

Fact Checking

In 1962 when I was leaving India with Gary Snyder
I saw a necklace, called a "beggars necklace"
made of semi precious stones that I wanted
Gary said, yes you can buy it
if you learn the real names of all the stones
(never pass up an opportunity for self education)

The New Yorker magazine is doing a profile of Snyder
and I told the reporter, Dana Goodyear, this story
and showed her the necklace.

A New Yorker fact checker, Chris Jennings, called me up yesterday
and wanted to know
how many different stones there were in the necklace
Dana wrote that there were "dozens"
I went and got the necklace and counted the different kinds of stones
over the phone to the fact checker
Eight. Different kinds of stones

Red, orange, green, milky white, blue
mossy green, mottled brown, glittery rust.

September 17, 2008

**I'm Very Busy Now
So I Can't Answer All Those Questions
About Beat Women Poets**

A startled melancholy underlies all
—the party's over for the dollar

“Blood splattered wall paper
would find a substantial niche market”

Is it that you don't “want” to do it
or is it that you “can't” make

the private public
like the poet

But does the “public”
want to hear it?

U.S. has a lot of enemies
Are they mine too?

—Not a very nice night
I'm stuffing a long woolen muffler
into this person's mouth

March 4, 2010

**Seventy-Seven
Beautiful and Adorable Things
for Arthur Okamura's 77Th Birthday**

1. A very beautiful thing is the clay cup from your Kyushu family
2. An adorable thing is the face of a child you have drawn on a melon in the garden
3. or King Charles Charley sleeping on his back
4. Simply beautiful is the great blue heron trying to get into
your tightly guarded fish pond
5. and the way you draw Einstein
6. and the way you draw yourself
7. and the way your draw all those naked ladies
8. An especially beautiful thing is watching you play ping pong on TV
after you have eaten one of Margot Doss's brownies
9. Both adorable and beautiful is when you draw from the right side of your
brain
10. and doze on the right side of your brain
11. and take a shower with the right side of your brain
12. and drive a car with the right side of your brain
13. Those quail eggs are simple and beautiful
14. as are Kitty's decorations at Christmas
15. Barack Obama's lips are very adorable when you mold them in Play-Doh
16. Quite beautiful is Ryoan-ji's classic stone garden
17. and your painterly appreciation of it
18. Disgustingly un-adorable is Dick Cheney on TV

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19. and George Bush falling off his mountain bike
20. and falling off his couch all by himself watching the Superbowl
21. and getting a bruise on his face
22. Refreshingly beautiful is a clear morning after heavy rain
23. when you wear your vest of silk
24. and make a perfect pot of rice
25. and a monarch butterfly nonchalantly flies through the open door
26. and lands on top of your pen while you draw
27. Beautiful and adorable things that you never paint are unicorns
and cherry blossoms
28. Sometimes adorable are the flowering tree dahlias which have taken
your garden
29. but never need to be watered
30. It is beautiful when much praise for insights are given
31. especially when they are yours and you just made them up on the spot
32. Really beautiful is a Bob Creeley poem you haven't ever seen before
that mentions you by name
33. or when someone compares you to Rembrandt
34. or refers to you as the Michelangelo of Bolinas
35. You have a bad dream and consult a dream interpreter
who tells you the dream is actually beautiful
36. Hilary Clinton visiting in town is holding forth about a recent event-
several people stand near her, but it is you she keeps looking at as she
speaks

37. You've lost something, start to look for it, and find it right under your nose
38. Someone gives you drawing paper of very fine quality made in Belgium and you immediately do a charming drawing of Charley's profile
39. which the neighbor's envious dog then tries to pee on
40. It is both beautiful and adorable that you can turn yourself into a rabbit and pull yourself out of a top hat you have just drawn
41. And it is both beautiful and adorable when you "cluck" your friends under the chin
42. and impressively beautiful when you skip rocks along the lagoon channel
43. and jump from a standing position onto the bar at Smiley's
44. and play the saxophone under almost any conditions
45. including when the saxophone is made of sea kelp
46. and play a game of cribbage
47. and make heavenly barbecue pork
48. and carve radishes into roses
49. It is exceptionally adorable to watch Charley's large eyes and total poker face and wonder what he is thinking about or if he is thinking at all
50. It is also adorable when you take a pair of scissors and cut out one of those little men
51. you know, the one whose penis waves up and down
52. and when you ask someone to draw three trees, a road, and a fence and you read their entire life history from the drawing

53. It is plaintively beautiful when you make a paper airplane out of a \$100 bill
and it flies out the window
54. and it doesn't even bother you
55. because you know it's not really real
56. And it is really adorable when you make rings out of US currency
that people can wear on their fingers in case of emergencies
57. And of course it is totally adorable when you pull out your pipe and offer a toke
58. but you never show the effects
59. because you are using both sides of your brain simultaneously.
60. while painting a picture of Marilyn Monroe upside down
61. It is very beautiful that you can take the San Francisco Chronicle
and turn it into a tree
62. or a tropical fish
63. or a very large star
64. Mostly it is terrifically beautiful and adorable that you are a perfect being
65. because perfection is in the eye of the beholder
66. and you have taught us to use our eyes
67. and you have taught us to use the right side of our brain
68. and the left side of our brain
69. as you are one of the brainiest painters
70. who ever lived
71. and so our eyes
72. are beholden
73. to your inventions

- 74. and terrific use of color
- 75. to transform air
- 76. into this birthday celebration
- 77. for without You we would have nothing to have a beautiful and adorable party about

February 4, 2009
way way after Sei Shonagon
at Michael Lerner's house

Dig this: <https://paulenelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/1.-5.25.15-Joanne-Kyger-Easter-Discussion.mp3>

Write a list poem for a good friend. If they have a birthday, or wedding anniversary, use the number of years to be celebrated as your number of entries. If not, use their current age as an organizing principle. In the above poem, some entries are only part of a whole thought/personal attribute, and mixing this up can help the energy move rather than simply being a dull list. Notice how luminous details mix with glowing abstractions as well as the inclusion of current events/political figures (& the commentary about THEM. Hard to pull off, but mixing in something of YOUR everyday is something to consider as long as it fits in some kind of flow. Trust your gut. See [Sei Shonagon Handout](#) if you do not know about her.)