This digital proof is provided for free by UDP.

It documents the existence of the book *Road of a Thousand Wonders* by Jeffrey Joe Nelson, which was published in 2011 in an edition of 900.

If you like what you see in this proof, we encourage you to purchase the book directly from UDP, or from our distributors and partner bookstores, or from any independent bookseller.

If you find our Digital Proofs program useful for your research or as a resource for teaching, please consider making a donation to UDP.

If you make copies of this proof for your students or any other reason, we ask you to include this page.

Please support nonprofit & independent publishing by making donations to the presses that serve you and by purchasing books through ethical channels.

UGLY DUCKLING PRESSE
uglyducklingpresse.org
ROAD OF A THOUSAND WONDERS
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

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
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
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

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
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

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

recorded 12/19/04
11:48 pm to 12:48 am
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.
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

7.
Marry a native but remember marriage lasts for life.

8.
Live.
Grow old.
& die.
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
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.

* * *


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 ____________________________

* * *


* * *

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


* * *

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.
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.

* * *


* * *

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:
    Montmartre, Pigalle, La Jumelle,
    Le Monde
    Twilo

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

Looking 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

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
6.

Being called is exciting
to let the wounds blossom
to take the key & break the lock
breathe & loosen
seams open

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
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”
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, 
egungenstmanly 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
& 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 aire

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, Charle ville, 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,
borracho, 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
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?
The Kitchen Window

for Imaan

is
so
close

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?

Big Bear
to little bear
do you hear me

Big Bear
to little bear
are you there

Big Bear
to little bear
come in
LY

if we explode

we explode

clear the eyes

so what

you're not caught in a storm

the sky is a mellow purple

we can always say

we're not wearing thin

what a gas

like two tires

& call it a day

we've been built

to last... but

* * *

LY
b/c

(1)

rooftops

closses

closses

closses

closses

closses

closses

(2)

blue shelves

crosses

blue selves

blue selves

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

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
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

1.
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

wrapped around me

keep me prisoner
*  

Mira

I

Don’t think

It’s safe

For

A glass elevator

To move

This fast

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
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
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 refrigerator
So I took a shower, towed 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
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.

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.
**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 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
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

1.

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 über
guitar shoe

AK venus
911 de-cockus

numero dick
octo escalate

molten eminent
go bane

apology model
bomb recipient

elbow
orifice
Medical Fact

If you take out your heart you’re dead.

How to Make it Happen

Take off your pants.

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 bummer

Clotheslines Are an Ancient Form of Torture

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

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
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 politicos
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 tollbooth? 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 1 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-Sevenites, 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
Acknowledgments

Much thanks must be given to:
My family — Ed & Gina Nelson, Angela Murta, Aimee & Carolyn; Jed Shahar, Julien Poirier, James Hoff, Motts, Rusty, Natty-Bo, Filiposis — your input has been most valuable; Imaan Selim, most wondrous & rare; Luna Eve & Ilias Edward Cooledge Nelson — the future be yours; the people responsible for the following publications, in which some of these pomes may (or may not) have appeared: Lungfull!, Gneiss Press Editions, Fold, New York Nights, Lew Gallery Editions & Ty — find them & read them. Isabel Sobral Campos — for the hours.
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.