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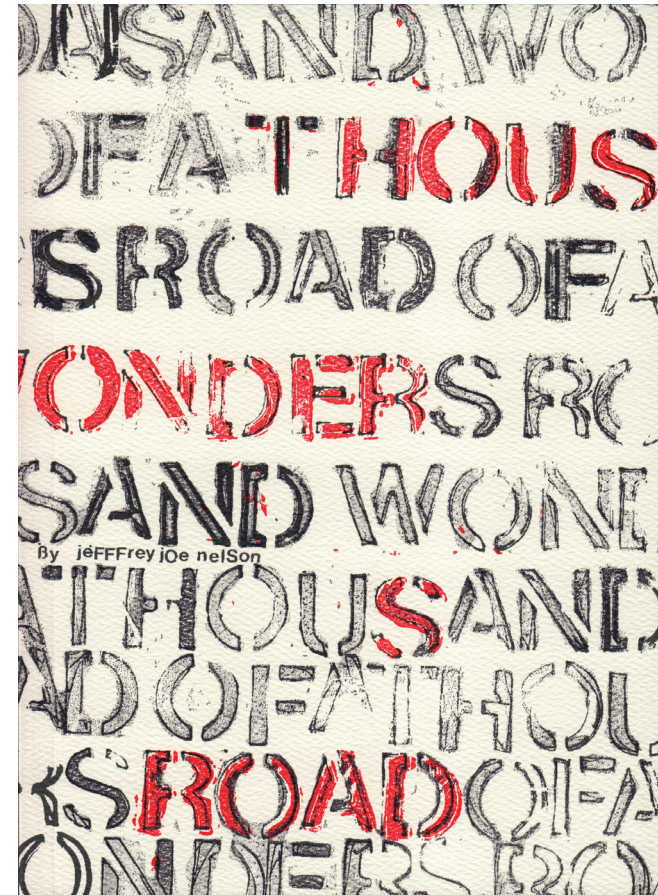
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# ROAD OF A THOUSAND WONDERS

Road of a  
Thousand  
Wonders

Jeffrey Joe Nelson

Ugly Duckling Presse  
Brooklyn, New York  
2011

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## Road of a Thousand Wonders

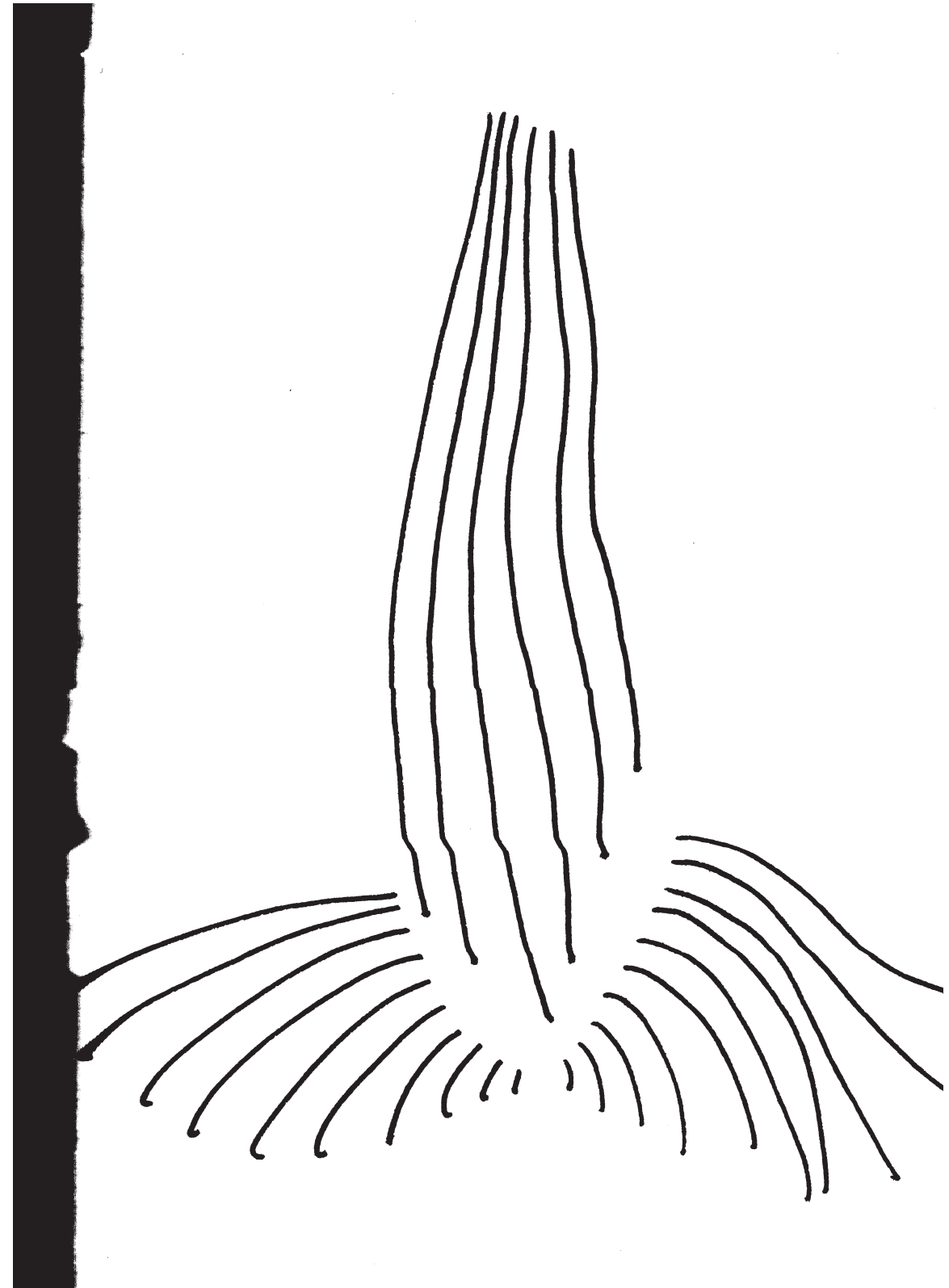
Convocation

Abierto

Abierto

Abierto

Sweet Nothings



## Sweet Nothing 1

Inside your legs  
A delicious amber

## Sweet Nothing 2

Blue,  
It is an eggshell blue  
Covering the sky today



### Sweet Nothing 3

You draw me out  
As if I were a ripcord  
Attached to a parachute  
About to explode

### Sweet Nothing 4

I'm not responsible  
I'm drunk, the tip of an iceberg  
Nudging me along  
It says, "scoot, scoot, scoot"  
So I move along  
Little by little  
& every time daylight hits me  
It sets off an alarm

## Sweet Nothing 5

Like a bird in a nest  
In a tree it doesn't know  
Because it doesn't need to know  
Because someday soon it'll leave  
& never come round again

## Sweet Nothing 6

Who's on the radio?

Me  
Twenty years ago  
A  
Confused teenager  
Unfurling my flag

## Sweet Nothing 7

Sometimes I have a daydream of nothing  
I dream of nothing, I see nothing  
I just sit there & stare at nothing

## Sweet Nothing 9

Ribs of water gleam  
Like a lizard's scales  
Caught in a moment of panic  
As it springs across my chest  
& scampers up the wall  
& your arm bearing a luxurious scent  
An odor half flower, half pheromone  
Trails down the length of my sternum  
To the rise & fall of my abdomen

## Sweet Nothing 12

A mantle of stunning azure  
So totally blue  
As to make me believe  
It has never been used before

## Sweet Nothing 14

Nowhere nearby  
Something's wrong

## Sweet Nothing 15

I can't wear hats no more  
I'm too warm  
The weather's too hot  
Like a suffocating glove  
Your arms are all over me

## Sweet Nothing 23

*for Neal Cassady*

When you're asleep  
Can you hear me passing out  
Along the rails

My head hits a tie  
Like a melon

Now I have no head

## Sweet Nothing 45

There is no other body  
Coming over tonight  
To lay you on the couch

## Sweet Nothing 46

Your heartbeat gets lost  
In the pulse of my mouth

## Sweet Nothing 48

*for Aram Saroyam*

sighlence

## Sweet Nothing 56

What is passion

Without caution

Fortitude

Without chicken-shit

Hypocrisy

Without cigarettes:

A nurse comes up to me

& asks me what I need

I tell her to give it to me

& she does

## Sweet Nothing 58

*for my father*

Hard road  
Dirt road  
Low road  
Yellow brick road  
Terror road  
Gold road  
Back road  
Black road  
Off road  
Steep road  
Slick road  
Flooded road  
Damaged road  
By road  
In road  
New road  
Bloody road  
Desert road  
Mountain road  
Dead end road

Scenic road  
Forked road  
Icy road  
Noh road  
Private road  
High road  
White road  
Out road  
Cross road  
Railroad  
Stage road  
One way road  
Closed road  
Country road  
Danger road  
Public road  
Whiskey road  
Open road  
Two lane road  
Wide road  
Broken road  
Lost road  
Endless road



Everybody is Happy

## The Coach Poems



## Coach Poem for Fil

It's time to break up into teams.  
There's no time for brushing your teeth  
or washing your feet.  
The snow is falling.  
The owls are nesting.  
Sleep with your balls  
in your hands.

## Snow Is a Lot of Work

*a collaboration with Filip Marinovich*

Snow is a lot of work  
  
walking sexually  
  
hard surfaced  
  
a weird synthesis of angles & confection  
  
I like that it is different  
  
the lyrical narrative takes me  
  
you need to find what you want to say  
  
to hammer them down  
  
pretty much just tightening  
  
hardly anything is alive

that I want to keep

have you selected other eyes

there's no leap

there's got to be breath

do you know that book

broke me open

I've just been thinking

it's terribly arrogant not to see

the boundaries set

the whole debate

isn't completely individual

like the Williams' poem

with the old lady

you've got to understand

like the schoolgirls who run home

after dark

the snow is falling

& the snow is a lot of work

James in Indiana

Anna in Red Hook

Creeley not dead

lush rhetoric

no, even Ashbery

I still feel

speaking from a personal face

a ventriloquist act of sorts

how Ted B. says

Some trees stand above the rest

something about brilliant oranges

or Auden on the shelf with a ghost

this lyrical beauty

complete & easy

no history

what the fuck are you talking about

& Stevens too defeating

ancestral notions of what words are

but then again

it's like what your speech is like

interests abound & direct

or when the personal

is transposed into symbols

unlike O'Hara's where

things are symbols in themselves

but is it even a choice

as it blends

observation & camp language

& snow

keeping it together

falling from the sky

like you & I

on this phone line

across the distance

of city space

& waterway

figuring out

what we want

& when we do

it's over

*recorded 12/19/04*

*11:48 pm to 12:48 am*

## Ragged Sea

Every morning on the way to work

I run

no matter the baggage I'm forced

to carry

Like today the snow heaps

on all sides

smudged by the day's paws

& then there I go another pair

of paws

sprinting through the world's

white mess

## How About You

I haven't been pleased with  
myself lately.  
Yes, my health chugs right along  
with my breath.  
& at home, there's food & heat  
& a place to sleep.

I sleep straight through the night  
without any dreams  
to remember when I wake & then I go to work  
& get paid.  
I haven't been pleased with  
myself lately

## Now There's a Little Give

This music bugs me  
I bug me  
Gimme a break, asshole  
I might as well be talking  
To a pastry... mystery is everything

My ass  
Tintinnabulation from outside  
Reverb in the ear  
Masters stroke  
Deltoid rambler  
The smallest bit of mouse repair  
Badger's agenda  
Screw the poor hobo bobo  
Barbie doll pachinko  
Whatever the hell  
Sleep & shower  
A graveyard in every pocket  
Your mercenary for my ego  
The muscled john  
Immediate hustle on the regular

Beat it down to six  
With Hurricane Rita & her sister  
Aunt Katrina Gertrude lattice  
Cupcake applesauce whipped dick  
Polo pony ascot  
Your doubting Thomas doll  
It's a wonder ye hairnet holds it all back

## Rotunda

To keep from going home most nights  
I smoke & drink  
& talk late with friends. Other nights  
at home I smoke  
& drink & pass out. Sometimes I  
make it to the bedroom but just as often  
I fall right out upon  
the couch with all my clothes on, even  
my shoes! Occasionally  
I wake suddenly from such a stupor.  
Perhaps I'd forgotten  
to turn off my phone or maybe the needle  
has caught a record  
on the last groove & is busy  
repeating itself endlessly.  
I'll sit up then & slowly rub my eyes  
check the time & walk about  
before settling down to finally write. This  
has been happening a lot lately

## Space

How does one come home to a dark house  
& start firing up the stove  
washing the vegetables & preparing the meat  
or fish? That's just it  
I rarely eat in the evenings unless I'm walking  
about the city with my hands  
simmering inside pockets or at a friend's  
table & then dinner is  
unavoidable. After waking there's never  
enough time & besides I feel  
like a thief & so eat furtively in the morning  
as if any sudden noise  
will break the day open before its scheduled  
time, raining an orange  
& vermilion alarm down from the sky.  
In the afternoon, however,  
I often eat more, joining the horde, when a brief  
reprieve from work allows  
just enough space to step out the door  
& scatter into the streets  
like a flock of nameless dust-colored birds  
searching for sustenance

## Departure

Tonight I am moving out of myself.  
When a train stops  
in a station I will quickly leap  
from my body  
& exit. The rails will carry my husk  
forward, to the end  
of the line & back again & in those hours  
I'll think nothing  
of surviving, of calling time-outs or making  
regretful phone calls  
or saying too much or too little  
or purchasing  
a flower when I should have bought a cigarette.  
Instead, I'll walk among  
the city like a light beaming momentarily  
onto strangers' faces  
making peace with quarrelsome dispositions  
& soothing the distressed  
while for others I'll simply listen as they breathe  
me in, eyelids fluttering  
as a mouth opens tasting levity, a giving without taking  
an earthbound return returned



## Rituals



## PSA

Your body  
Trapped in its jeans  
Knows better than that  
But you untaught it

## Human Interest

Dear Pussy Hole:

How can there be  
So much interest  
In who hits  
How far  
& frequently  
& in what situation  
A white leather ball  
The size of a man's fist?

Sincerely yours,  
The Finger

## Instructions

Upon waking

Grab a pen.

Write down the dream.

Make it happen.

## Some Rituals

Walk in door

Take off coat

Place keys on table

Take off hat & shoes

Take off shirt

Take off pants

Take off socks

Take off underwear

Take off body

## American

Place plastic in wallet

Place keys in ignition

Drive to mall

Spend lots of money in every store

Walk out feeling ten feet tall

One month later open mail

Open the letter marked credit card bill

Use the paper inside to wipe your ass

Repeat

## Ethnic Origin

1.

Walk in the forest naked.

2.

Climb into a rowboat with a fishing net.

3.

Talk about the balls of the bull like you were the one who chopped them off.

4.

Siphon the gas out of every car on the block

& then go to jail for 90 days

do not pass go but when you get out

make lots of babies.

5.

Leave the old country for the new.

6.

Build a bridge but remember that bridges are for walking on.

7.

Marry a native but remember marriage lasts for life.

8.

Live.

Grow old.

& die.

## Some More Rituals

Eat breakfast

Eat lunch

Eat dinner

Eat a few snacks in between

Check the scale the next morning

Buy a gun & some bullets

Load it

Aim it at the scale

Shoot

## American II

While watching television pay particular  
Attention to the commercials.  
While flipping through a magazine  
Carefully check out each advertisement.  
While commuting observe the faces of billboards.  
In the evenings before falling asleep  
Imagine yourself as an advertisement.  
Before passing into dreams purchase yourself  
& wallow in your consumer frenzy.

## Complaynte

Man, why they got the heat cranked up  
In this speeding tin can & why's  
It smell like hot piss & why people  
Wanna get out their seats & move  
About while the train's moving  
& the piss is stinking?  
It's all about New York City  
On a cool April day  
Hundreds of years  
Past the point of no return.

## I Remember

*after Joe Brainard*

I remember buying packs of baseball cards wrapped in cellophane so the top & bottom cards were visible. In the middle of the pack was a hard, pink, rectangular piece of chewing gum, dusted with white powder. It broke apart into a million little pieces like a piece of glass when I put my teeth to it & lasted for a minute before it became absolutely flavorless.

I remember waking up in a graveyard with the wind & rain swirling around me. I ran all the way home & lay shivering in bed with the covers pulled over my head for fear the bogeyman would get me.

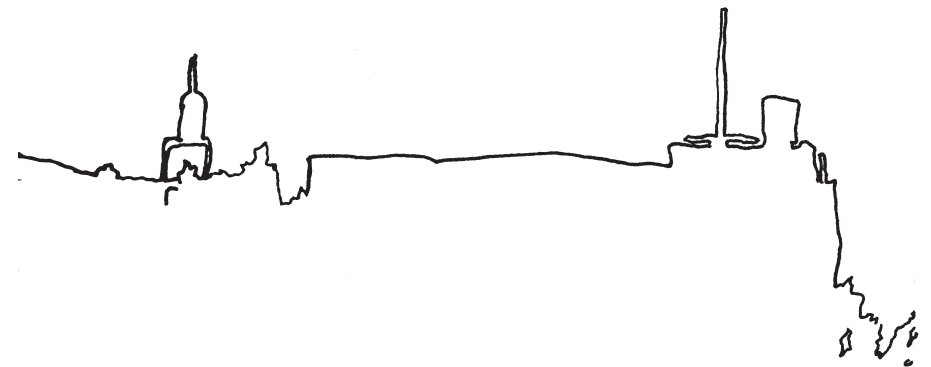
I remember driving to school when I was 17, passing 3, 4, 5 cars on the left hand side, driving like a maniac, like I had a death wish as my friends & lil' sister screamed for me to slow down.

I remember when my daughter was born. The top of her head looked like a tiny gray sponge. & then she emerged, rolled into a ball & I watched, amazed, as she unfolded herself like a flower & began to softly cry & squirm.

I remember 9/11. I was teaching Sophomore English at the Coalition School for Social Change on 58th Street, in room 321, on the 3rd floor when the principal Maureen Mahoney got on the loudspeaker & announced that there had been a terrible accident. A small plane had crashed into one of the Twin Towers. I grimaced & told the class that it was ridiculous. There was nothing to worry about, I said, & went on teaching my lesson as usual until class was over.

I remember diving into the ocean from the black rocks of the Greek Island, Siphnos. The water was so clean & light aqua green I could see to the bottom, 20, 50, 100 feet below. There wasn't a cloud in the sky & I believed I could swim around the entire island. & I almost did.

I Dreamed I Was a Terrorist



from you to the sky ①



## The Alpha Ending With Omega

At the end of a cycle I feel like I'm birth. Beginning like an uncracked egg. Omega, last letter of the alphabet. Alpha first. Lies in between.

\* \* \*

When I awoke you were lying beside me. I could have been a recluse. Sleeping anytime I choose. Anywhere. A super-human ability it ain't. Snoring loudly. Or purring unobtrusively. One a cat. The other a drunk. Are we aware of our sleeping selves? Or is it like being lost in a book. Unwilling to pull away. Pulling away only when our lives are in jeopardy.

\* \* \*

Hurricanes & potatoes have eyes. This particular tuber has multiple eyes from which sprout feelers eventually taking on the property of roots. The report upon the property of eyes informs the reader of an agglomeration of dust. The dust lying thereon. Dust unlike crust isn't released as easily upon waking, washing the face, striking off into the new day.

\* \* \*

When the sun comes out from behind the clouds it releases shadows & the world no longer appears to be sleeping. A cool glass of water jarring my senses.

## High Definition Scenario

I like when you concentrate on my ribcage. & the difference with yours. The shape of our leg muscles while taut.

\* \* \*

The difference being what you do with a set of new ideas versus the customary.

\* \* \*

An entirely new wardrobe. The eternally tan set. Exit the self. Black is beautiful. White is invisible. So alone. Will send out invitations. Was alone. Thought about saying hello. Felt alone. The sidewalk pile-up. Alone. Once a victim always a victim. Famous for a second.

## I Opened the Window & Listened for Your Voice

Letting go can be just as intense. As coming together. Like climbing a rope. & releasing your grip near the apex. Being caught as you free fall. A hand. Or a paw. Claws. Grasping your flailing arm out of nowhere. Sinking slowly together. Where a plateau awaits you. I'm waiting for you now. What makes someone wait? Trains, for one. Need, for another. Like releasing a burning ember from the chest's interior.

\* \* \*

Your name came to me from the pages of a magazine. Suddenly. None of the music on the radio was making sense. Spinning without yarn, string, fabric, control. Picked up the phone. Busy. Static. Silence. When would a letter reach you? Ever?

\* \* \*

What's the advantage of living on a rooftop? If one can't harness the powers. Of a pigeon's wings. Lightning. Perspective.

\* \* \*

Imagine the weight of a building's collective occupants.

\* \* \*

Deep beneath us lies a cold lake of water. Some say the earth is hollow. Others a fire so indescribably hot nothing can survive except for the dueling passions of unbridled hate & unrequited love.

\* \* \*

I am one of the following: fool, loner, degenerate, crackpot, anchor. Do we know enough about each other's weaknesses now? Enough to pick up where we left off? As a child I collected everything. & anything. Tarnished coins & worn rocks. Ripped notes & bottle caps. Dirty doll heads & desiccated insects. Soiled underwear & spent pens. As if I were saving for the crash.

\* \* \*

Take a leap with me. If you were blind? No, let me rephrase that – if you were aware of your particular blindness would you seek to correct it? Would the fear of change stop you in your tracks?

\* \* \*

The interpretation of dreams can help placate our deepest fears. There was blood in my dreams or was it rain? Which turned to snow covering the entire country like a lullaby in a china shop. I was driving a car. Just arrived from the South. The tracks of my tires through the snow. It was very late at night. Or very early in the morning. Mine was the only vehicle operating. Even the snowplows retired. Mastodons done in by ice. Lights out in offices & projects. Not a single stirring. I crossed the river via tunnel. & emerged into empty city. Street lamps cast a pale orange light on the snow-covered landscape. The tracks of my tires. The only evidence of passage. & when I opened my windows. To listen for your voice. In the frosty air. The only sound was my motor like an animal purring. Echoing through the snow.

## Progressive Acceptance Speech

Occupy me like an audience the silver screen.

\* \* \*

The silver screen opens on a city flooded by fear. Accept it & you've accepted a plane loaded with \_\_\_\_\_ dropping them on \_\_\_\_\_.

\* \* \*

I was raised out of being kind & quiet. A girl's best friend, momma said. To turn a watery eye & laugh at the laughers. What was once big & strong & dull. Breaking one by one & two by two. Rode a tractor once. A camel. A surfboard. A trail of marijuana smoke. A silver scream. Now a limo. Rolling through suburban villages like a tank in a dream. I fear everything here.

\* \* \*

Hold out your arms till they can't support any more imaginative weight. Wait. It isn't that I'm not what I was. It's that I'm so much

more. Once I felt a trace of fear. Once I was trained to ignore. Everything was fear. Now I ignore by experience. Smile. Adore.

## Relaxing in Armor

Makes my life easier. To climb apartment steps as the air passes  
through the straw in my chest, scrambling eggs on my legs.  
Showering once a month, sleeping standing. All the more reason  
not to feel silly in that suit.

\* \* \*

There's no pressure to be worse than we are.

\* \* \*

Stop showing me your sensitive side.

\* \* \*

People have trouble believing for want of witnesses.  
Bear in mind it was brownish-green & 8 feet wide.

\* \* \*

If I had the right dream anything could be possible.

## One Hundred of the Finest Whines

*(a poem for two voices)*

1. I'm there for you.
2. I'm not down with that.
3. What's my ex have to do with it?
4. You're not on my maturity level.
5. You're such a tease.
6. That was the nastiest thing you could say.
7. My pussy's sore.
8. My dick's small.
9. America is built upon the shoulders of cunts' husbands.
10. How much have you had?
11. I didn't get enough.
12. I did as I was told.
13. I'm waiting for the paint to dry.
14. Don't tell me what I can do.
15. You can't do it.
16. I can't.
17. I live here too.
18. I wanted to eat that.
19. I just want to lay down.
20. You were supposed to stop me.

21. It's permissible to call people cunts in England.  
22. I don't have any.  
23. I only need a little.  
24. Love me.  
25. You did.  
26. You didn't.  
27. You didn't think I'd notice.  
28. You didn't think.  
29. I noticed.  
30. A truck went by.  
31. Where were you?  
32. This isn't what I expected.  
33. I'm easily frustrated.  
34. You're frustrating.  
35. I'm not frustrated.  
36. Stop talking.  
37. Your phone is ringing.  
38. You never call me.  
39. I'm jealous of your hair.  
40. Where did it go?  
41. What do you mean?  
42. I hate when you do that.  
43. Slow down.  
44. Let me drive.

45. It's me.  
46. Look at me.  
47. You didn't ask me?  
48. They're not my type.  
49. They never are.  
50. When's the last time you ate something green?  
51. We're lost.  
52. Where did we park?  
53. They stole it.  
54. I lost it.  
55. I'm lost.  
56. I'm a loser.  
57. Even the good times are bad.  
58. What are you thinking?  
59. It all depends on how you look at it.  
60. Please, not now.  
61. Please come here & kiss me.  
62. Hold me.  
63. Punch me.  
64. I never win.  
65. It's too hard.  
66. You play too rough.  
67. Can I get some?  
68. I don't wanna be naked.

69. I'm always wrong.  
70. You're never wrong.  
71. I'm not lost.  
72. I didn't know.  
73. I forgot to remember.  
74. How did you know?  
75. Who told you?  
76. I want it.  
77. I'm the youngest.  
78. I'm the oldest.  
79. No one thinks I'm sexy.  
80. I know.  
81. It's too cold.  
82. It's too hot.  
83. The wind is too strong?  
84. I'm gonna get burned.  
85. They don't like me.  
86. They never did.  
87. It's not hot enough.  
88. There's too much to do.  
89. There's not enough to do.  
90. I'm lonely.  
91. I'm bored.  
92. Am I complaining too much?

93. Is it the end yet?  
94. When will we get there?  
95. How many more lines to go?  
96. I can't take it anymore.  
97. I'm too tired.  
98. It's not my turn.  
99. Are you done?  
100. It's my turn.

## Digestible Self-Help Manual

It's not too late to do anything.

To make people cum in mid-stride.

& lay back on the couch. & forget why we're here. Forget about work.  
Cars & their owners.

\* \* \*

Outside, inside my spine settling down finally. I can't say I'm that  
here now. The stars are obscured by the skirt of Manhattan. A  
breeze. The city's inside. The spine is part of. A curiously Puritan  
vestige. A memento from another era. A must-work-for-life  
compunction.

\* \* \*

The end of the street is the end of the day. I live at the top of a  
juncture of two streets so that their beginning forms an elbow. I  
keep trying to figure out if I'm situated in the fist or the armpit. It's  
rare to find a cul-de-sac in the city. But streets do end.

\* \* \*

If I could forget about work for a moment. Think about you  
touching me. The spine gets tighter. & then the rock & the days  
piled up. A lessening occurs. De-pressurization. No more rearing  
up on my hind legs like a startled horse. No more running to  
catch the train or the bus. The long pome is done for now. It's  
only beginning. At first one gets in & out quickly as if being there  
were likened to an eclipse. If one blinks it'll be as if nothing  
happened. How can one sustain? The looks young boys give nubile  
girls.



## I Dreamed I Was a Terrorist & You Asked What Kind

Elevator temporary bubble burst. Emperor. New rose. Probe. I'm miles from the only city you're in. The tuba soothes. & the small 't' in truth. Ensconced in a different city. Living not loathing. Driving into oncoming traffic. Looking for a quick release. The week passes by so quickly. Like aging inside an airplane.

\* \* \*

I lost my raincoat. & was drenched to the bone. Nerves soggy. Hair like seaweed. Face like the ocean floor. Last year between the mountains & the highway. A motel in the middle of a worn out lover. Breaking the bed in three places. As if signaling recognition.

\* \* \*

Then again if I don't smoke. & I don't exercise. & I'm not even fucking. Settle down. If I place my hands. At the joints where your legs meet your waist. & I push upward.

\* \* \*

Whales & humans can't enjoin. But then there's Jonah.

\* \* \*

The whole is rounded. & resembles a human head. & after the fist punctured the hole? A head burst from too much thinking. Everything is in working order. We need a crate of champagne. To celebrate. It doesn't matter that I don't drink. An immediacy of knowing if I do or don't mind. If you smoke. We don't need a television. That's what sex is for.

\* \* \*

Everything is its working order. Automatically thinking it's all a matter of interpretation. You said it didn't matter. & I said. Good. The wind was hurting her. It'd been years since she felt it so strongly. Undressing. He opened the window. Lay upon the bed. & waited.

## Nuggets

Whatever I saw I'm not sure. Or said. I walked into the hallway.  
Stood at the window. The courtyard was empty except for the snow.  
& cried. Teeth. Teeth. Each tooth its own world. A world in pain. A  
world about to collide.

\* \* \*

I've always wanted to bite you. But you bit me first. Your teeth marks  
still on my cheek.

\* \* \*

Don't. You will be young for a very long time. & then suddenly. The  
end will rip you in two. Somehow making the hole, whole again.

\* \* \*

It grows in the mind. A gash in the screen makes you think you're  
seeing two movies at once. Twice. Static.

\* \* \*

The gash in your head is all your thoughts pouring out into a pool.

## Nocturne

*for Ali*

What I don't remember. The narrative jogs in place.

\* \* \*

It's ok to be left alone. But not in a garden. We're still naming our children Eves & Adams.

\* \* \*

The windows give. I'm out among the rooftops. Tangled in the lights. Pulling down the clouds for cover. Asking the moon. When.

\* \* \*

I wore black jeans. White sneakers. A green short-sleeved shirt.  
You were percussive. Like a drumstick. My body a third leg.  
Outdistanced by ego & emotion. Our fantasy. To host a late-night show. In an underground pool. 3/4 of the body submerged. Drinks on tiny tiki trays. A corpulent merman telling jokes. During the

commercial breaks the sponsors croon. Working late takes its toll.  
Its hard to look at my body in the morning.

\* \* \*

Was that your throaty voice in my robot?

## Travelin' Vagina Bear Blues

There's no need to worry. What's done is dying. A new breath in death. You're not obligated to feel nothing. Which of course means you are. Crooked roads headed south. A straight line decides where we diverge. Into your mouth. From the tip of your corrugated tongue. At the center of the black plum. I think of miners extracting coal. As I suck on the pit. Up every mornin' at the break of day. Putting miles & mountains between us. The minions of the state will have to wait. Till I come back from wherever I went. Hold my checks. Don't sign my name. Talk to me in the evening. I've got a hole at the back of my throat. Talk to me in the evening. It's for breathing. When you're alone. & the sky has fallen into the bucket from which you painted your walls. Wherever I'm driving. Or laid up. I'll hear you & respond in kind. Let the winds remind you that I'm gone.

## Notes from the Hive

*for George Schneeman*

Some say the body is not as elastic as time despite bits & pieces of it going missing. It doesn't matter how many others have witnessed your growth. Glowing, subdued, supplicating, rearranging, resizing, releasing the idea of your physical form. All this just so one can eventually return to where they came from.

\* \* \*

Matter, the ancients believed, could be divided into four humors. Confronted flesh to flesh the body's humor turns meditative or impassioned. Awareness is a different matter, awareness of the land & its formations. Awareness of self & others.

\* \* \*

Saturation of color attracts my eyes.  
A house in the green hills of Tuscany is charged with possibilities.

\* \* \*

I rarely laugh when confronted with a naked body.  
Unless that body is upon the screen & has nothing to do with me.  
The page is more personal.  
I can touch it as I slip in unnoticed & stop the ticking of clocks  
extending the corporeal past itself to stretch the face of time,  
freezing the calendar like a painting frozen upon a wall.

\* \* \*

When you call me & ask me what I'm doing.  
That's what I'm doing.

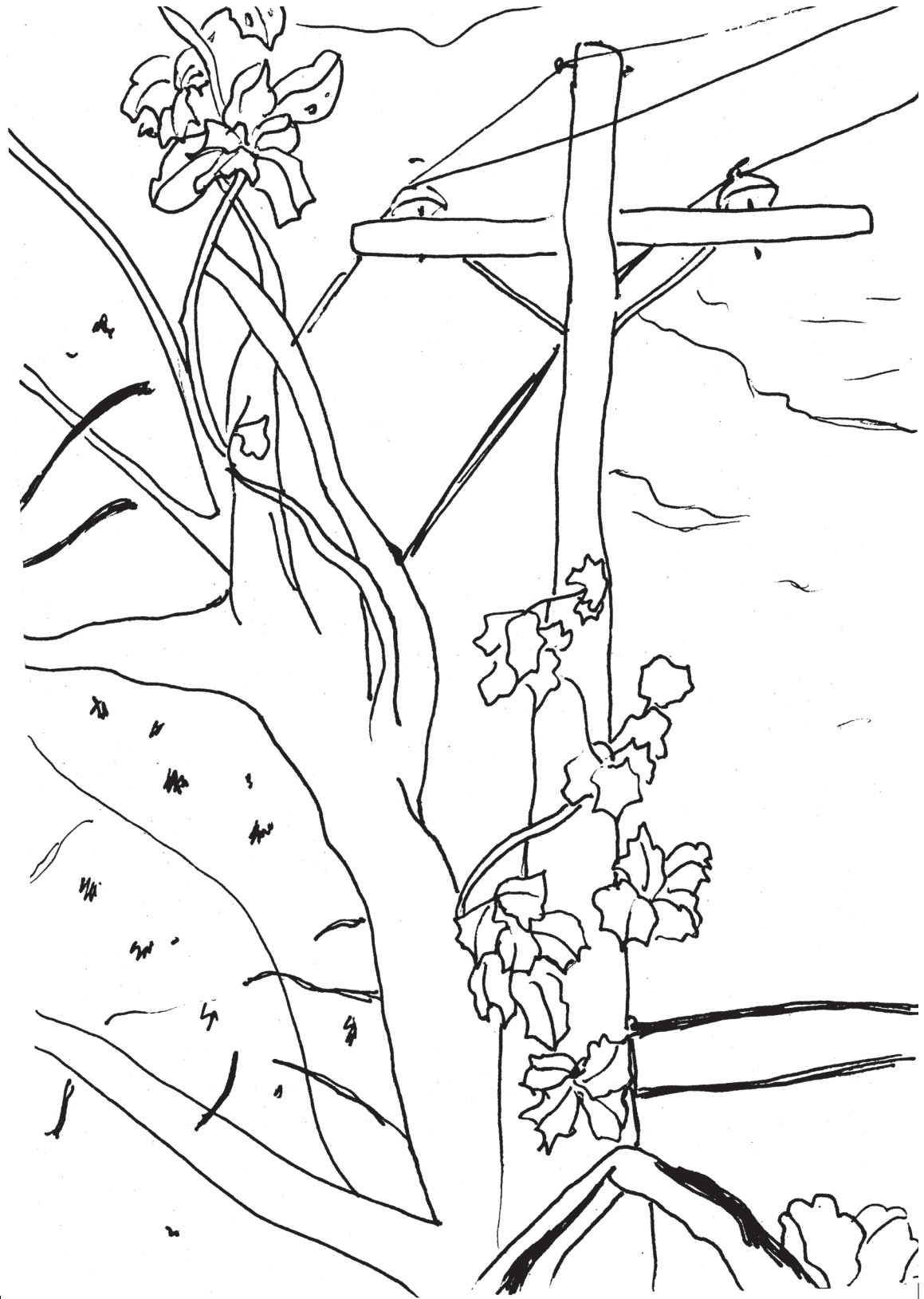
\* \* \*

There's a reason for the missing: open the windows of the temple.

\* \* \*

Can you hear me if I don't speak?  
Word bubbles form above my head.

Rimbaud in Brooklyn



1.

An ocean is each little sound you make  
through lucid waking dreaming: red France, Red Hook, the fire trucks,  
police sirens, ambulances, biplane

soliloquy

pomes

The semiotics of translation known to me,

Arthur,

Author,

Poet

Boy

to mark, give signal &

Open

The belle de nuit gift of music, sound of

Salsa & rock n' roll

wine sop of cabaret rhythms

Strolling wide Avenues, what were once promenades in a different time

& place:

Montmarte, Pigalle, La Jumelle,

Le Monde

Twilo

90

Twilight & Dawn take yr time when you speak  
responding secretly in Brooklyn, vulnerable & High  
awash in first light

White Star

Black Star

Future, look at the sun, at the streets, the movies of our lives,  
watching anchors of

families flower, lending blood to a work of art

The American Spirit happening

Overflowing with the Pomes

91

2.

I'm gonna rub something white all over yr chest  
That way you know you'll have

me in

you

A burly chaos of calm  
Central Supply Repository

of future

within past

As Dominicans cut hair, cut records, cut heads, be sexy in stairwells

How courageous you're lying there without anesthetic lipstick,  
pregnancy or betrothal,

vulnerable,

listening

Lie beside me  
we'll see what happens

The sight of the Pomes was florescent at first  
a kingdom seen in present tense flashback

Present dissolving into mythic

Mythic, keeping the sound of all things beauty of  
Teenage Stoner Uniform, limbs barely covered by dreaming  
to breath in 7 am fresh light, a bright orange orb

Pome of Manhattan skyline via Carolina Charleville country aire  
broken sculpted surface  
of our inexorable

run down



3.

We do thou

& will

Willing are

& be

We all came

Together through &

Some stayed

In this city

To eventually

Understand

Singular

Anonymous

Misery

& joy

I mean

Revolution

& orgasm

Here

Through thee

Poet

Visionary

Boy

4.

Experience activity as a temporary religion

Author the calm chaos created on a burly Thursday, fighting  
courageously the Puritan spine,  
the apathy of Catholics,  
the drinking in squalls

How painful is listening?

Look at the word I'm not saying

Tatters of a stark green canopy  
Abyssinia in daylight  
bare

I'm responding  
to this city  
look at the city  
at the river  
at the peddlers'  
wares

Valium of our rooms, it's late, the Stars are high,  
the phone isn't ringing, I'm listing  
the agent in sweaty white boxers, mental breaks releasing

New night is old night, beauty reduced to speeding cars  
the Pomes

Who's Arthur Rimbaud – if he's pitching for the Yankees  
who's catching?

Who's breathing giddy gulps of toilet water  
Whose anus is melting into empty pockets & electric redhand life

anchor  
rocket  
future  
a now  
that keeps the sound  
barely

5.

Monkey Man knows Mickey Mantle is legend but who's Arthur  
Rimbaud? Being known means being seen on Saturday evening.  
Brain cooling, then growing warm beneath Venus Diablo  
& the father like a banister guiding the Pomes,  
the World, the female twin,  
the words alive, inexhaustible sets of

Majicks:

dark music

inherent of creation

Look at the word, tower against the sky, at the pomes in yr body under  
the obelisk  
in Brooklyn I stand uncertain, seams open, pondering Punk Rock  
Teenage Stoner Uniform, looking at pictures of you & you & I: Who  
were those people?

He alone was an exception dwelling in sensation

s

A soliloquy of fire,

A calliope running wild through yr hair

singular

multiple

full of electric red hands: beginning or end  
flare of a taxi's single open fare light? beginning or end of the tiger?

tie?

man?

keys?

poet?

father?

boy?

Listening in white boxers, listing agents of today's Voice, tomorrow's  
flashback  
kingdom kicking into happening, empyrean of now

ethereal breathing

how painful but

how beautiful

churning my skin

into the possibility of Pomes

6.

Being called is exciting

tho, not by yr mama or yr father

I pressed my ear to the wind & heard

The Pomes like wet towels hitting the wall

throwing off the anchor of the stoner flower, denim prick,  
the soft but tough cunt

The land of NYC full of our blood & the Bloods falling in droves  
birds forsaking feathery, weighing wings with weapons: Teens  
struggling to become Twenties  
fighting our dark white Father

At first, the sight of The Pomes were florescent  
garish in lacking natural luminescence  
replayed on television in fifteen minute intervals  
sounds of exhausted flowers, fires, bullets, bottles, cars  
driven by dog-gods  
shipwrecks of city living  
incinerating what little education

to let the wounds blossom

to take the key & break the lock

breathe & loosen

seams open

7.

Then & now I feel blessed by birthing

Blackstar or Whitestar, late in the teens, early in Twenties,  
beginning of Nineties  
giddy gulps were routine, starting to rotten, South was North,  
a landfill of beauty in  
the modern music all over my chest

By evening I'm on logical disconnect, listening for birds  
in the tree-barren darkness  
tapping weakness, an Apple slowly tapping insects inside

The phone ringing answers secretly  
the tape repeating  
indiscreetly

Without a Pome  
I grow old  
& die  
tired

Of wrinkled, baggy & torn clothing, tattoos & scattered piercings  
buying in  
to tuning out  
by buying in

Overflowing with sweaty urges

The seams loosening  
the brilliant orange orb  
arising

An American Spirit burning  
I  
You  
He  
We  
Us  
of She  
& them

"Lend our lives to a work while dwelling in sensations"

8.

To be an exception mixed up & given to everyone watching & nodding,  
hissing &  
applauding You leveraged yr powers searching for a river amid street  
traffic, the Bedouin  
among falafel vendors, continuous

peripatetic  
Pome

The things we've done dark father are noisy against the present  
Leaping is due to the Presence  
the present is mine  
others are there, orbiting  
Friday, lunchtime on baby blue  
infinity, furled, a temporary morgue  
outfitted in suits & ties  
tarnished Nike dissolving  
against gleaming façade of  
Condé Nast building, limbs  
barely covered, Summer 1890  
dash 1990 slash 2000  
dusted in 2010

A lucid waking dreaming, walking by way of running  
look at the words, mental breaks releasing  
I'm a wallflower tiger in my Teens flowing into Twenties  
now over, secretly receiving & answering for the dirty white body  
of history repeating the Dow Jones Electoral College mantra

The bear men, the bull men, elephant, donkey & monkey men,  
ungentlemanly abusing their children; How Painful but How  
Beautiful;

"The language of daily living"

The endless past & future, love & torture of Eros' bright wings

9.

I want beauty to hear The Pomes as salsa music grows an orchid on the  
collective white  
chest

Thee & do, the language of daily life, instantly mutable, my eyes you're  
not my only

Sense,

Smell the water, smell the sky, the exhaust, the words as they form

There is an excitement to responding to our modern condition a  
century ago & receiving something different 6am Tuesday disharmony  
churning morning beat everything as you go:

Throb

Plant

Creature

Pome

The Puerto Ricans & Mexicans are teaching us Spanish

On Wednesday find relief in filtering the call to prayer on Atlantic  
Avenue, changing the music, charging the air

Smell the Black Star celebrating a birthday in Brooklyn

Spell, la belle de nuit la fille, touching the other in orbit,  
tasting the sky, earth & water

Maybe I am Baby Blue, a Pome, growing old, falling out of Teens into  
Twenties now collapsed, feeling Thirty is dirty, an exception given to  
death, a total worth of American Sprit on logical disconnect: a buffalo  
flower metro station pastis guiro fortune cookie gay bar gangster gun  
runner ghost dog banister lampadaire a head full  
of anonymous red hands

Coming loose in speeding cars  
the beauty

of our vulnerability

10.

Obelisk clock tower, monument to slavery's ship, projectile of Capital,  
presiding over tatters of a green jungle canopy – I will always remember  
you – a Resource: North Central Carolina, New Jersey, Gaul,  
Charleville, Sunday

Forget about semiotics,

Forget about Me, you are gone, He is Her, She looking at Us, the You  
You are is  
becoming  
& you're lying there

Watching television – parade of idiots

Passerby, maybe I am the dirty white body trying to hide within:  
popcorn, gladiator, ginseng, flâneur, hightop, camembert,  
borrachito, bruha, hotdog

Listen to the sky, the streets, the river, its broken sculpted surface  
reflecting listeners becoming lists

White Star I'm listening to the Black Star birthing

Being read happens in today's Voice

& it was exciting being called, receiving in a different time & place  
their beautiful music & mine, not solely in Abyssinia or Eden but  
Brooklyn beside a speeding car, floating in florescence, garish, non-  
luminescence, the last dollar imploding without memories for  
just any dark father, companions, or lovers, the dark bright voice  
arising out of

awakening

Out of growing  
steeped in the language  
of daily living

A beautiful music throbbing  
all over my chest is His Her Our  
lungs breathing The Pomes

Petals of the iris  
viewing the orchid exposing  
ears  
lobes  
mouth opening  
seams seeping

You are singing in Manhattan skyline air



## White Snaps

To have what the Cubans have

in chaos as different factions

to kiss the one you love

One by one the clouds

the buckets filled again

- to make me forget

my place upon the ground.

the barefoot dancers collapse

## Familiar Territories

I mounted & then dismounted

Played hard & then grew soft

Searched for solitude & then for herds

Exaggerated grossly & then fell for the straight story

Honored my father humiliated my mother

## Fear

I am a fog  
bound for peace  
in times of war.

## Ten Variations

Your rip  
You're ripped  
You're it  
You or it  
Yore of it  
Yorick  
Your tic  
Your lip  
You're up  
Europe

## Late November's Calendar, 2005

18. stopped suffering today – 10 am, 4 pm & 7 pm
19. it fell
20. off
21. sublimity: a day that lasts forever
22. a German tourist cuts in front of me & gets the last pastry
23. somewhere in here you died
24. & came back to life like boxcars full of liquor

25. clarity comes in small parcels ( a passage of undress )

26. an episode of intense weeping ( a passage of redress )

27. alas, the rocks of the sea couldn't keep the pilgrims from thee

28. if you give me enough rope I'll find you a proper tree

29. yesterday, I began seeing in colors

30. the epiphany isn't today

\* ( it's tomorrow )

## Beauty of a Deadly Rose

f  
l  
a                      head  
s                      w  
h                      o  
i                      r  
n                      r  
g                      a  
r                      d  
e

empty football field  
waiting for night

## Accept Loss Forever Sal Paradise

Reminds me  
Of a funny joke: young writer says  
I haven't found my voice yet!  
Old writer says:  
Well, what the hell  
Are you speaking with?

## Fables

Big Bear  
to little bear  
come in

Big Bear  
to little bear  
are you there

Big Bear  
to little bear  
do you hear me

Do you  
huh  
do you?

## The Kitchen Window

*for Imaan*

is  
so  
close

LY

clear the eyes

you're not caught in a storm

the sky is a mellow purple

we're not wearing thin

like two tires

we've been built

to last... but

if we explode

we explode

so what

we can always say

what a gas

& call it a day

\* \* \*

b/c

(1)

rooftops

c  
l o u d s c  
l o u  
d  
s  
c l  
o  
u  
d  
s  
s d u o l c

(2)

blue shelves

c  
r  
o  
c r o s s e s  
s  
e  
s

blue selves



(3)

yellow balls  
green thighs

yellow walls  
green spies

yellow halls  
green rise

yellow falls  
green eyes

yellow malls  
green ties

yellow palls  
green sighs

yellow drawls  
green highs

yellow awls  
green dyes

yellow shawls  
green lies

## Spell

Mass windpipe inhalation

Stop go pushing a sparrow

Into diamond limits coal shaft

Shift cobra come easily

Mandrake route

Digital bell thresher

Odds not evens

## 2 Pomes for Leaving & Staying

### *Morning's Repair*

Upon waking & then falling  
    Falling & then waking  
Upon dressing & leaving  
    Leaving & dressing  
Upon walking to the train  
    Training for the walk

\*

### *The Pick-up*

To pick up  
    Right where  
All the cards  
    Dropped  
Face up  
    In the dirty  
Street

## In Chapter 27

A young boy blooms into a rose.

## Three Consecutive Mornings

- I.  
late evening  
    early morning  
ripples  
    on a quiet pond
2.  
no  
    more body  
no  
    more mind
3.  
each bird  
    sends out  
a call  
    into the morning

## Sonnet 5/8/06

Laughter      tearblocks      roof-ripped  
Empty window      dressing cue  
Stick with purpling      arrest  
The heart cloud      turnbust  
A rival for the eye      leader  
Gust      liked & wounded  
Dog lickings      a purposeful bag  
One to door the head      get out  
Lights embargo      bevy of glassware  
Drink to travel      wild & luminous  
Bugs decay to skin      wreckage  
Of aged      from the perspective of trees  
A platform      figment taller than  
Ground      rising      to meat me in

## Revelation Urge

glassy & glazed

in beauty's bare gaze

fine sibilant hiss

egg punctured by a fang

alligator in flames

willows

rocks at dawn

Ray Charles hit the horse

don't set me free

till the morning's gone

keep me prisoner

forever more

whatever you do to me

do it to me good

I don't want to see

what someone else can do

do it to me

like you like it done to you

don't set me free

baby can't you see

there ain't nothing wrong

when your arms are the bars

of this prison

wrapped around me

★

I

Don't think

It's safe

For

A glass elevator

To move

This fast

Mira

Two Canadian geese

As silent as canoes

Glide into the lake

## Six Grams of Epigrams

1. As we learn the importance of empathy

imagine yourself a lion

the hunter's spear

raised before you

2. You are the lion

the hunter's spear

raised before you

3. lion spear raised

4. we you it

5. wot

6. o

## Nocturne 2

What I don't remember. The narrative jogs in place.

## Some More Dum Dums

Near the earth's molten core  
Myths happen behind the curtain

\* \* \*

There's a hand on your back  
Moving in a circular motion  
But you're no dummy

\* \* \*

I'm late  
Floating over the park  
Slave monument  
Gas station attendants  
Single dog owners  
No snow just fog  
Thick as pancake

\* \* \*

Rain projected

More myths

More fog

## Crossing & Recrossing

I am a domino

falling against the rare

beauty of the air

& the ocean's river turning

car squall

an indigo line

rips into the sky

passing like a brief blithering

dividing earth & mind

12/24/01



Tales

in

Fair



## A Brooklyn Tale

When I got out of the train station  
The air smelled like macaroons.  
My sneakers crunched through feathers  
& broken glass on the sidewalk  
Outside the Chinese restaurant.  
A man with one eye  
Looked at me sideways.  
The breeze was stirring through  
The oak leaves like a rumor.  
I ran as fast as I could  
Beneath the clouds & dodged  
A yellow school bus at a traffic light.  
I sat on my stoop in the afternoon's gauzy light  
Fingering a red malachite pocket knife  
Wishing it was big enough  
To slice up the world.  
I went upstairs, took off  
All my clothes & fell asleep.  
When I awoke it was night.  
There was nothing in the frigerator  
So I took a shower, toweled off  
& then sat on the couch & waited.

Sure enough I heard bells & whistles  
In the distance. I listened as it got closer.  
It was the ice cream man.  
Now I'd have some dinner.  
I got my change together & went downstairs.  
He said he didn't take Canadian money.  
I said that's not Canadian it's Sacagawea  
Golden dollar. He wasn't impressed.  
I bought two ice cream sandwiches.  
One of them melted in my hands  
As I ate the other. The boys on the corner  
Started jawing. I thought there was going to be  
A fight. I pretended not to see.  
A bottle broke. A girl screamed.  
Lil' Tony grabbed someone by the neck  
& said don't let me catch you on this block  
Again. A guy with long black braids  
Rode by on a miniature bike. He flashed a gun  
In the muggy air. Everyone scattered.  
The gunman rode in circles. He looked like  
He was fifteen & wore dark glasses.  
He aimed his pistol at the moon  
& fired four times. The moon slipped  
Behind a cloud & didn't come out  
'Til the next day.

## Tommy T's Tale

The world's maw opens  
in the night outside my window.  
There's a biscuit in it.

## JJ's Tale

Pink beam licked blue gold  
Steam locust caryatid brushwork  
Into fire, into life  
Fixed slogans round your ears  
A double dose of brute noise  
& wanderlust eggshell ego  
My umbrage for a humble gal  
To cook & be cooked for  
Maiden in my arms & out  
More tough than rough  
An orange jewel in the dagger's hilt  
A flying ant in a brood of bent  
A single hair on the surface of the sun  
Nineteen times I clung to her breast  
& away we swam with a turtle & snake  
Hanging onto our backs.  
When we got to shore  
The three-legged man grabbed my arm  
& said, come here son, look what you done!  
Because that's who I was does that mean  
I can't be who I am now, I said? Don't talk to me

About that. I got bugs crawling over me, he said  
& there's little magic in that itch.  
Sobriety is a dead duck in this here meat market.  
My lady said let him go but  
The three-legged man held on fast.  
Cop-out will you, he shouted!  
For crying out loud you're a loose knot  
An impish imp, string fragment.  
Collide obvious, saccharine bite you bitch!  
How most guys can't get away without sounding gay  
When they call another man bitch.  
But not his pine tree gravel gavel.  
Mountains & clover, you are this  
Airplane noise in my head, I told him.  
Let me go, I hollered, & called out  
Clotpole, dim culprit, gull catcher,  
You married your right with your left  
& it's not my fault. He eased up his grip  
& let loose a long sigh. Steal a little to give  
To the people of the river, he said, it's rising  
& they're gonna need it. Then he let me go  
& I haven't seen him since.

## Listen Nigga's Tale

Listen Nigga smoke weed all day.  
Listen Nigga order Chinese dinners & don't pay.  
Listen Nigga got four baby girls & two boys.  
Listen Nigga got five baby mommas.  
Listen Nigga went to jail at sixteen.  
Listen Nigga was out at twenty-one.  
Listen Nigga called a cop a cracker.  
Listen Nigga knows how to work a hammer.  
Listen Nigga can cut some heads.  
Listen Nigga use to work on the car lot before he got canned.  
Listen Nigga got a .38 in the glove box of his El Dorado.  
Listen Nigga got gold plated teeth.  
Listen Nigga don't wear no colors except black & brown.  
Listen Nigga shot a barking dog in the eye.  
Listen Nigga get that nigga out of your head.

## Little Bird's Tale

The girl talked like a little bird on a wire.  
She said one day someone's gonna kill you.  
& when I said why she said because  
That's just the way you are.

## Addendum to the Previous Tale

That very same night  
There were 4 Jeffrey Nelsons  
Admitted to Brooklyn Methodist hospital:  
  
Someone was obviously out to get us.

## The River's Tale

There's a spot on the Black River  
Where you can pull your canoe up to the bank  
& mount a silty stair where  
An old green bench waits  
Covered with the initials of all  
The men & woman who died  
& were born again in its dark waters  
& just before summertime begins  
As the moon waxes high  
If you sit on that green bench  
Round the time one day  
Folds into the next  
The old river folk say  
When you die that's  
Where your soul will come to lie.

## BB's Tale

The hardest rain drops straight from the sky  
Like it was dropped from a great height.  
What stops its fall is your body trees  
Sidewalks buildings rivers.  
If you were to stand in one place  
If you were to stand utterly still  
In a hard rain then eventually  
The rain drops would break  
Through your skin & wash  
All your blood away.  
This would not be cleansing BB said.  
It would not be like getting dunked  
By the preacher in the river.  
You would not be reborn  
Inside yourself again free of sin.  
Your blood would run away from you & join  
The river till it ran into the great ocean.  
Your body would fill with water  
Instead of blood. Whenever you moved  
You'd leave a puddle where you'd been.  
& whenever you spoke your words

Would sound like rain falling  
Against the leaves of a dogwood tree.  
& whenever someone looked in your eyes  
They'd drown there & forget  
Whatever it was they wanted to see.

## G's Tale

I got on the last car of the G train.  
I felt beautiful & free.  
A little girl with black sunglasses looked at me.  
An Ace stood up out of the pack & called me out.  
I said there isn't anything between you & me.  
But the Ace just smiled  
Waved his long brown hand & said  
If not now later.  
I knocked on my wooden head  
& said so be it then.

## Southern Knights

Above the inside pocket of my yellow three-piece suit  
Johnny Gimble's was stitched in silver on a black tag.  
Little Rock, Arkansas probably late 1940's Hot Rod said.  
Jon-Jon said maybe the Thirties. No one knew for sure.  
The suit was banana-yellow. You look hot & soft  
At the same time said Jenny one of Hot Rod's girls.  
I wore it with a black shirt skinny yellow tie  
& sharp black creepers that came to a wicked point.  
The dogwoods & honeysuckle were in full bloom  
& the air was thick with their perfume.  
A different type of loud music poured  
Out each of the bars along Water Street.  
I felt like a killer bee moving from flower to flower.  
I heard the sound of pool balls knocking in my head.  
I drank the cheapest beer with a shot of brown in every bar.  
I scrawled my name on the rough plaster in the bathroom  
Of the oldest bar in town & ate a pink pickled egg.  
Someone handed me a three dollar bill  
& said keep the change. I fondled my German  
Switchblade & waited for my songs on the jukebox.  
A redneck walked a white pig as big as a sheepdog into the Ice House.

A skinhead gave me the finger & moved on.  
I thought about the slaves that used to be housed  
In the cellars of these bars. You know he's back  
Said Randall the doorman at Lula's.  
Who I asked? Curly he said without moving his lips.  
I thought he was doing time in Dorethea Dix I said?  
He's out. I saw him in a dream looking for you.  
A guy with a greasy red hat came in & said  
A fight broke out in front of Jacob's Run.  
I wondered if Curly would come round.  
I wanted to fight everyone in the bar  
But no one would look at me twice.  
I wanted everyone to sign my book  
But no one would touch my pen.  
I wanted Quinn the Eskimo to talk to me  
But he was busy behind the bar & told me to chill.  
I stood in the corner with a beer in my hand.  
I leaned over the foosball table & began to saw  
Though my index finger with a red switchblade.  
I was tackled by a man named Churchill.  
I lost the knife & an angry crowd gathered around.  
Quinn told me to get the hell out of there before something happened.  
I bandaged my finger with a dirty sock  
I found on the side of the road.



I walked down to the river's edge.  
I took off my creepers & rolled up my pants.  
I dangled my feet in the cool brown water.  
I washed out my wound & cursed the moon.  
I cursed the voice of the mockingbird & the whippoorwill.  
I cursed the names of everyone I knew.  
I cursed my family name & the town where I lived.  
I drank from the flask of Jack I kept in my suit jacket.  
I threw the book of names I started in the river.  
I put my shoes back on & got myself together.  
The streets were full of people mingling.  
I went to the Dixie Grill on Market Street  
& spat into a cup of coffee & switched the sock for a band-aid.  
The bars rang their bells for closing time.  
I decided to make one last run. John the horse cop  
Wore his shades at night & his white helmet  
Low over his brow. He looked at me like  
I wasn't there, like I'd disappeared  
Like a ghost he'd tried to exorcise.  
I went up to him & said what's doin'?  
He nodded at me as I stroked Jubal Early's speckled nose.  
He said Son haven't you done enough all ready?  
Front street was full of women who weren't drunk enough.  
I tried every line I knew from the one-armed fisherman

To the end of time before five moons passed us by.  
Nine times out of ten I could count on at least one woman  
Being drunk enough to come home with me.  
A girl with an orange dress & a claw hanging over her left eye  
Asked me if I'd escaped from a circus.  
Her friend's laughter broke me in half.  
I could hear the Cape Fear rushing past  
The rusting battleship parked on her brown body.  
Don't even think of goin' out there John said.  
The currents too strong it'll suck you right in like a big brown tit.  
I wanted to scream my name from the top  
Of the bronze Confederate soldier's memorial.  
I wanted to climb to the top of the Lutheran church steeple.  
I wanted every woman to look at me  
& know I was the one they were going home with.  
I was twenty-one years, five months & ten days old.  
I stumbled towards Hot Rod's house alone.  
The night was too warm for a three-piece suit.  
I was drenched with sweat when I hit the door.  
I stepped into the house on Grace Street  
like I owned it's wrap-around porch &  
Stained glass windows. At best I rented a couch  
For the price of a few bong hits a day  
While we watched the Next Generation

& talked shit about each other & everyone we knew.  
 Quinn the Eskimo was sitting on the green leather love seat  
 With a woman twice his size. He pretended to be a crane  
 As he hoisted the fat girl's pussy out of her pants.  
 They giggled like two idiotic children when they saw me.  
 He told me to check Rod's room. Hot Rod was passed out  
 On his bed in a wet spot bigger than the Great Lakes.  
 A naked girl as white as a goose lay bawling  
 On the floor. Upstairs the landlord was playing leap frog  
 With his beach buddies. I heard the thwup thwup  
 Of their bodies hitting the floor every five seconds.  
 Out on the verandah I slipped into the porch swing  
 Listening to the night birds.  
 There wasn't any moon to speak of  
 Just a shimmering silver effulgence  
 Where the moon was supposed to be.  
 If you listen real close Curly use to say  
 You can hear the river speak. What's it say  
 I asked? I remember how he took a hit off the pipe  
 Looked at me & then looked away. That's something  
 You'll have to find out for yourself he finally said.  
 The Oleander leaves stirred. My sweat began to dry.  
 I wanted to sit inside & watch TV but  
 Quinn wasn't done messing with the fat girl.

A black ghost drifted by. He fixed me  
 With his yellow eyes & a shiver set  
 The little hairs on my neck on end. I thought about John  
 Riding Jubal Early to the stables. I thought about  
 Ed shaving heads for five dollars a scalp & then  
 Falling asleep in his barber's chair watching gay porn.  
 I thought about Ashley undressing in the moonlight  
 & then cashing my check at the bank the next day  
 like we never done the double-back beast together.  
 I thought about Shirlene coming to my door  
 In nothing but a sugar sack & a pair of black heels.  
 I thought about a spider as big as my hand.  
 I thought about Katyann crouched behind  
 The door holding a kitchen knife. I thought  
 About Jackie letting Curly make her  
 On the bumper of my car as I hit the pipe  
 & watched them through the rearview mirror.  
 I saw the fog roll in low & slow  
 Like a stratospheric steamroller covering everything in gauze.  
 I remembered that Rios stole my magic bullets  
 & danced on my records & covered all the doorknobs  
 In the apartment with his jizz.  
 I thought of Kismet & Red Snapper  
 Liars & bad grammar. I wished I knew

What stars I'd be looking at when the clouds cleared  
& the moon finally shone through. I thought  
I knew where I was when Gabriella walked up out of the fog  
& sat next to me on the porch swing.  
Her clothes were strewn with pieces of fog.  
She was smooth but not slick.  
She lived in house with another Gabriella  
Covered from the ceiling to the floorboards in white pine.  
We slept together once but it wasn't any good.  
I jumped out the window before she could introduce me round.  
Can an apparition be both angel & devil I asked?  
I can't answer your question she said.  
Her skin smelled like chamomile tea.  
She was bred to deal with early deaths.  
She had three cousins dead before they were sixteen.  
She lost a horse to a lightning bolt  
A father to science & a mother to shock therapy.  
I watched her do a Kabuki dance once. I tried to say  
We were ten years from the end of the century.  
We were a million miles from civilization.  
We were anything but free.  
I wished the sun would come up in the next minute  
& break this awful spell wide open.  
I choked on my words.

A mountain collapsed inside.  
A hot breath came out of the hole.  
A burning rock pillow slammed in the head  
Singeing my nerves & brain.  
My entire body shook like I was full of giant night crawlers.  
I put my head in her lap & cried.  
She stroked my hair for a thousand hours.  
She said it didn't matter.  
Those people aren't your friends  
& I almost believed her  
& mostly she was right.  
I said you're as powerful as a black woman.  
I said the rock quarry's probably real cold right now.  
I said I was too tired to run down the road.  
I said I wanted my red knife back.  
I said I didn't give a shit about nothing.  
I said I want to know what's really going on.  
I said every man has got to stand trial.  
I said this can't be happening for bullshit.  
I said I can see.  
What can you see she asked?  
I held my wounded finger up to the sky  
& pointed at a hole in the fog where the black night froze  
& watched it close right there & then.

You can't live your life without fear she said  
& she was right. Let go she said  
To the sky. Let go she said  
To the streets & the house  
& the one horse town.  
Let go she said  
& I did.

I'm a Sickening Adult



## Flowers for Beckett

*for James Hoff*

I.

you are not  
a rose

2.

author  
window  
rock

3.

I took my hand  
& put it back  
in my pocket

4.

mirrors

are so

done

## Incomplete Sequence

not dreaming  
seeming tired  
hired right hand  
fired left

## System Note

Your Macintosh's clock is set to a year before 1973.

This may cause certain of your pomes to behave erratically.

## Brilo Pads

inferior  
guitar

AK  
9 I I

numero  
octo

molten  
ego

apology  
bomb

elbow  
orifice

über  
shoe

venus  
de-cockus

dick  
escalade

eminent  
bane

model  
recipient



## Medical Fact

If you take out your heart  
you're dead.

## How to Make it Happen

Take off your pants.

## Six for the Walking Poor

Dog barking in a ditch  
middle of the day

\*

I picked up a piece  
of broken glass  
& opened up my head

\*

The commuter train's whistle  
blows through the trees

The tracks of my thought  
taper off

\*

Yellow petals of  
the china blossom tree  
do not weep for me

\*

I am back  
where I was found.

Your green blanket  
covers the ground.

\*

The geese crane  
thin black necks  
to see who  
the strangers be

## After Odds

Throw down

Ground stroke

Eagle leader

Grip descent

Barter assess

Return stronger

Act dumber

## Double bumper

## Clotheslines Are an Ancient Form of Torture

[illegible]

## Deep Liner to Left

Lust, like the things you think you've lost, never leaves.

## The State of Southern Romanticism

The honeysuckle is in bloom.

Aw — go fuck yourself!

## Nordic Illusion

I thought you were white.

## Then

get a stick  
notched  
& a bow  
rub quickly  
generate  
fiction  
create  
heat  
smoke  
&

## Put the Money in the Ape's Paw

If you aren't lucky  
Some kind of money  
Could cut your foot open.

That would be horrible.

That's why you can't  
Stand on the money.

## Funding for the Latest War Has Graciously Been Provided by the Following

Bandages made by hands of Sri Lankan children for Martha Stewart  
Guns by Philip Morris & Legget and Myers  
Bullets supplied by Exxon & British Petroleum  
Bombs manufactured by IBM, General Motors & Nike  
& soft money donors of president select George Walker Bush  
Latrines brought to you by Coca-Cola  
Saltpeter donated by Pepsi  
Troops by mom & dad

## Hearing

How can you honestly know  
of an impending terrorist attack  
& then claim to be unable to stop it

## I'm a Sickening Adult

[illegible]

John Cheever, Writer, NYC, 1981

*from a photo by Richard Avedon*

John,

Despite all his weather  
(or rather in spite of  
knit tie & pinstriped shirt)  
arms wrapped about himself  
gripping both elbows  
above the waist  
holding on  
with all he's got

Ezra Pound, East Rutherford, New Jersey,  
June 30th, 1958

*from a photo by Richard Avedon*

Pound's scream  
as white & loud  
as the bleached  
background shirt  
splayed white

as his neck  
eyes closed  
face like a fist  
exposed



W.H. Auden, Poet, NYC, March 3rd, 1960

*from a photo by Richard Avedon*

Auden in Winter

sport coat open

no hat on his head

no scarves

no gloves

his face more wrinkled

than his pristine pomes

his eyes like a dump truck's bed

slowly filling with snow

Constellation Haiku

The body falls

at random, like sunlight

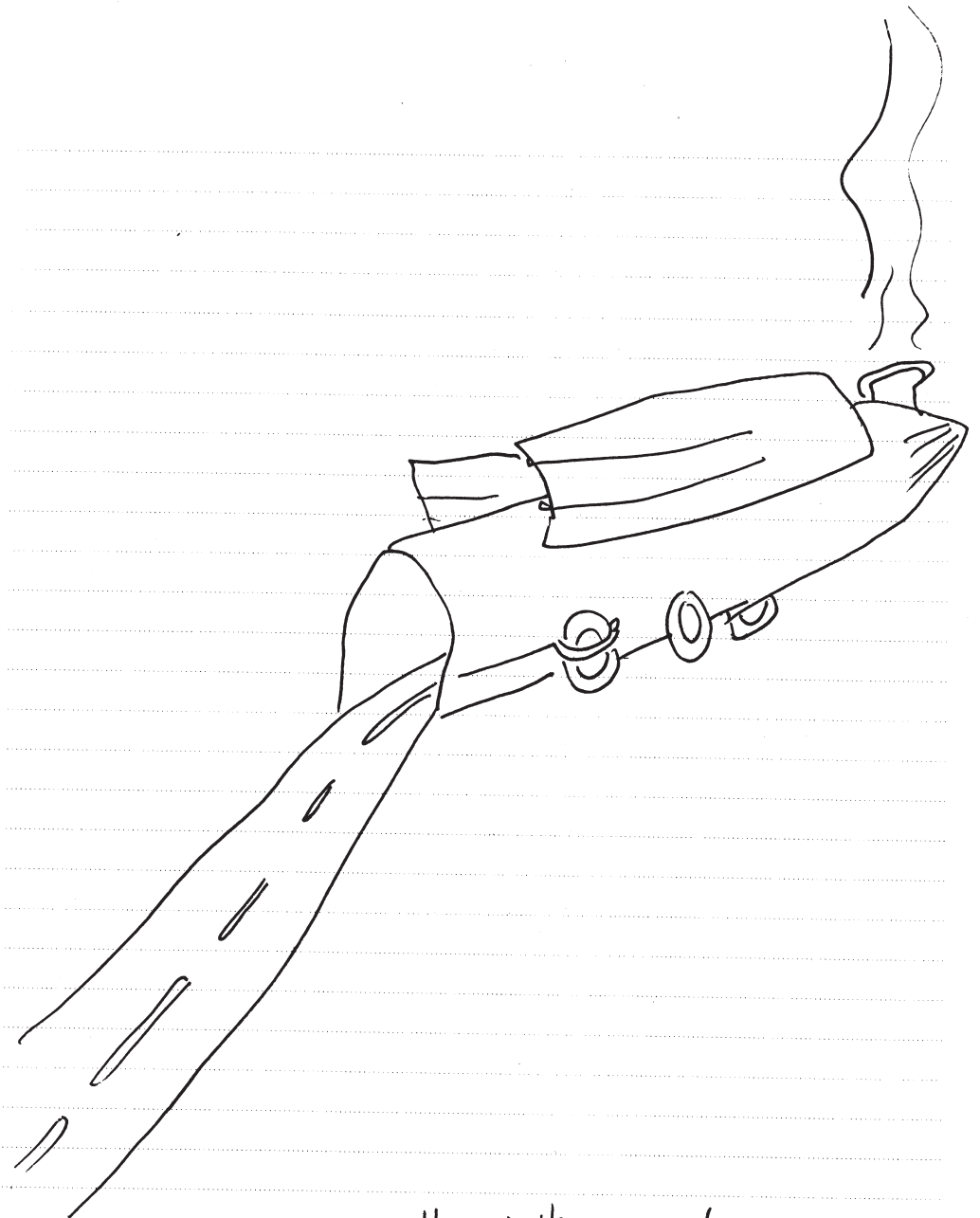
off Coney Island waves

On Saturday in December

I am 33 closing my eyes

rushing ahead with train

## Forecasting



this isn't a road

I remember taking

## Things You Smash

The tiniest things  
a finger nail, a toe or a nose  
then work your way up  
toaster, stereo, television, window  
don't stop at inorganic matter  
go for the neighbors  
the sons & daughters, the husband  
or wife  
why only concentrate on individuals?  
smash the police  
the dentists  
the doctors  
the teachers  
the priests  
the politicians  
the players  
on & on  
till you reach  
the end of  
the line

## Forecasting

Thought clouds forming overhead  
with increased drowsiness

My legs of goose tingle  
& my heart suddenly aflutter

This time next year  
I'll be new again

## Forecasting 4

On the screen the dead appear  
as if to step through  
the curtain & grasp my hand

What's original is love  
each new blood burst  
& brain beat an entity

Promising return or eternal  
loss: a sparrow come to sing  
or a falcon come to hover & prey

## Forecasting 6

Stolen from the bird  
like a parcel  
of whips:

All horrible musicians  
should be run through  
with antlers

## Forecasting 7

I'm not going to eat  
meat anymore

Just my parents  
& my children

My wife  
my students &

My teachers  
& then I think I'll be

Done

## Forecasting 8

I comb my hair  
& take some aspirin

I harbor reservations  
at the finest restaurants  
about my closest friends

I know nothing of the sky  
except that it's there  
when I am, breathing  
when I breathe

## Forecasting 9

Deep down  
most guys  
are pussies

## Forecasting 10

Confessed to a co-worker  
my life in shambles.  
Lost another game.  
Will see my daughter  
briefly tonight.

The train moves on  
through passages of darkness  
interspersed with light.

## Forecasting 11

Not one history but many. Remember when we spotted Johnny Cash working a New Jersey tollboth? I was asking direction to Ikea of all fucking places & he just kept nodding at me & saying, “Yup I do,” like a hillbilly groom. Finally his eyes flashed behind his maroon tinted glasses & he crooned, “Are we gonna keep going round in circles or are you going to actually ask me to tell you where it is?” We all laughed. He was right. All I’d been doing was asking if he knew where it was. When we pulled away from the tollbooth you said, “Wasn’t that Johnny Cash?” & I said, “You’re right. Oh man, just imagine the song that fucker’s gonna write.”

## Forecasting 12

Levity of breath & being  
scars sifted & swollen  
a solitary leaf upon my leg  
not stiff but fluid  
a movement back &  
throughout, the bricks of  
the building moan  
window sigh, a flat blue  
sky, leaving Brooklyn  
behind for the day  
not mind, road  
stop gas stop  
stop & laugh & chat  
stop sun on my face  
& red beard aglow  
like a bloody ax  
the sausage of the soul  
karmically ironclad  
we’ll take all your  
bits & pieces & shift  
them in a viscous

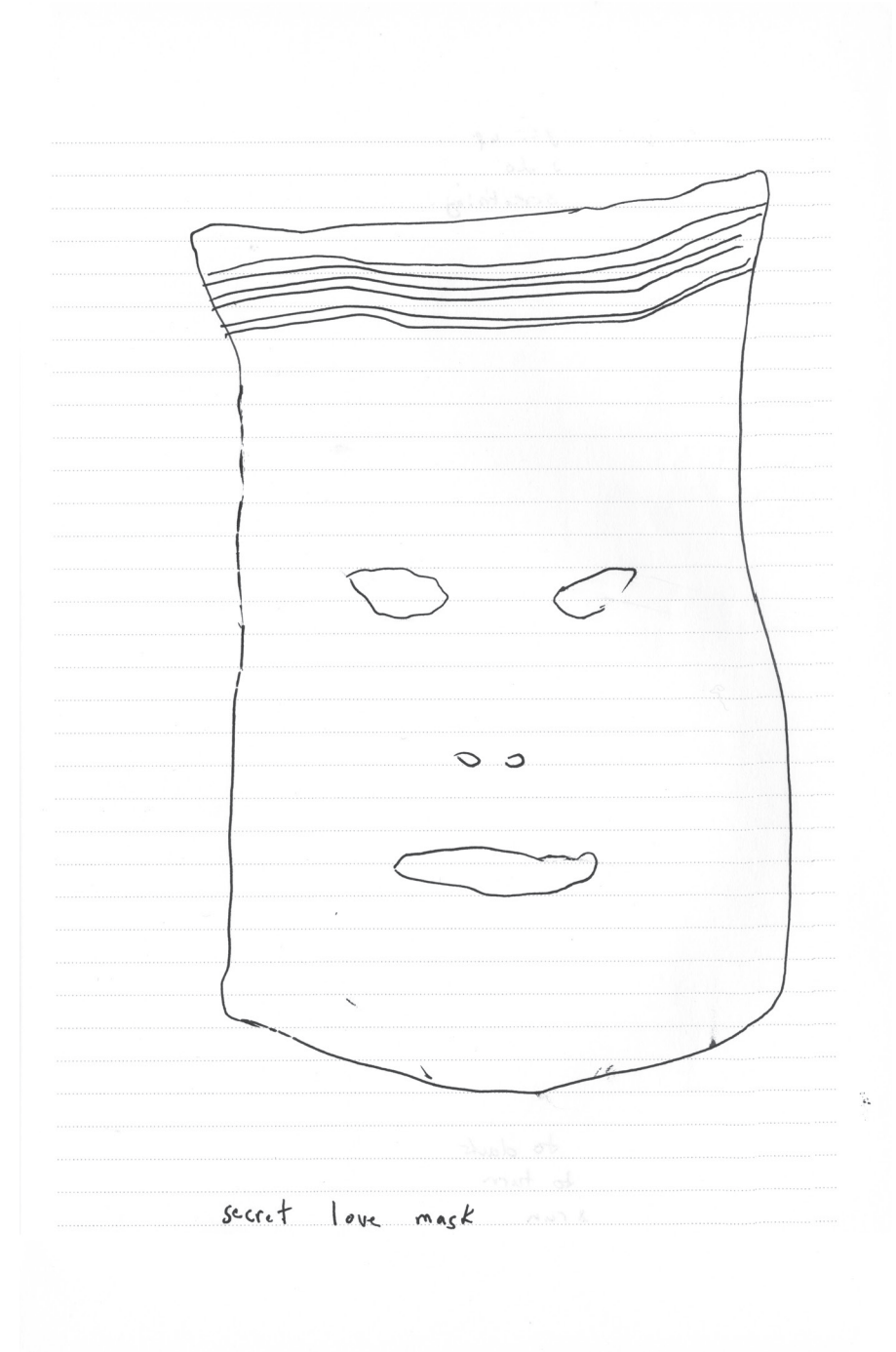
skin sack & then the blood  
will congeal & the freezer  
& then the fire



## Confessions of a Bathrobe Poet

A note on the title:

The original & forever Bathrobe Poet is Filip Marinovich who I first heard use the term at the second Anti-reading held at Tonic in NYC (circa 2001). This particular affair was in the basement of Tonic and so Filip's knubby, faux-velvet maroon bathrobe seemed a perfect outfit for Loudmouth Collective & Ugly Duckling's tribute to the participatory, anti-establishment ethos of Fluxus. I use the term in the same spirit — & may no one read these poems comfortably.



## Averted Epiphany

It's the end of the world  
& the sky is just right  
like a vast pair of plum underpants

My room is inside my room  
where the windows  
smile like guillotines  
but that's way too cheesy  
& romantic which I'm  
not in the mood for

## Take Courage

All the monkeys  
in my family tree  
are hanging  
off me

## Nuptials

The two of us laughing  
framed by darkness

To offset the chaos  
of our internal  
stress machines

## Nocturne

The sky's damaged  
blue light  
against the pin prick  
immensity  
of a few lit windows

## Expectations

*for Luna Eve Nelson*

The night is cool  
& you are away in your own world  
in my world McCoy Tyner is being too loud  
at the piano which is strange for a man  
who is usually so soft & stimulating  
in his delivery, maybe it's the time  
of evening, past I am & getting later  
not really a school night anymore.  
Then again it could be his band  
egging him on or maybe it's the times  
mid-Seventies, the decade escalating  
& nothing much to show for a president  
removed except another dunce  
in the oval office & in my room  
sleeps the moon.  
There are no more drugs here.  
Tonight I'm content to watch over her  
reading from various books piled high  
on round table, if all the nights  
this summer were like this I shouldn't

have cause to complain, more writing  
I'd desire & then that too, my hand  
upon a dark warm thigh, the sound  
of the ocean.

## Lemon Peel Sensation

The gladiola of a decade  
not the fake mask of a dollar  
but a genuine memory  
enhanced by tinkling  
black & white keys.

## Back Story

Who's my host  
I want to know  
  
The light falls  
flatly & then spleens

me with its hands  
I'm seven again

the air is green  
with vegetables

& grass  
is parallel lines

a foreign country  
like the heart

on Thanksgiving day  
watching a football game

## The Buddha Weighing in on Feet

“Creatures without feet have my  
love  
& likewise those that have two  
feet  
& then those that have four feet I  
love  
& those too that have many  
feet...”

## East Coast Blues

Three hundred years old  
& some change I stand  
in the naked window  
alone, Election Day jazz  
on the radio as clouds roll in  
from the Western Plains

## On the Writing of This

*with Edmund Berrigan*

I had a marvelous dinner  
I also have sold Alabama torso  
Roe makes a fine marinade  
((I'm blown to bits))  
Finely in New York  
Up to the rim with newspeak  
Simmer & Stew  
Let's blow off work  
Go bowling things  
Dropping off  
Systems of measurement  
Slick slack, sickening sacks  
This town matters  
Your deck's in tatters  
Bush whack cortisone  
Jettison the too puffy lips  
Desecrate the mummies  
Take to opal estuaries  
That gorge themselves  
On capsized captains

Oh, wrap my mummy in paraffin  
So I can begin hanging out  
With him anytime

## Garden State

Back out to Jersey  
to see Grandma & Grandpa's ghost  
past the giant turbines & furnaces  
of the Marcel paper plant churning out  
blue-gray lumpy heads of smoke  
past the planes descending  
on a suspecting Newark airstrip  
past the town blending into wooshing sounds  
past the meadows of tall swamp grasses  
past the concrete & the glass & the tin strip malls  
past the stadiums & the sparse tree line  
past the old maids & the big hair & the smokers  
past the ball fields & the movie houses & the town dumps  
past the clouds & the acetylene sky & the memories  
of driving to the hideaway with friends  
full of narcotics & speeding radios  
past the tombstones of schools & offices & police stations  
past the bridge which brings me back home  
to the woods & the shore & the sea

## Somethin Filip Sd Keeps Poppin Into My Head

"It might be a holiday for the postman  
but not for the poets of America."



Write Something



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Born on December 7, 1969, Jeffrey Joe Nelson grew up in the Garden State. His name was misspelled in his birth certificate — three f's. The road has led him through North Carolina, Florida, California, Italy, Holland, Cuba, Brazil, and Prague, bringing him to Brooklyn where he lives with his wife Imaan, daughter Luna and son Ilias. In 1998, he founded *Greetings*, a magazine of the sound arts. He has coached basketball and taught English at the Coalition School for Social Change in New York City for the last ten years. For further reading, look for these chapbooks: *a car/A Pome* from Lew Gallery Editions, and *Caption My Caption* and *24 Golden Bears* from Gneiss Books.

