

100 Poems (After the Japanese)

Paul E Nelson



Dedicated to Paul E Nelson Sr.,
December 27, 1928 - May 11, 2014

After the Japanese (1)

Eaves've abandon'd perennial winter
drip this year; early Sarcococca, Indian
Plum get (if no Polar Vortex) sun, brisk
Cascadia days. Our only sacrifice - dry
flats & blood pulled right out the nose.

After The Japanese (2)

Winter's still here but daffodils remain
out the loop, shoots pierce dirtline.
Glaciers atop Cascades, among winter's
highlights w/ Sweetbox & its walk-
stopping winter perfume.

After The Japanese (3)

O, the corridor walk, the cold
Wednesday. How calm the February lake
& possum who rattles last night's
garbage. Must he fatten on compost
& bags of half-eaten doritos?

After The Japanese (4)

When you take the pedestrian corridor
down Angeline, up 133 steep Ferdinand
stairs, walk east might see Baker (Kulshan) or
Cascade glaciers. West, stairs & a legacy
of C.C.C.'s *Yes, we can.* (When we could.)

After The Japanese (5)

Facing Mt. Olympus past
the moss-hung rainforest
the silver ribbon of the Hoh
River's only sound in this

relentlessly quiet cedar cathedral.

After The Japanese (6)

When you see the High Hoh
 Bridge span the river after
 Glacier Creek merges with it,
 approximating sacred. Daylight half
 past the sound of falling pine needles.

After The Japanese (7)

When you look up past
 the heaven call'd the High
 Divide, the moon's likely the Ripe
 Plum Moon, Thimbleberry Moon
 or Moon To Gather Bark for Hats.

After The Japanese (8)

Our two bedroom flat's
 Southeast & down from
 Capitol Hill. Thus we live &
 drive adjacent to the often foggy
 lake past houses w/ enough closet space.

After The Japanese (9)

The purple Periwinkle (Vinca
 Minor) struggles all winter to
 pop up & plead spring's case
 just to feel the boot of the dog
 walker & weight of February snow.

After The Japanese (10)

Crescent Moon-shaped hunk

of land (Cascadia)'s where
what's further west is east &
sea meets water & water
learns to land any way it can.

After The Japanese (11)

This side the wide sea a path
winds through islands, universes of
Mandlebrot coastline. Where Sudhana'd
meet Chief Joseph, remember the settler phrase
for *fight no more forever*.

After The Japanese (12)

Let the gales of hell blow through
the paths to the condo association's lawyer
& bury his beemer in eternal snowdrift.
Then for a while we put away
arson fantasies & enjoy breakfast sunchokes.

After The Japanese (13)

From inside the parked Honda
winter of almost no rain
arboretum pond still iced days
after snow and tyrant King
(King shadow) cleans the forgotten catbox.

After The Japanese (14)

Like a Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun painting,
businessmen ceremonially masked, usually
drooling, it may be libido's outlet to
fixate on scent of late winter witch
hazel days before Valentine's.

After The Japanese (15)

It is for your sake
I hike down the CCC
corridor up 133 Ferdinand stairs
step light on mossy sidewalks, try to
remember where the lilacs were.

After The Japanese (16)

Though we're not on the trail to
Glacier Meadows, should we hear the sound
of landing pine needles w/ each
September breeze
off Mt. Olympus,
I'll second the hallucination.

After The Japanese (17)

Even when the gods were before
or after this period of parenthesis, goddess
knows water off the Stuck is glacial till
that sticks to molecules of hydrogen dioxide
clouding itself into Commencement.

After The Japanese (18)

Wavelets ripple/dissolve into holy
(tiny) stones on Obstruction Pass beaches.
& gather'd stones posted on altars
store light & secrets we confide to those
who we'd bow to as if they didn't know.

After The Japanese (19)

Even at a time when the cat lapping
water's the loudest sound in South
King County, here's how you'd abandon
a life of blistering orgasms drown'd out
by the fear of another abortion.

After The Japanese (20)

Even the nation's kitchen cd be a soul
 kitchen (antidote) to life of nihilism.
How the spiritual chase cd be a search
 for right plant names, right stance
 or watching where the lichen forms.

After The Japanese (21)

She sd *I'll be right there* & because,
 we wait/find the wait maddening as
 traffic, urging on the daylight with candle offerings
slog through the Starving Moon, the Goose Moon
 the Cracked Branch Moon, the Nose-Bleed Moon.

After The Japanese (22)

The death of a planet's climate
 system in fits & starts *so random*
 she'd say, when the breath of the Cracked
Branch Moon gets a word in edgewise
 to the Moon of Angled Rain in Waves.

After The Japanese (23)

When you can see the moon above
 Cascadia the Goose Moon or Perpetually
 Late Moon, one urges the Vinca Minor to again
become erect. What else is spring for
 besides planting and blossoming?

After The Japanese (24)

Hike the 18 miles to Mt. Olympus maybe
seen from Blue Glacier (not where Greeks
wd've seen Gods) but leave the first
 of the lentils or polenta with butter and
 pearl jasmine as a raingod's libation.

After The Japanese (25)

If you want a real nickname, hike
just past the avalanche chute, start
fire with ceremonial intention, resist
attempts such as *Goat Boy, Pocket
Man* or even *Blood Hawk*.

After The Japanese (26)

If the giant maple leaves
on the Stuck Riverside path
had a heart, wd sing a song
for a dog/bear fast as the current
cd push an empty Miller can.

(Start of Marblemount poems)

After The Japanese (27)

Aside quick winter Skagit, signs
Beaver'd been here. Eagles rest, fat
in bare trees. Wake the teapot for puer
registers its crankiness but fat moss never
minds whitening of it & sky by light snow.

After The Japanese (28)

Snow puts a soft patina on the ropes
of the February mountain garden. Only
color's fire's window reflection & memory
of last night's hellebore blossoms
floating w/ a lit candle in a bowl of water.

After The Japanese (29)

My winter wish is to pick
thimbleberries near Mt. Olympus
but the Chinese witch hazel's scent's
what's here now & summer pines

for Cascadia rainrainrain.

After The Japanese (30)

The lichen & the day moon
Graves'd say & light another smoke
always in the wake of suicide I'd wonder.
Nothing like a corpse on the floor, dead
from their own hand to sudden end a childhood.

After The Japanese (31)

At daybreak (late after Wandering Poet saké with
Cook) how white the trees one'd wonder & white
the sun barely there through snow clouds & how
small falling snowflakes start out so unique &
end up so flat on the Marblemount ground then melt.

After The Japanese (32)

In the soft light of Skagit sun diffused
through clouds'd drop light snow,
how spangnum moss'd hang there
a lot like lichen but barely moving
'til our footsteps flush out several thrushes.

After The Japanese (33)

Why the old poets who won't
ever grace the cover of Sports Illustrated
& make a life by a river or in the woods
then wonder why I'd not read enough,
& sing in my head once they've died?

After The Japanese (34)

Snow or no snow, moss endures every winter day
same as the thrush or the fat eagle in the tree
branch across the quick river. Coffee in
the mountain cabin so incredibly good & same
color as the Boston-style of my youth.

After The Japanese (35)

Winter daylight loses its resolve as March
approaches, makes the wall of stars so
surprising when the clouds settle in
just below the tree line and the Wandering
Poet saké bottle dies a good soldier's death.

After The Japanese (36)

In Skagit winter fields, sounds
of lonely autos eventually incur over new
soft and serious snow, cd be how
one field becomes a *Garden of the Benefactor*
of Orphans and the Solitary. Or maybe just poets.

After The Japanese (37)

Though you left me to my cat &
Slaughter farm dome, it's not me
with my roots showing. Not you being called
Mom at the toddler gym, showing baby
the arts of rhythm & the bouncy house.

After The Japanese (38)

The bamboo behind the hot tub's
bent over by the weight of February
snow. Is my reticence for an afternoon walk
sloth, my poor choice of footwear or my
addiction to the sight & warmth of fire?

After The Japanese (39)

Though I try to hide it, in my
 smile it appears - the lack ('til
 recent) of dental insurance. Still
 my laparoscopic belly laughs every
 day/poverty hardly bothers me no more.

After The Japanese (40)

I never realized how much I love
 bare tree branches saggy w/
 new snow 'til the sight in a storm
 by the Skagit. I can love Cascadia
 winter knowing I can drive out of it.

After The Japanese (41)

 The wool coat wet with Skagit
 snow, but soft & dry underneath.
How flakes melt hitting the river
 & snow safe on branches 'til
 liberated by the roar of the plow.

After The Japanese (42)

 I've left my love
 w/ the baby, the rain
 & the cable tv. Is it a function of perception
 (or wisdom) to see how love now manifests
 as my father's smile in my daughter's face?

After The Japanese (43)

Should it ever happen we'd walk the Skagit River
 forest path as February snow fell & snapped
 branches or even whole trees surrendered,
 be sure we'd note the sound of falling needles
 & enjoy from here all drama trees try to provide.

After The Japanese (44)

Ex-lover, what you won't realize,
love won't stop when the relationship
does, as Robin sd, how he loved you then
& wd touch you as you'd walk by in your naked dream self w/
all the glow you left in the palm of my hand.

After The Japanese (45)

Like a rowboater or kayaker
pruning the lichen-festooned dwarf
spruce on The Loleta Lake, or Lorine
intuiting dreams of Lynx mounds, how
one falls in love with a place's beyond me.

After The Japanese (46)

The dim cottage cut out
of the heart of Marblemount's bright
enough for me & the solitude, views
of snow-festooned vine maples & other
leafless trees, people enough for me.

After The Japanese (47)

Water is form flowing green
in time Garcia says, so not the driven wave but
leaf drift downstream in green winter
Skagit, where only crashes are branches
of bare trees patient to wait for this here snow.

After The Japanese (48)

Tend the fire & watch the fire
 'til *mysterious beings form in the air*
 the inside's response to fat & relentless
February snow & the 27 shades of black
 Lorine sd Van Gogh saw in capitalism.

After The Japanese (49)

Drive by the suicide house today
 see how drugs, religion even iPhones
 & noserings won't change you, you
 just needed to stand there, maybe sway
or chant the chant someone chants through you.

After The Japanese (50)

How can I tell her the fierce
 love I have is for fire that it
keeps me warm, hypnotizes
 settles into a better rhythm
 & watches me as I fall asleep?

After The Japanese (51)

 The we all know summer's coming
 maybe even a week or two of spring
& bowler hats made of snow
 won't gather atop fence posts, intersections
 of vine maple branches, how wish it'd never end.

(End of Marblemount poems)

After The Japanese (52)

Lie next to my snoring spouse, up
past 1AM thanks to the 4P soy latté
& the first day of AWP, how pass on a
conference laminate, look past the emptiness
of the professional monument to nothing.

After The Japanese (53)

Her Facebook pleas for her new husband
missing w/ the only clothes on his back &
the ashes of his mother, how we'd fear *the best*
Italian acupuncturist in Kent has done the most
harm, stopped the flow of his own qi.

After The Japanese (54)

Once by a waterfall, (Cascade, Snoqualmie,
Multnomah) its mist lives in your solar plexus
forever. Now how to rebound that sense of grace
in any pure human act of
falling short.

After The Japanese (55)

Some day you find the suicide
they worried about on Facebook
was a false alarm & you already've
rehearsed that rare 2nd chance & ask
who travels with the ashes of their Ma?

After The Japanese (56)

Abandon the path under the Wood
 Frog Moon because there is no path, often
 no moon out in March Cascadia or one
 eaten by nimbostratus or rendered irrelevant
 by the wisdom of the market.

After The Japanese (57)

As Mount Olympus blows another breeze
liberates pine needles past Blue Glacier
(& meadows it protects) candlewax becomes
legend. Psilocybin fascination wears off to
prehend the muscle memory of clarity.

After The Japanese (58)

Better to have avoided coffee
w/ chicory last night 4p, never
keep the guitar tuned in dreams, clang
of off chords not Monk-like, even disturbing
the path of the Budding Moon.

After The Japanese (59)

On the path to Mt. Olympus, past
High Hoh Bridge, past Elk Lake, past
icy azul of Blue Glacier & glacial zephers
liberate hemlock needles well within
a shout of Piper's Bellflowers.

After The Japanese (60)

Let the cherry blossoming begin
in the Budding Moon of Standard Time
in the season of endless Sarcococca
(Sweetbox) perfume, how to tulip & daffodil
filch & retard spring's velocity 'til lilacs.

After The Japanese (61)

Not a prompt but a response to Sei
& chickadees who wait for daylight
savings time unlike the fence
builders next door, there Saturday 8A.
Fences make good neighbors, not their erection.

After The Japanese (62)

Could carrier pigeon it or note
in bottle it. Could tweet or (stop)
telegram (stop) even note tied with rope
on a brick through your picture window but
that's not a glow in my palm my dear unfriend.

After The Japanese (63)

Dear George Hugo Boldt & yr plaid jacket
& bow ties & strikedown of empire (& its
National Guard gassing of fishers in mists
of the 70s Puyallup) & Billy Frank who'd say *culture*
where you say *culvert* & let the kings run.

After The Japanese (64)

To be so open to be a canvas
for psyche projections from the un
hinged & cancerous to be a pedofile
or batterer (only in their mindseyes.) Once
the imagination rots, plan the burial.

After The Japanese (65)

On the bluff past Appleton Pass
surveys the Boulder Creek watershed
its spring & thirteen switchbacks, find out
what's *more alive than I ought to be* & how
the unknown self's the one seeks a hearing.

After The Japanese (66)

If I give myself a pre-bedtime suggestion:

dream of an innocent pillow, no dream about
the Lady, the Buddha, or last year's
hummingbirds flying out the hands of children,
but a bearded old man with an axe.

After The Japanese (67)

You could float on (okay) above
this burning spaceship amidst
shooting stars & satellites guide
drones w/ the Cherry Blossom Moon
not yet an ad for Amazon or Jack-in-the-Box.

After The Japanese (68)

Little Sister wd blast a cubic mile
aim for Boeing's Defense division
leaving a stack of spent matches in Spirit
Lake, turn the Toutle River's North Fork
into a pumice eating moonscape for a score.

After The Japanese (69)

In my morning solitude
a thousand words, just a 1,000 words
all I ask & all I see's your dancing cats
meal photos & emails in this large closet
they want me to call my "studio."

After The Japanese (70)

When on the spring evening
the March wind disturbs the rest
of the screen door, look up from the blue
hum of your computer know
rabo de nube is news much as Crackbook.

After The Japanese (71)

Less famous the waves which lullaby
the Clayoquot Sound rock island, same
as the caves beyond the loop at Cape Flattery
carved careful out of stone as well & winds there
that dry sleeves just as drizzle gets them wet.

After The Japanese (72)

Just this side of the Cascades
(whose reflections festoon Lake Xacuabš)
huckleberries not yet in bloom, nor thimble
berries, nor is the velocity of lilac blossoms
yet prehended in these here waning mists of winter.

After The Japanese (73)

We can only take so much
Cascadia rainrainrain & a walk
through the Witt winter garden's
sarcacocca clouds / hits of witch hazel
rachets up the velocity of blossoming.

After The Japanese (74)

Search over the wide sea
for a triple seven left here
weeks ago & refuses to blip
any screen. We'd all want answers
only an Amelia could give.

After The Japanese (75)

The mid-stream boulder on which
one might do laundry, eat polenta
& wait for a military helicopter
still divides the stream, reunites
the lost backpacker w/ those capable of grief.

After The Japanese (76)

Each syllable, writ summing up
a life to that point's a window
viewable from Constitution, jewels
for which a pig'd be sacrificed
& island life be turned by bike, kayak.

After The Japanese (77)

See how clear & bright Orion?
Constellations always conspiring
lives above cloud city, patient
enough for a Cuban girl who'd find
her penchant for cigarettes, slot machines.

After The Japanese (77b)

See how clear & bright constellations
after rare spring Cascadia gusts or
consciousness ignoring car ads & fine
print of pharmaceutical ads? Stars
burn, a moment of interstellar lucidity.

After The Japanese (78)

Is it forever that March rain
will fall in Seattle? The sun shower
& saggy downed catkins are answer
enough. And now thousands of tiny
spiders on my car. No. Bits of catkins.

After The Japanese (79)

When I looked down at the old matted-fur cat
barely able to walk anymore, even up out of his own
wastes, I'd apologized for all my unkindnesses &
imagined he said: "That's what we're here for, &
if the good outweighs the bad, we stay."

After The Japanese (80)

Distress of a just dead pet mitigated
by matted fur, breakdown of the liver,
your shivering seizures might've been
avoided by an injection. Helping, she suggested
you wanted to die alone.

After The Japanese (81)

There is no escaping the dirt
yet suppleness never gets in there. A cat
corpse can hide (tho a still furry tail end sticks
out) but a day later a ghost cry subtle
in the bedroom. Fur clumps yet festoon the carpet.

After The Japanese (81b)

From a world where just being a mammal's
not enough (*he was just a cat*) the only escape's
dirt under the porch, marked w/ a "Z" for when
organs shut down & w/ them legs can't even
make it to the nearby bush to die alone.

After The Japanese (82)

Should I live long enough, she
at my deathbed may watch consciousness
lift out of my eyes & smoke rise
from the burning of my bones, skin, teeth, then
laugh, as my spirit will, having outlived capitalism.

After The Japanese (83)

It's 2am when I realize I'll be hung
over & morning comes, dreams lost &
wander into Trev's meditation. Soon,
Yoshi will disperse geese & my shoe

soles steal a peck of cherry blossoms.

(Nanaimo Ferry - 4.12.14)

After The Japanese (84)

Should I blame my late cat for
paroxysms of grief that bubble up
in latihan, in the forest, wandering past
the pet store or is it the first blast of what's
to come? I call Pop to talk about Las Medias Blancas.

(Nanaimo Ferry - 4.12.14)

After The Japanese (85)

A late morning in spring:
snow atop peaks a sight to savor
before forests beyond them burn or
are decimated by bugs. From the ferry forty-five
minutes out, the city assumes its proper proportion.

(Nanaimo Ferry - 4.12.14)

After The Japanese (86)

After two long days, Kulshan from I-5, from VIU
west of Nanaimo from the Chelan, leaving Sidney
(*quite a backing up today* the purser'd say.) *What
mountain is that?* she'd ask. Baker. A volcano. Come
to Cascadia for rain. Flee because of fire.

(Chelan Ferry - 4.13.14)

After The Japanese (87)

A string of gems, capped w/ ice, caps fire /
holds history, oversees green/tolerates stumps
 & the humans that love them. These Cascade Mountains
 help water reach the sea, help battered fish spawn, die &
 leave eyes to the first bird smells the corpse.

(Chelan Ferry - 4.13.14)

After The Japanese (88)

Let me show off these, islands of green
dot the Salish Sea! Even the shoes of the
 fisherman's wife (some jive-ass slippers)'d
 find a home here, beyond the shimmering,
below the Madrones, between the dying empires.

(Chelan Ferry - 4.13.14)

After The Japanese (89)

In my hard chair as the reading's
about to end, coffee's getting cold/ pastries've
just arrived / a moment of silence
 as a cricket sounds, but not a cricket, a ring tone
of someone didn't silence their cellphone.

(Chelan Ferry - 4.13.14)

After The Japanese (90)

Were I a rock in the Salish Sea
 would bare my chest for wily madrones
wonder how low branches of the family tree
 get cut off/ form ghost limbs, wonder how the hierarchy
 of madrone branches, laugh as blossoms drop onto my fur.

After The Japanese (91)

If only our world was always a whorl of hail &
Easter greetings, thin layers of April sunset
rays illuminating rain and weddings weddings
weddings to toast the couple, cut the cake,
have a scent of how it all starts.

After The Japanese (92)

After the rare/angled/April rain
looks like hail on the neighbor roof but
isn't, robin loves the pale morning azalea
sings as if nothing happened & we still complain
about seeds of the cottonwood tree sticking to feet.

After The Japanese (93)

From the perimenopausal sofa the view
of the monastery has appeal, retreat
from the world of hormones & diapers.
Are we worthy of the 2 year old's improvised
dance to The Jazz Messengers' *Moanin'*?

After The Japanese (94)

Not the pink snow of spring cherry blossoms
a global warmed wind flings here from
Fukushima or Sacramento, past the p-
patch to color gutters pink / rearrange
(for a moment) the mechanism of perception.

After The Japanese (95)

Mother never made it Pop'd say abt why
he'd not eat sea creatures or any fish, how
his heart'd (wisely) flame out @ 85 on the day
for Mothers, & blooming ceanothus & bits

of bone in the urn ensure he won't come back.

MN - 5.15.14

After The Japanese (96)

To Elmhurst where the elms long ago
surrendered to Dutch Elm disease, ready
for him to make oak tree leaves stutter
or my own descent into *Jesus Christ!* as
punctuation but please never *It's no good.*

MN - 5.15.14

After The Japanese (97)

The word *grief* can't suffice
for agony of being a four year old again,
murmuring *Daddy* through snot in the latihan,
search thru the mac for an mp3 w/ his voice
must be in here somewhere.

MN - 5.15.14

After The Japanese (98)

In this old basement flat the urine
smell dissipates, a wall, a dresser, a
fridge festooned w/ family photos, an
improvised Nelson museum, my bad
high school haircut unfortunate to enshrine.

Chgo - 5.17.14

After the Japanese (99)

*I always found the ceremony involving burial,
internment, very meaningful, almost celebratory the
mature poet'd say & how we'd know what's inevitable
yet not be prepared, not even assured winter's over
in Chicago May. Only one last fence for him to jump.*

Chgo - 5.17.14

After the Japanese (100)

Somehow they reeled him in. Two brothers
looking over from beyond. Steered him past almost
every abutment into a safe landing place where he
could cross his arms and look relaxed & "twenty years
younger" once the blood stopped.

9:54A
Chgo - 5.17.14

P.S.

Later than Seattle, Chicago
lilacs at their peak May 11 for
mothers may have festooned hats
with them for the day & Pop
cd start his journey outward.