



Bernadette Mayer, outside The Poetry Project, St Mark's Church, New York, May 6, 1989 photo Allen Ginsberg

[Bernadette Mayer](#)'s 77th birthday today. [May 12.) Happy Birthday, Bernadette! We celebrate with a transcription of her July 1989 workshop at Naropa, where she ran down a description of each of her books up to that date.

The post is broken down into several sections beginning here

Bernadette Mayer workshop at Naropa July 17, 1989

BM: What I'm going to do is go through this motley assembly of my published books and explain to you what the structure of each book is. I'm not going to talk about any other aspect of the book but the structure in terms of, you know, the concept of form which, you know, I prefer to call "structure" in a work. (that's more architectural, or something) . So how many people think that's a boring idea? Well, you won't know until I start, I guess...

So. Next is this book called [Midwinter Day](#), which is one long poem which also includes prose parts that was written about one day, December 22nd 1978, and it was written... nobody ever believes me when I tell them that it was written in (*sic*) one day, but it almost was. I did rehearsals for the first section which is dreams. I practiced for about two weeks before the December 22nd date and tried to.. tried to sort of fine-tune my dreaming, you know, so that, when I had dreams on the 22nd, that they were really gonna be...I was going to be good at remembering them and that they were going to be vivid, and worth recording, I suppose, or worth sharing with other people, or that I was going to get better at writing them down in some way. So that was an extension over that day. I also took

photographs and wrote about them later, and actually that was just here. I divided the book into six parts and it was just like the six parts of the day that I perceived the day being, and the last part was the time when I usually.. at that point in time, just.. at night-time, I would always go to my desk and write. So for the sixth part of the book that's what I did and that's what exists here, and the rest is about, you know, regular daily doings (I was mostly taking care of babies at the time and entertaining friends).

So I'll read you a couple of the... what I did with the photos, what I tried to do with the photos, and this was worked in later. I also took.. made sure to keep copies of the newspapers from that day and whatever other written or visual material happened to pop up, you know, by accident, I'd keep track of, so that when I was putting the poem together later that I might want to intersperse some of that material, but the only real notes I have are these about the photos (actually, I have extensive notes about dreaming but it would be pointless to begin about that). I wrote this list just (to) go through the photos (there was one roll of film) and try to describe what each one was before I attempted to use it in the text.

"-l. Trying to see myself in the mirror over the typewriter as sea (S-E- A), 2. Breakfast at the bottle of milk white light, Lewis in shirt jacket, Marie, stripes putting oatmeal in mouth....."3 - Grey streets - cover of snow - streets wet, not icy, Amoco roofs flat (I should say that, in this instance, and also with the photographs, the use of the photographs in *Memory*; that, I was never trying to take beautiful photographs necessarily, I was always trying to ... I mean.. I guess I should say, take as many, just take as many as possible, you know, but take photographs in the sense of what you're really seeing, you know, not trying to isolate objects and say, put them in the center of the frame, you know, and say, "here's a beautiful styrafoam cup", you know, surrounded by grass (that would be fun!) but to just to take them just to reflect what actual vision is, you know, and not, not romanticize, you know, it or certainly not the writing either but not romanticize the visual. I'm

not going to read all these but I'll read a few more – 5. *Dress babies Sophia's fuller lips, dark blue shirt, blue pants, M's red sweater, blue leggings, green hat, Lewis' serious glass gold glasses red gold velvet headband all askew pretty lips all family of beautiful lips but my pursed ones* – (see that's all in one picture, it's interesting, I feel). I'm going to read you all the longest ones because I think they're better. (reads)- *"11 Sun's come out, Clark at table reading United Artists"....."Clark grinning a little or beginning to speak, L looks at me stiff or tentatively.."* (Just more ... I mean that's more than you could note in a moment, you know, if you were sitting with a notebook), *"-13 – M at kitchen table writing with my pen..... yellow pot with sauce is on"* (See, the other thing is you don't always see all these things when you're looking with your eyes) *"Bright sun and Marie holding holly hobby paper doll...."*....*'all the stuff on the sink superior soy sauce sun rectangles* (that's a good one!)

Here's a short one, (I'll read you the last two) – *"35 Blurred cheese sandwich on wholewheat with cucumber and red onion mayo – 36 - "Sink of silver cups and unwashed stuff wooden spoons all circles and lines. orange pot, aluminum sink, soup ladle, lines and lids round drain and drain lines of knives shape of sponge last look"*

And so it just became.. It became sort of more information as I said to the people who were at the workshop this morning , you know, it would be interesting to just write about what you know and leave out the self. I mean, for an extended period of time, like a year or so...

See also: <https://allenginsberg.org/2021/12/t-d-21/>

And this video.

