

Perfect

by Swanson Tudor

Perfect

A Saturday afternoon, all sun, no humidity
where people dream of hiking
looking forward later
to a little chilled wine, cold pasta salad
an afternoon for me to walk three short blocks
to sit beside Arthur at the bar
and after a while he talked about his poetry
in the angry resigned way
he talked we talked about disappointments collected
and held close to our spleen
a soccer game lingered on the television, not enough
to distract me the tiny figures
running and stopping across the huge field. I only know
Galeano's little book of the past
with Montevideo, Sao Paulo; when they caroused all night
into the early morning hours
the next day in the midst of hangovers spitting phlegm
on the muddy tracks of grass
making those spectacular goals to keep them from going back
to the docks, factories and mines that always wait
Arthur was on a roll, champion
of the simple stanza with heart
versus depraved witty sestina
and the subtle class war of the writing
workshops; it called for me to add a little diplomacy
for argument's sake
but I had skipped breakfast and was already
feeling the beer so I asked Arthur
what he thought of the two women
sitting together at a back table
as he explained to me that one was a neighbor, who had

never spoken to him in three years
I watched us through the bar mirror most of Arthur's face
obscured by a bottle of something blue
our hour long story unfolding, without an ending of note

I would be the first to leave
gathering up my cigarettes and lighter half standing waiting
for him to recognize my departure

I glanced toward the back table before opening the door
onto a perfect afternoon.

