

A Country's Just a Place

**a book of poems
by Willie Watson**

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also by Willie Watson:

Everyday's a Butterfly

Rheets 2019

Cup of Tea

The Quest for Enlightenment and Stuff

Rheets 2018

Paradox

Rheets 2017

Wild Pigs of Fukushima

The Meaning of Life in Easy English

Rheets 2016

Geology

Rheets 2015

The Shit Guru (An Expat's Story)

Rheets 2014

Pink Snow

155 Sonnets

Rheets

Twoems

Uncle Willie's Very Silly Animal Poems

The This of the That

Tarot Poems (with Marie Brožová)

The Alchemist's Notebook

Four Syllables on Water

The Guru Kalehuru and Other Poems

Poems from Prague

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Introduction

This is an introduction. I am introducing you, dear reader, to my most recent book of poetry, and I am introducing my newest book of poetry to you, my dear reader. You may take a moment to look at each other, smile, and shake hands or whatever the metaphorical equivalent is when you are holding a new book.

It is a very likeable book, has a good sense of humor, and I'm confident you will have a lot in common and get along very well.

The book's name is 'A Country is Just a Place' because that is the name of one of the poems in the book and it's one of my favorites. Poems are not like children. A writer can have a favorite.

For one thing, it was an easy poem to write. Once I had the general idea, the words just started to fall into place. I like it when that happens. As a writer, I'm kind of a lazy person. Also, when I read it at a poetry reading, it was received very well. Of course, you always get a bit of polite applause, but I've been doing this long enough that I can tell when an audience has stopped listening, and I'm fairly sure that in this case they hadn't. So, I liked it, at least one random audience didn't hate it, and now I want you to like it, too.

More importantly than that, I like it because it is an important subject, something that poets and other writers, musicians and artists should be addressing, again and again and again, in as many different ways as possible. The idea is that all human beings on Earth are human beings on Earth together, and we need to work together and love each other and transcend the stupider aspects of our human civilization, which dictate that people shall live in separate nations,

divided and suspicious, instead of in glorious harmony and peace.

There are plenty of other poems in this book, of course, 66 of them, in fact. Some are short and a bit silly – I don't stay up nights worrying about the sexual habits of eels, or the differences between species of honeybees, for instance, and the poem about Wallaroos had no greater point than that Wallaroos are actually a kind of animal that exists. Some, like *Emerging Patterns*, *I Wish I Were*, and *Skinsuits*, are more serious, and I hope quite enlightening. Maybe that's giving myself too much credit as a writer, but I found them enlightening and hope you will, too. Most, as with any collection of anything, are somewhere in the middle.

As usual, my lovely wife Helena has been indispensable in putting this book together and putting it out there. She is the best.

Willie Watson

A Country's Just a Place

I love ice cream and apple pie
a burger or a steak
soft white clouds, a clear blue sky
a summer by the lake
I love the look of wonder
on a little child's face
but do I love my country?
a country's just a place

I love majestic mountains
and rivers flowing free
that go on and on forever
and I love the deep blue sea
I love the flowers and the trees
I love all things that grow
I love the stars up in the sky
but countries come and go

I love to hear great music
I love to sing and dance
I love the sound of laughter
and the feeling of romance
I love my friends and family
the way they make me feel
but do I love my country?
countries are not real

There would be no need for conflict
for armies and for war
If people loved their countries less
and other people more

Trigger

The sound of coffee being poured
makes me want to pee
that's what's called a 'trigger mechanism'
in psychology

What's on our Minds

We may have fewer songs of love
but lots more songs about sex
though in a way this might be sad
it's about what you'd expect
The lack of lovely love songs isn't
that hard to explain
it's because we've all got booty on the brain

Stew

**All generations
just like all nations
religions, professions
and ethnic groups
all have their fair share
of both good and bad people
different ingredients
in the same soup**

Wallaroos

**There are kangaroos and wallabies
and then there's wallaroos
which are, at least in size
about halfway between the two
we saw a few of them today
while strolling through the zoo
Lovely, lovely, lovely wallaroos**

Sense of Paradise

**We have two eyes with which to see
the beauty all around
We have two ears with which to hear
the music and the sound
We can smell the blooming lilacs
We can taste the pumpkin pie
and when we touch another person
sparks begin to fly
We wander and we search and we
refuse to understand
That, as long as we're alive,
we're in the promised land**

Utopia or Oblivion

We are where we are
on the scale of evolution
and we can't see near as far
as some fine day
we just might be
But for now, but for now
but for now we'll keep on going
unless we self-implode
which is
a possibility

The World Beyond Our Senses

**We see, we hear
we smell, we taste
we touch, oh yes, we touch
and with these senses
we perceive
the universe as much...
...as much as we are capable
within these limitations
for all that is beyond that
we have imagination**

Emerging Patterns

**Mental Acuity
may be essential
In many careers and
diverse situations
but rivers keep flowing
the grass keeps on growing
They don't owe anyone
an explanation**

**All that preceded us
None of that needed us
That's just the culture
Like yoghurt, we grew in
From which we've evolved into
Sentient monsters
Who shamble around and
Don't know what we're doing**

**But we have consciousness
Now we have consciousness
No matter that it is no
More than mutation
Now that we have it
We need it, we crave it
And it's the foundation
Of civilization**

The world all around us
The sky and the ocean
Perpetual motion
A warm, summer breeze
The sweet blood of maples
We pour on our pancakes
The sheep in the meadows
The birds in the trees

Hydrogen, Oxygen,
Sodium, Nitrogen
all are a part of an
overall pattern
which can be seen
everywhere in the universe
gravity's there in the
rings around Saturn

Patterns of planets and
Patterns of butterflies
Patterns of lakes, and
Rivers and streams that are
All just a part of the
Physical universe
which forms the background for
all of our dreams

Patterns of weather and
patterns of traffic, the
streets of the cities, of
commerce and crime
patterns of politics,
patterns of history
can all be charted through
space and through time

Existence is energy
Energy, matter
Then somehow a spark and
Voila! Life emerges
Growth and desire, the
Passion and fire
Our great aspirations
And primary urges

The sweet evolution
which led to the trilobites,
dinosaurs, carnivores
people, eventually
it is a tale of
Increasing complexity
But, there are patterns
which make it quite plain

Because we've evolved
to a state of existence
That's more than subsistence
We now have a brain
To absorb information
Which we can then analyze
Then we hypothesize
How to explain

In the beginning we
Had myths and stories
Of spirits who lived in
The trees and the rocks
we were just guessing
but kept on progressing
Though new information
Still comes as a shock

It's all a part of the
great jigsaw puzzle which
May take us millions of
Years to complete as we
all are inside of it
we can't deny that that
Truly would be an
Incredible feat

**If we could talk to the
extraterrestrials
who live in spaceships that
roam through the galaxies
we would gain insight, and
knowledge and wisdom
we'd be disposed of a
lot of our fallacies**

**Further and further out
Into the cosmos, that
Vast, empty space where
We're traveling blind
We're also moving
The other direction
Deeper and deeper
Inside our own minds**

**Our billions of minds, each
Unique as a snowflake
The stripes on a zebra
A fingerprint's whorl
each one distinct with
its different perceptions
Of all we've experienced
Here in this world, but**

We're drifting, like bubbles
apart from each other
Each human existence
Is lonely and strange
But the more we are learning
The more there's a yearning
For something, for something
To radically change

It's coming, it's coming
there's something that's coming
There's something that's forming
About to be born
This curtain of darkness
Blanket of ignorance
Veil of deception's
About to be torn

There is a galaxy
There is a universe
There is a world inside
Each of our minds that is
active and vibrant and
constantly changing, so
once we start looking
Who knows what we'll find

L'être et le Néant

**Nothing is something
that we can't conceptualize
Nothing is something
that doesn't exist
Cogito Ergo something or other
but the reverse is
too much of a twist**

The Lack of Preparation for a Hypothetical Situation

**If I should see
a cow in a tree
I do not know what I would do
I have no plan
for that situation
nor, I imagine, do you**

Vision of Liptovska Mara

The lake appears
between the trees
the rippling blue
that's almost gray
and dappled with
the sun's gold rays
a portal to
another world
on a lovely
summer day

Precedence

We bitch about bacteria
we moan, we swear, we curse
but, as far as life on Earth
they existed first

You Know it's True

**At some point in our petty lives
most of us have thought, or said
the world would be a better place
if everyone I hate was dead**

Maternal Instinct

**The mama bird digests her food
then vomits it back out
right into her hungry baby's
greedy, open mouth
That might seem off-putting,
gross, disgusting and absurd
but it's an act of love
if you're a bird**

The High Front Porch of the Mind

**The eyes are the high front porch of the mind
where we sit in a high-backed wicker chair
late on a summer afternoon
in the slowly cooling air**

**Across the lawn and picket fence
a tree lined residential street
and on the sidewalk, people pass
and thus, the circuit is complete**

**and everything we see is seen
and all that can be seen, we see
and every image of the world
is entered in our memory**

**We do not seek, but still we find
the eyes are the high front porch of the mind**

Green, Limited

**The trees that once formed mighty forests
continents across
In city parks now line the lanes
where we can go to ease the strain
of living in our modern world
but, still, it is a loss**

UAF

**Alas, the unknown artist's fate
is failure to communicate**

Ruminations on the Self-Awareness of Animals

**Cats and dogs do not keep kosher
cats and dogs do not speak English
and, in fact, they're unaware
that humans don't all talk the same
They can't read
and have no concept
of our world of shame and blame**

**Birds do not observe our borders
understand our social order
they just fly, until they find
some thing to eat, or place to land
Still, their lives
are quite complete
and they don't need to understand**

**They live in the same world we do
feel the wind and hear the thunder
drink the rain and see the sun
the moon, the sky of brilliant stars
Yet, I wonder, yes, I wonder
if they wonder what they are**

We Always Live in Unusual Times

**The pattern is continuous
so it should not seem strange
the only constant in our lives
is that things always change
we can't go back to normal
and we never will because
there's no such thing as normal
and, in fact, there never was**

A Meteorological Observation

**Spring's great triumph, Winter's fail:
It looks like snow, but it's only hail**

Covid Paranoia

**Tyger, Tyger in the zoo
Covid-19 got to you
I thought William Blake was clever
Now, you're scarier than ever**

Poems and Dreams

**Poems are like dreams
they fade from our memory
once they're exposed
to the glare of reality
sweet revelation
is ready and waiting
just out of our grasp
and it's so damn frustrating**

The Key to the Future

**Imagination only goes so far
it cannot change the way things really are
But, what it can change, for all to see
Is the way that things are going to be**

The Birth of Autumn

**Autumn is a feeling in the air
summer, summer, summer
and then suddenly it's there**

GIGO

**I fear as we evolve into
one great, collective mind
what's once connected
cannot be unstuck
based on input information
there is every indication
it will be
schizophrenic
as fuck**

How to Spot Fake News

**When someone says 'some sources say'
it irritates my ear
and makes me skeptical about
what I'm about to hear**

The Limitations of Meditation

**It feels great
to meditate
to clear your mind
to cleanse your soul
to BE in an enlightened state
where all is one
if that's your goal**

**to shed your worries
and your cares
and to fully realize
that there is beauty
everywhere
and then you
open up your eyes
and the shit on the sidewalk
is still there**

A Biological Conundrum

**Though we may wonder, what's the deal?
Somehow, the male and female eel
have for each other, great appeal
and so, somehow, they mate
they do not do like humans do
fuck, or hump, or shag, or screw
I guess they have a thing that's new
and yet, they procreate**

Free Will vs. Pre-Determination in H₂O

**The droplets of water
all sparkle and dance
as the laws of physics
leave nothing to chance**

VBNMW

V is the vegetables we're told to eat
O is Oh, no, I would like something sweet
T is tough titty, you'll eat what you're told
E even though they are tasteless and cold

ET's Intent

**What is the aliens' intent?
That remains unknown
They might kill us or ignore us
or they might leave us alone
If they walk across the Earth,
how many will resist?
But, for now, we still don't even
know that they exist**

On Reading of a Shipwreck Discovered off the Coast of Norway

**Ships have been sinking
since there have been ships
for many thousands of years
they lie beneath
the ocean's depths
made up of widow's tears
From a million raging tempests
through accidents and war
human history is preserved
upon the ocean's floor**

The Proposed Addition to Invalidovna

**I look at modern architecture
but I don't understand
why they build such ugly buildings
just because they can
they're not in tune with nature
or most normal neighborhoods
just because they can be built
doesn't mean they should**

Grammar Tip

**As to spelling and to grammar
here's a helpful hint
there're things we say while speaking
that look kind of dumb in print**

Serious Poets

**Serious poets don't like my poems,
they lack a certain gravity
but I keep writing anyway
a sign of my depravity**

Everything Contains its Opposite

**What Sartre said was just half true
Le paradis, c'est les autres, too**

The Ubiquity of Art

**It's one of humanity's basic urges
Wherever we are, there art emerges**

Did Hallucinogens Play a Role in the Origin of Religion?

When our primitive, primitive brains
find something they cannot explain
they don't recoil, or refrain
instead they dive right in
mythology, theology, and lots of wild speculation
are all tools that we've employed
in our investigations

We've had visions, insights, hunches
and sudden inspirations
our thoughts will go wherever they may
and in their peregrinations
they've led us everywhere we've been
our current situation

Is one of great anxiety
and self-examination
and some look back and think
"Religion was an aberration
perhaps we ate some mushrooms
and just had hallucinations"

I hear these things,
it somehow seems to me
a weak attempt at a late apology
Sure, we were wrong
and often we've been bad
but we did the best we could
with what we had

The Right Time and Place

**There are poems to write of autumn
when the leaves fall to the ground
there are poems to write of winter
when the snow absorbs the sound
there are poems to write of springtime
when our thoughts all turn to love
there are poems to write in the summer
when the sun shines bright above
there are poems to write in the morning
there are poems to write at night
at any time, and any place
there are poems to write**

Conformity

**In my youth, I tried to not conform
I had long hair, I let my freak flag fly
we felt that we were riders on the storm
and yet, we have grown older, by and by**

**Now, my great desire is to fit in
but, old habits do not want to die
I wouldn't even know where to begin
I can't conform, no matter how I try**

The Inherent Limit of Capitalism

**We have to save the planet
at least we have to try
if capitalism can't reform
then capitalism must die**

The Omnipresent Temple

If God is present everywhere
as Christians tend to say
why would you need a church at all
to have a place to pray?
The spirit of the universe
is in the fields and trees
You can't get closer to it
just by being on your knees
or if you're facing Mecca
or you wear a silly hat
or abstain from pork and seafood
or anything like that
a wander through the forest
or a stroll beside the sea
will serve the spirit just as well
and it is all for free

Existence Precedes Consciousness

We have minds
which have evolved
when problems needed
to be solved
exploring
everything we'd see
creating
new realities
but the world
and all of it's physical laws
with all of its beauty
and all of its flaws
matter, energy, animus
all of it preceded us

Why Not?

**Some people see things just the way they are
Their world is simple, but it's kind of dull
Others see the way the world could be
a million different possibilities
realities within reality
the past, the future, and the fantasy
Their existence is more interesting, by far
harder, more complex, but far more full**

A Comment on Public Education

**It seems our schools are not designed
to inspire growing minds
but more, to get us to conform
to the dull, incurious norm**

The Order of Things

Things happen after other things
according to physical laws
and it's correct
that cause and effect
means that every effect has a cause
In science and engineering
every piece must play its part
but non-sequiturs are permissible
in art

Singles

Single women, single men
married, divorced
and single again
It's all mathematical
part of the plan
for each single woman
a single man

Nostalgia is Bullshit

**We all tend to miss the past
that's just nostalgia for our youth
The truth is nothing ever lasts
and the past was not that great.
We didn't have the internet
or even mobile phones as yet
but there was lots of bigotry
and poverty, and hate.
The sun that rises also sets
and time goes on and on and yet
its image fades
like finger drawings on a misty glass.
The opiate of time blots out
so much anxiety and doubt,
at least we know the time
that we're in now will also pass**

How They Come

Some poems come quick
some poems come slow
where they come from
I don't know

Retention of an Illusion

By the hands of what hand
will you hold this thought?
on waking from a dream
the sounds and the sights that come in the night
are never as real as they seem

I Wish I Were

**I wish I were a wisp of cloud
drifting through the atmosphere
and I could see the farms and cities
all laid out so neat and clear**

**I'd mingle with the other clouds
that I would pass along the way
and we would grow to fluffy white
and then to calm and silent gray**

**Darker, darker, darker still
until all doubt has disappeared
the tension builds, the tension builds
till lightning bolts shoot out like spears**

**and then we'd fall as drops of rain
to touch the flowers and the trees
and form the streams that cross the plains
until we'd fill the mighty seas**

I wish I were a tiger
stalking, silent in the night
to feel the beating of his heart
and see with piercing sight

I wish I were the springtime
I wish I were the fall
so many different things to be
I'd like to be them all

To be the busy beaver
and to be the beaver's dam
to be as one with the universe
and yet....
I know I am

Cultural Appropriation

**In this world of many nations
languages, cuisines and fashions
art and music and traditions
some of which inspire great passion
all of which have their position
in the complex tapestry
of human cultural preservation
There are some who get all crazy
and react with indignation
if a thing from column A
a work of art, a recipe
should wander into column B
they jump up and down and shout
all full of righteous indignation
at this intolerable situation
Cultural Appropriation!
Personally, I disagree
it's good to cross the boundaries
and growth and change will never end
if we just let our cultures blend**

The Inherent Paradox of ‘Living in the Present’

**Try to stay in the present
and the present becomes the past
you’re either moving towards the future
or you are not going to last**

Bubbles and Rainbows

**Like bubbles, and rainbows,
and butterfly wings
poems can be quite ephemeral things**

Wow!

There are so many wows in a lifetime
There is so much wow in the world
Wow is whenever I walk down the street
and I notice a beautiful girl

and I'm sure that that works vice versa
and women are often the same
We also say wow for a three point shot
at the end of a very close game

Wow is a big bolt of lightning
that shatters the black night sky
Wow is a murmuration
of starlings as they fly

Wow is leaving the planet
and floating out in space
Wow is the wide-eyed innocent look
on a sweet, little baby's face

Wow is seeing a magic trick
and there's no way to figure out how
it was done, but it's fun
to live in a world
that's filled with so much wow

Brown

**Brown is a beautiful color
as a tone of skin
and brown is the color of autumn leaves
scattering in the wind
Translucent maple syrup
and the pancakes you pour it on, too
different shades of brown, of course
but both of them run true
Long, brown hair that shines in the sun
or deep and soulful eyes
lots of cows and horses
and delicious pumpkin pie
From the deep, polished brown of chestnuts
to the golden brown of toast
but, enough with the poop emojis, please
because that's just fucking gross**

Skinsuits

**We walk the Earth in suits of skin
And all the sights and all the sounds
Of this sweet world come rushing in
and the universe around**

**The dandelions in the spring
The yellow leaves that light the fall
the dogs who bark, the birds who sing
Applause that fills the hall**

**The tastes, the textures and the scents
reveal to us a world of bliss
an ice cream cone, a furry toy
A tender, loving kiss**

**Each sensation, we take in
and add it to the things we know
and so, our consciousness begins
and bit by bit it grows**

As in the underwater world
silently, beneath the storm
a grain of sand becomes a pearl
a new identity is formed

We learn to walk, we learn to talk
and then we toddle off to school
we find our place within the flock
we play the game, we learn the rules

We learn, and we experience
and everything is stored within
this vessel of expedience
this temporary suit of skin

and every one is quite distinct
as far apart as are two stars
the way we feel, the way we think
in essence, who we are

We walk the Earth in suits of skin
but what's important is within

In an Ideal World

**Bells should ring
and drums should pound
and trumpets boldly blare
sending out a joyous sound
and filling up the air**

**Pictures should be pretty
and flowers should smell sweet
and all the food upon your plate
should be good to eat**

**Teachers should instruct you
and doctors help you heal
and psychologists should tell you
why you feel the way you feel**

**Parents should be patient
and children should be good
and poetry, above all else
should be understood**

Books Abide

Upon the shelves, the books reside
while humans laugh, and eat, or drink
They calmly wait, the books abide
until we want to think

Indoor Snowman

The snowman on our balcony
isn't made of snow, you see
Perhaps that's less traditional
but, it's better
In spring, when other snowmen die
he'll still be standing high and dry
and the floor on which he stands
will not get any wetter

Windows

**Art and nature, nature and art
Sometimes they are one and the same
Every window that you pass
is also a picture's frame**

Blind Spot

**Nobody ever thinks they snore
because, of course, they are asleep
that's some kind of metaphor
don't know for what, but it sounds deep**

Vosnesenkiis

**Vosnesenkiis, if you please
these are truly awesome bees
with pockets in their knees for pollen
Just in case guests come a callin'**

On Reading of a Third Monolith, Discovered on a Hilltop in California

**A monolith's not hard to make
it has no moving parts
and thus, they are the latest craze
in guerilla art**

To a Somewhat Dicey Uber Driver

**When one person says that you're too stoned
it's very easy to leave them alone
and carry on, enjoy the day
it doesn't matter what they say**

**When two people say that you're too high
it's still not hard to ignore their cry
and whether or not they have a point
go ahead, smoke another joint**

**When three people say that you're too bombed
it gets a bit harder to just stay calm
their negativity's so misplaced
and you just want them out of your face**

**But if everyone thinks you're a total mess
perhaps it's time to reassess
perhaps this time you've gone too far
and you should not be driving the car!**

Mycorrhizza

**Trees are ancient
Trees are wise
and trees communicate
via the underground
mycorrhizza
that's made up of roots and fungi
all of life on Earth exists
in an interconnected state**

Twice Reflected Light

There is a warm and golden glow
on a silent, winter night
coming off the deep, white snow
a twice reflected light

The moon's a still and silent place
a lifeless rock, as dry as bone
hanging there in blackest space
emitting no light of its own

The lovely orb we see at night
the light reflected from the sun
is no less beautiful or bright
for knowing how it's done