

Porch Beginnings

Men and women in fatigues on route to the Armoury
didn't pique my attention, since I'd seen plenty of G.I. Joes.

Nor would Nicola and Anna, neighbours to my *Nonna*,
draw me from my toilet-paper-roll-binocular focus

on the sidewalk figures I followed. Long before
the log and audit of urban fieldwork became a job

that verandah, the full width of my grandparents thin Victorian
framed in brick and concrete, was my perfect first look out.

A natal playground where I nicknamed the mailman,
spied on the pigeon man (who cooed like the coop he kept),

or learned to trust my gut and refused the crossing guard—
when he'd stop to say *buon giorno* and invited me

(who knows where) with a grin that felt false
like a hallow's eve smirk scratched in a zucchini.

I was told not to stare, at a hunchback as he laboured
past at a turtle's pace—*è solo vecchio Nonna* said.

But I wouldn't stop. Observing was just becoming obsession.

Future Designer

I'm tasked to sketch the future
movement of buses. Engineer
arcs and radii and that right distance
for boarding and alighting passengers
not yet born. I stencil in vehicle
templates like toys and figurines.

I augur how walkers, cyclists and drivers
will one day travel and pass, a balance
of lane widths and time.

A tension of standards and desires
means I can't fit an hour for lunch
or catch my own train home at night.

But I draw with measured certainty concrete
curb cuts, ramps and sawtooth bus bays.

Office Tower Caretaker

Bus shelter sits beyond the property line
but I clean the waiting debris beneath its bench anyway.
Even hose, with a vintner's worn nose, the pigeon shit
patterned bases and piss that's fermented.

Some mornings the sidewalk's a collage of blobs:
spit still wet with snot, viscid relics of Rorschach-like vomit
or a rainbow of Skittles, some flattened, all scattered.
Postmodern hues and shapes I'll paint sense of later.

Daily I wipe the soiled sole prints from staff
stamping through the lobby as I happen to be mopping.
I put up with that and a boss who insist I wash
as the morning rush starts. Still, these floors are better

than the mall's or vacuuming carpeted cubicles.
I'm a journeyman of commercial buildings
and fond here of the fifteen foot Ken Christopher prairie
landscape that hovers above our welcome desk.

Long grass bending strokes show a strong breeze.
If I could only mimic that brushwork. If only
all my sweeping led to a muscle memory
that applied with my fine inks and oils.

I spend my days clearing and removing
and my nights layering and staining.
But cleaning is a cycle and dependent,
needs dirt like I need work.

Bus Driver

One bus driver disrupts
rush hour and the expectations
of the *bimmers* and *Benzs*,
with an arm out the window.

One bus driver risks delay
and the annoyed looks
of passengers, questioning
whether they know the way.

One bus driver avoids sounding
alarm, all for a jay walker
to saunter across
stalled traffic in peace.

One bus driver's pause
is empathy for someone
who has been given
little patience.

One bus driver's gesture
answers why this jay walker
shouldn't wait or make up
the distance to the crosswalk.

Notes to Fellow Soccer Coaches

Against seven year olds, you can strengthen your own ego playing keep away.

When the kids do laps, watch from the touchline taking drags from a cigarette.

No need to demo drills yourself. But if you must, toe bash even if you taught them not to.

Get a clipboard. You'll look more official with a stopwatch and *COACH* embossed on your coat.

Trust the tallest kids.
Who needs finesse if you've got brute kicking distance.

If you've coached hockey, the basics of any game with a net are the same.

As they get older, increase the machismo and jokes to denote you're in charge

for example *you're a good kid so why does everyone hate you?*