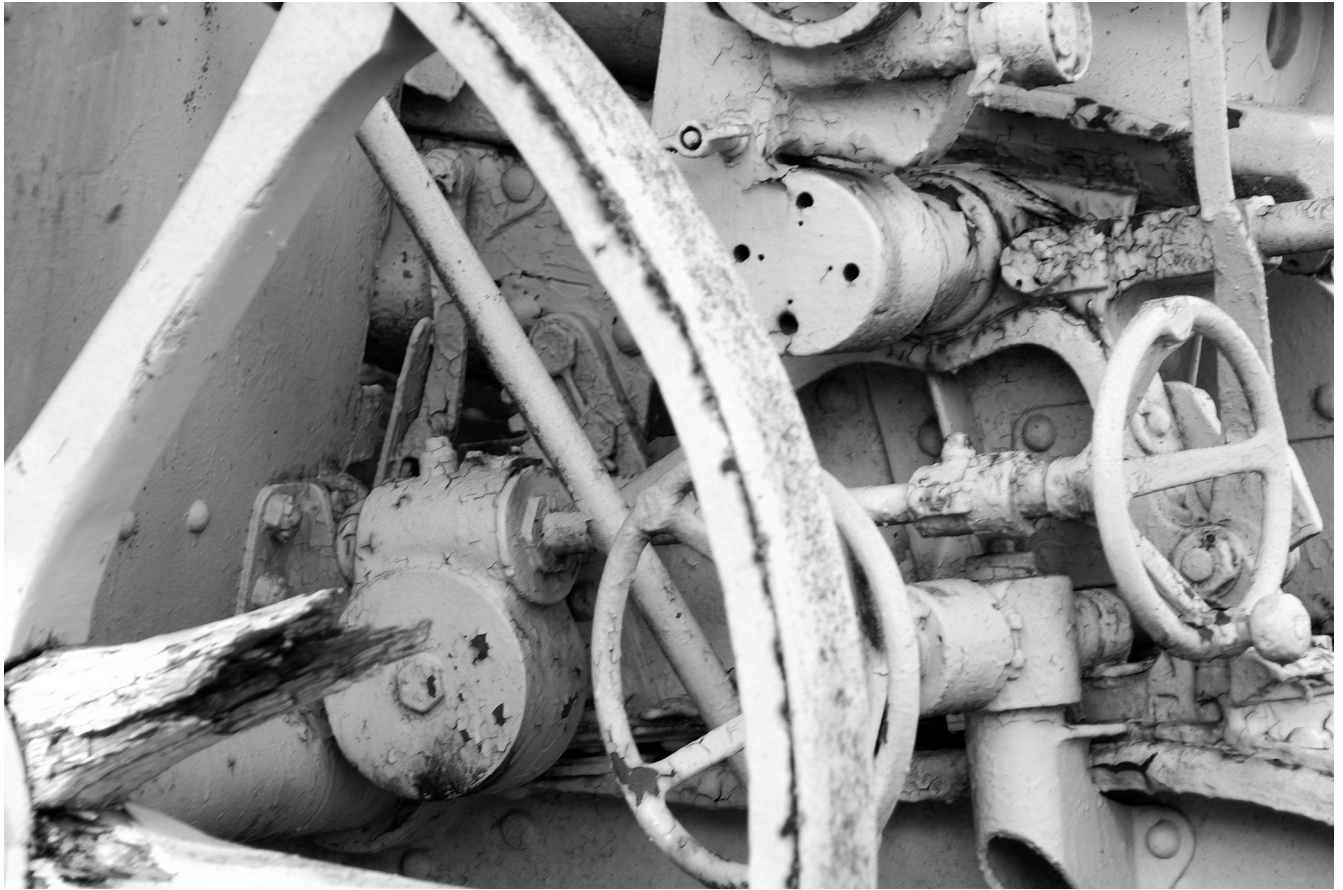




## Armoury

I'm sure if I asked  
someone would tell me where  
and when this gun came from  
Wooden wheels  
on such a carriage

Surely it's a monument  
although I've never seen it  
before





The place where Gordon becomes Norfolk





## Northumberland Apartment

Inside that dormer  
was my godfather's chair  
just the right height  
for me to sit  
and her to straddle the arms  
It was like sex in outer space

When she moved in  
she set up her bed  
in the sun-room  
When her mother came to visit  
she would go in  
to brush the dust  
from the covers

Beer floats for breakfast  
after long parties  
and once  
a dog wandered up the stairs  
and stayed for three days  
before wandering out again

She and I wandered out  
to our own apartment  
and were happy for a while  
until, inevitably  
I became an asshole  
What more can I say



## Via Rail

The national rail service  
all four cars  
and two engines  
I suspect the nice one out front  
was being pushed  
by the freight engine  
at the back

And new fences  
as the Toronto commuter rail  
wants to shut down four streets  
so they can accelerate faster  
to the next commuter town  
all in the name  
of easier trips  
to somewhere else





## Spur Line

This old town  
still has its own railway  
spur lines to industry  
inside the city

More and more of them  
becoming gravel trails  
for bikes  
and walkers

The old telegraph poles  
becoming overgrown  
When they disappear  
will our past follow







## Lauren

This might seem to be  
a portrait of me  
but, if the photographer  
takes a self-portrait  
with each snap  
Then this is a portrait  
of Lauren



# Arboretum







## Jacob's Ladder

See the little angels  
rise up, rise up  
only to fall  
from the rungs of the ladder  
that Jacob used  
to escape from Esau

Seems a lot to put  
on an old garden plant



## Dappled Sunlight

The sun through trees  
reaching down to the floor  
exploding off the leaves  
of the little ones  
trying to make it  
to the canopy



## Deadfall

No manicured garden this  
the dead left  
where they fall  
To dry out  
and become tinder

This is the wood  
of my youth  
uncared for



## **A Very 60s Sculpture**

There to greet me  
when I arrived at school  
this fibreglass example  
of forms  
grew unwanted  
by the admin building  
and is now here  
in the arboretum

“See we still display it  
it is still here”



## Sisters

Three roses  
No, too early for roses  
but three

Only one  
is hit by the sun  
only one claims  
the title

The others  
must wait their turn  
patiently  
the earth will move  
the sun will move





## Spray

Such a spray of blooms  
for a week or two  
and the rest of the year  
this bush is green  
In the winter, bare

What is this for  
you may ask  
why is it here in the garden

Once a year you remember  
as blossoms splash  
to cover the green  
with billows of white







## Zen Waves

A Japanese garden  
on a plot perhaps ten metres by ten  
But as large I suppose  
as many in Japan

A rock, a pool  
cherry trees around  
and raked gravel  
all running slightly to sea







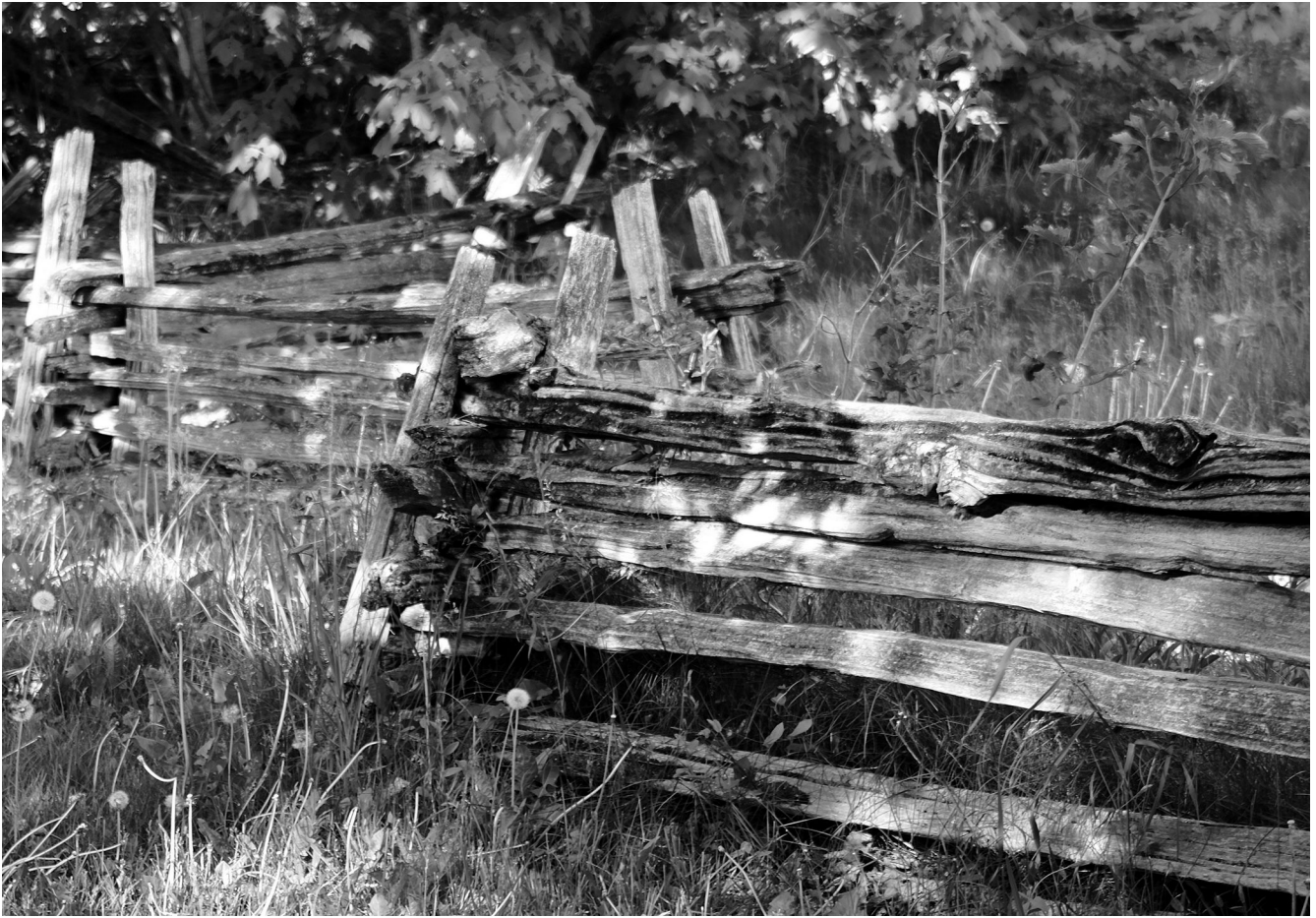


## Nature Raw

Here is our rock  
in our Japanese pool

A hole drilled  
through the middle  
and hidden piping  
turned up slightly high

Perhaps in response  
to the European garden  
all symmetry  
and spraying fountains  
close by



## Split Rail

Cedar fences  
wandering through the place  
no particular pattern  
certainly not left over  
from the farmland  
that once was here

But placed long ago  
so that they are weathering  
and collapsing nicely

This is what once was not  
and never will be again















## Park Bench

Some benches  
are more interesting than others

When you walk alone  
through the arboretum  
you can sit here  
and be embraced  
by growing things





## Ghibli Corner

I have no idea  
what these things are  
some sort of root exposure  
from the tree that spawned them

But to me  
they will always be  
some sort of Ghibli creature  
grown from trees

Can't you see their eyes  
beginning to open











## Jarring

In amongst the lists  
of the dead  
in the memorial forest  
is the gas pipeline  
The pressure valve  
and the shutoff

Not hidden  
painted blue and yellow  
almost natural  
beside the plastic flowers  
of the wreaths  
leaning against the plaques



## Walk

What can we do  
in a pandemic  
but walk

What can we do  
when we're old  
injured and sick  
but walk

To have a place to walk  
is precious

All around  
University land  
is being converted  
to houses, condos and plazas

This too  
will one day be worth  
more than walkers

So we walk while we can

# University





## Everyone Wins

Sport fields made  
for the students  
“they don’t use them”  
and so they are rented  
to the town

Overuse makes them useless mud  
and so  
in the name of the students  
plastic grass is laid down  
and now  
even more income  
from the rentals





## Out Of Touch

There is something to be said  
for grass  
newly cut  
so that it lies in lines  
across the field  
across the berm  
built to return the balls  
as they are hit, kicked or thrown  
out of touch



## Young Man's Lament

Chain link  
and ball mesh  
waiting to be raised

This is how I felt  
as a young man  
when life was forever  
and girls came along  
like a bus (every few minutes)

Oh let me be free  
Oh this freedom is lonely  
let me be captured once more



## Pathway

Here is your path  
laid out for you  
School, job, family  
Enjoy yourself  
when you retire

Not me you say  
I will avoid that  
I am not my father  
I will find my way out



## **The Great Fish**

Like a great fish  
surfacing behind a wave

Oh, no, just a new stair  
leading to nowhere  
leading to a lookout  
over the intramural soccer

I do miss the lakes



## **Waves**

Waves of cement  
climbing over grass swells

Beautiful

But I have no idea  
what they are  
They start at the bottom  
and go to the top

Does there need to be more







## East Residence

The sun rises in the east  
but I never saw it  
I was on the other side

I arrived in 1975  
and landed in this residence  
it was summer  
and I caught more sunsets  
than sunrises

Just 18  
Just out of high school  
early  
What an innocent young man  
What mistakes I made  
What thoughtless hurt

Barely able to understand  
where I was  
what I was meant to do  
I was a lost soul  
The worst kind

So many girls  
could have made me  
so much better  
But they had their own thing  
and seeing my faults  
was just too easy

Me, confused, bewildered  
I didn't see them  
except perhaps  
as one sees underwater





## **Empty Parking Lots**

Think of the lost revenue





## Worth the Extra

A great empty space  
of angles and ridges  
creating a lovely brow  
over the new entrance  
to an old building

Lipstick on a pig  
I think someone said  
but no, do not be unkind

The angles  
the lines  
the shadow  
a lovely minimalist  
photograph



## Sumac

I come from the land of Sumac  
hours south of here  
in the lands of sand  
the lands of the gully  
the mists that drop  
into the hollows

The afternoon air  
so humid  
so full of water  
that sharpness  
can't exist  
everything is seen  
as if through Vaseline  
on a lens





## What's Down There

Years ago  
with a cheap digital camera  
fixed focus  
I would shove it onto a grate  
or at a hole in a wall  
and take a picture  
to see what is there

Perhaps that was my University  
pressing my nose  
against the education  
just to see what was there

Did I find something  
Here I found leaves  
and trash  
Hopefully not a metaphor



## The Search for Answers

On one side  
I did the French Press  
and messed about with  
polymerase chain reactions

While on the other  
I did the bench press  
and messed about with  
martial fighting actions

Some sort of balance  
always seemed to work  
between the search for answers  
and, well, the search for answers







## Room 210

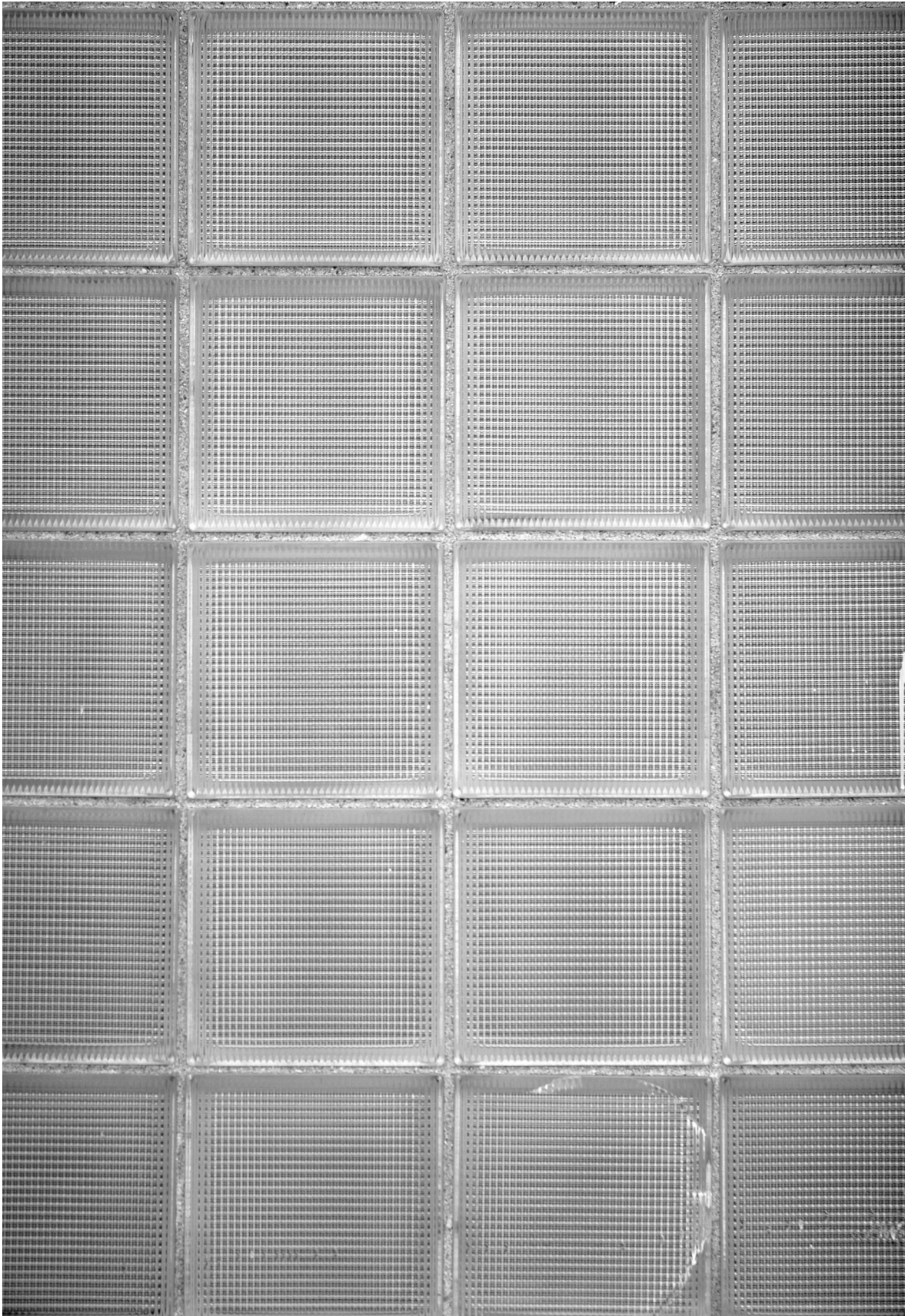
How many years  
did I spend  
looking out those upper windows  
while swinging a sword

After a while  
the windows were gone  
We need more offices  
and then the room itself  
We need more offices

It was the ideal space  
cold in the winter  
hot in the summer  
I even offered to buy  
an air conditioner

Now it's conditioned  
for all those offices  
that we needed











## Room 302

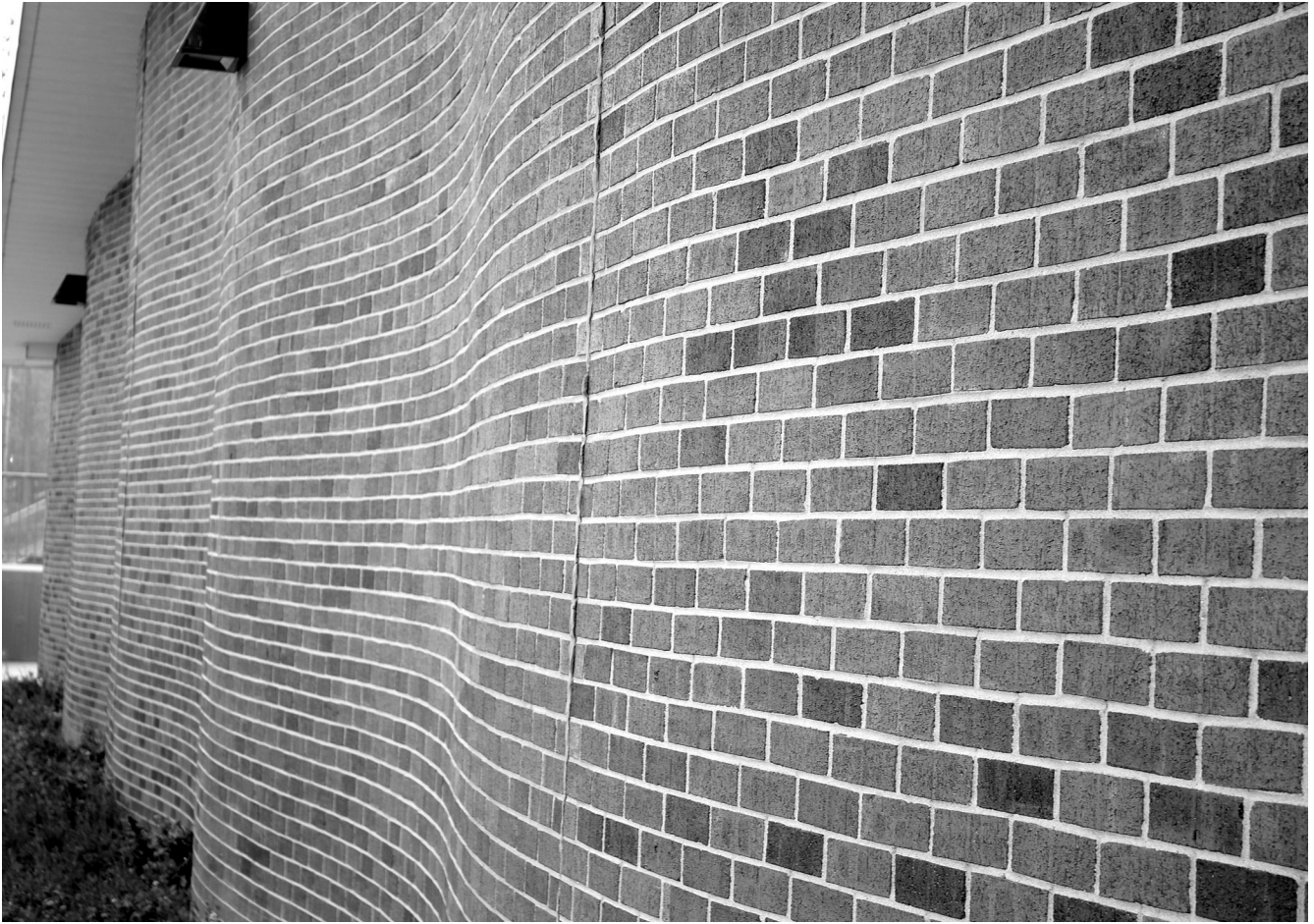
Up there to the right  
of the second floor  
is a flight of stairs  
to the third floor  
and just about  
the last dance studio

Where once we had enough  
the place was doubled  
and more in size  
and we lost those little rooms  
somewhere along the way  
to giant gymnasias  
and uni-purpose rooms

We swung our swords  
and our sticks  
for many years  
hanging on to the space  
hanging on to a few students  
just hanging on

Fingernails dug into the floor  
we resisted the fads  
the latest crazes  
in dance, in yoga  
and the latest, bestest  
way to do a situp





## Great Zimbabwe

A mile a day  
for many years  
while I worked across the street  
in Crop Science

A mile a day  
in the pool  
and I never knew  
that outside wall  
was wavy brick



## Powerhouse Lane

The heating stack  
the cooling towers  
and the generator

You would never think  
that the intellectual wonder  
of a University  
is based  
on such mundane foundations

But great minds need heat  
and light and hot water







## The Way Home

Down this brick walkway  
(ripped up and fenced off now)  
I used to walk  
from the Coffee Shop  
in the basement  
of Massey Hall  
(gone now these many years)  
To the tunnel  
under the road  
leading to East Residence and home  
(blocked off now)

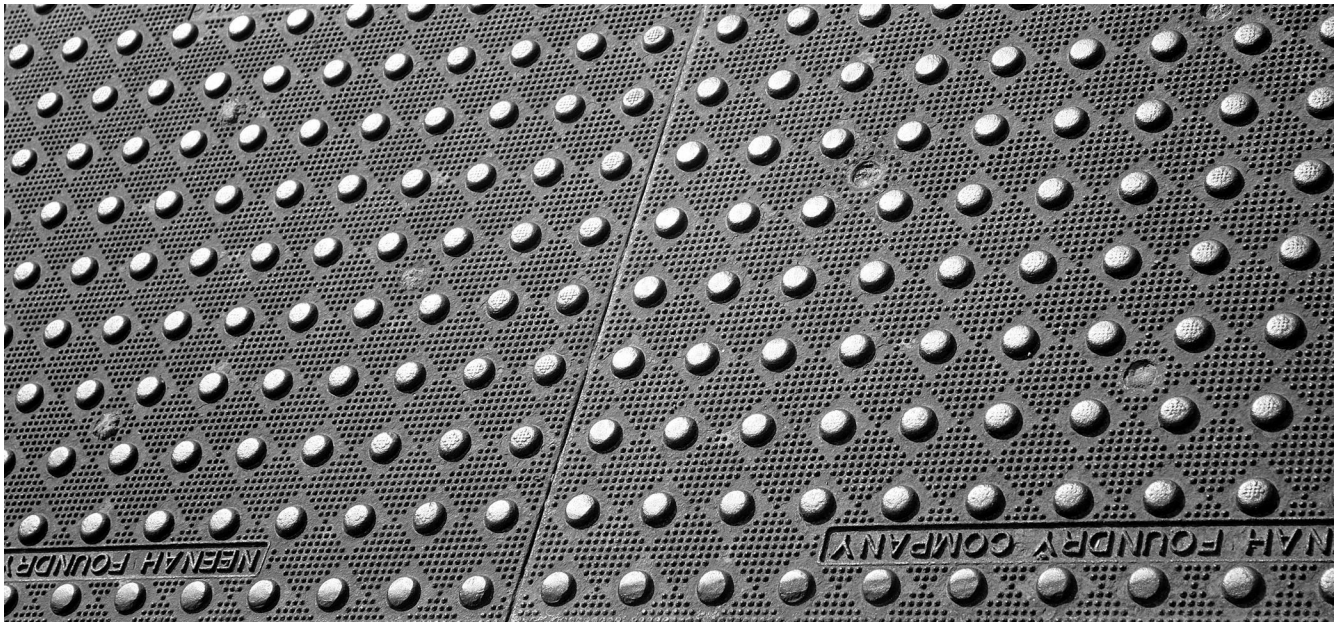
I'm not sure  
I could find my way home  
any more

Is there a home left  
anywhere but my memory  
Is there a place  
where I still sit in a basement  
drinking too much coffee  
napping on my coat  
and talking with friends

Is there a home left  
where I could cross the campus  
and the road  
without once risking my life  
to automobiles

Is there a home left  
where on my desk blotter  
was a phone number  
(written backward)  
I could call  
if I was lonely that night





## Rumble Strip

Beside each crosswalk  
they have installed  
a steel plate  
with knobs on

Some sort of safety  
rumble strip  
for running shoes



## Twenty Years Ago

Twenty years ago  
I found a line  
of bicycle racks  
making some sort  
of bullseye  
And with my Pentax SPII  
and Ilford HP4 film  
I took this shot

Today I took it again  
without a thought  
just aimed, focused  
and pressed the shutter  
I can't say  
that this shot  
for all the electronic wonders  
of twenty years  
is better





## After Class Rituals

The gallons of beer  
the pounds of chicken wings  
we bought upstairs  
in the arena

Those with jobs paid  
for those who had none  
that's the way it goes  
You pay it forward

But always someone  
would figure it out  
and order double  
Usually the rich ones



## Crop Science

So many years  
In Crop Science  
Sorting seed  
measuring proteins  
grinding and all the other  
lab things.

I wrote Basic programs  
for the data loggers  
along with a DOS game  
that turned up years later  
on a floppy disk of shareware







## Brutalist

Our brutalist buildings  
Such an embarrassment  
So '60s

Let us build otherwise  
our new buildings  
will be light, airy  
Full of decoration







## Gas Tanks

So many years  
I dealt with the gas tanks  
and the solvent stores  
in Animal Science

A lovely block room  
beside the elevator shaft  
but with a blast door  
leading to the loading dock





## Organic

The brutalism of Crop Science  
and the bricks of Soil Science  
Are knitted together  
by plantings  
perhaps originally done  
by Horticulture  
and designed by Landscape Architecture  
but maintained now  
by Grounds







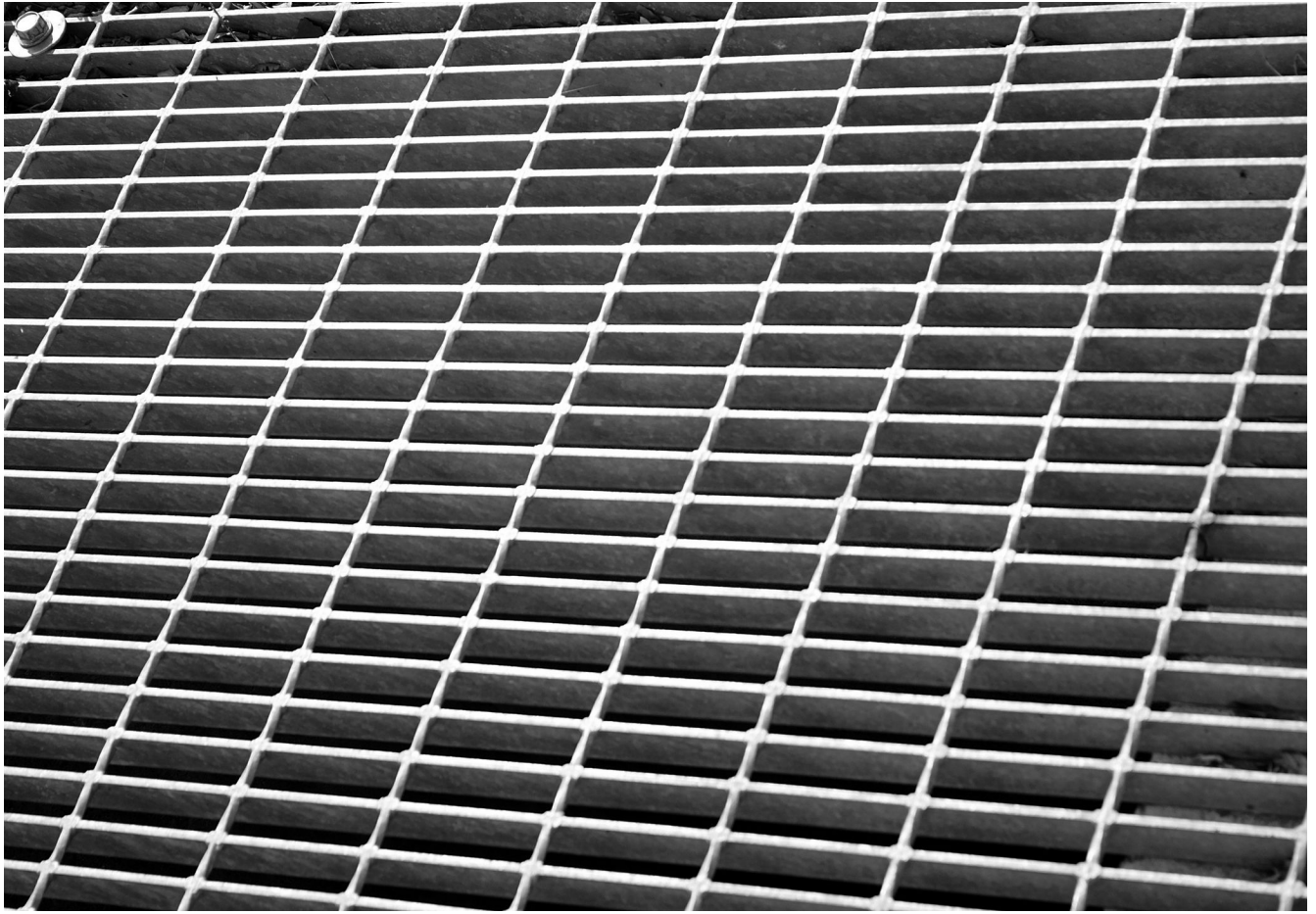




## The Bullring

Church tables and chairs  
and fights every Saturday  
I would sit against a wall  
and shove the fighters  
back into the centre  
with my foot  
When the bottles hit the wall  
it was time to go

Years later  
the place was open to four  
but stopped the booze at one  
Summer midnights we climbed the pole  
in our underwear  
and at four we went skinny dipping  
in the pond at the Arboretum





## Shademaster Locust

Soft dappled light  
hitting hard concrete











## Alumni House

A carriage house  
Horses and carriage  
for the President

Later a sheep barn  
left to rot  
on the edge of the Arboretum

Later still  
the Alumni House  
a centre for donations  
to the Auld Alma Mater









## Fragments of the Past

So much of my life  
is behind a closed door  
with iron strap hinges  
and cast iron latch

It comes back  
like glimpses through the cracks  
of a double hung door

Light beams across darkness  
showing bits and pieces  
shadows and glimpses  
Feelings  
Smells



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