

After 40 Years

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In my poetry I often write autobiographically, always searching again and again for what lies behind the taken-for-granted, always hoping to be startled by the unfamiliar in the familiar.

After 40 Years
(for Lana)

you might expect 40 poems
each with 40 stanzas
composed in 40 lines

instead of this poem
cobbled together
in 40 quiet minutes

like a long breath
in the chaos of Las Vegas
where everybody is

somebody else, or
wants to be someplace
else, in other stories

while you and I
celebrate long love
knowing this gift

is granted, not
taken for granted,
received gladly

and while I have
scribbled this poem
in morning minutes

we have been revising
the poem for over
40 years, knowing how

the mystery of grammar
always holds us in process,
this story without end

how a life can hold
countless memories
in intimate moments

like neon lights in a Vegas
nightscape, defying all
simple interpretations

so all I know in this moment
expressed lightly in a poem
40 years in the making

is how in all of Las Vegas
with its memories of meadows
and tribute bands and magicians

Celine Dion and Elton John
Cirque de Soleil acrobatics
and casino promises of fortune

I know with joy our love story
defies illusions and delusions
rooted in the heart's measure

and lying on the pool deck
in the Vegas summer sun,
side by side, your pink bikini

reminds me this poem
is always full of surprises
like the story is just beginning

after 40 years, you
are the one who breathes
in this poem & all the poems

Bio

Carl Leggo is Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia, Canada. His research interests include: life writing, a/r/tography, narrative inquiry, poetic inquiry, creative writing, contemplative practices, and arts-based research. His books include: *Growing Up Perpendicular on the Side of a Hill*; *Come-By-Chance*; *Teaching to Wonder: Responding to Poetry in the Secondary Classroom*; *Lifewriting as Literary Métissage and an Ethos for Our Times* (co-authored with Erika Hasebe-Ludt and Cynthia Chambers); and *Sailing in a Concrete Boat*.