



## Pre-Labor Day DaySong (Poet's Subject is Time)

I went back to my blogpost *Notes on Gone South* about a chapbook Barry McKinnon sent me and was reminded of this quote, which I never forgot:

*The composing principle for “Arrhythmia”, and I hope all of my work, was in line with W.C. Williams’ dictum that each poem must sum up the poet’s life to that point. I wrote “Arrhythmia” daily with the sense that if I had anything more to say I’d better get at it. If the word “subject” is still in the post-modern lexicon, I believe the poet’s subject is time – and that language discloses the actualities therein. Emotion is the poem’s fact.*

And just like that the poet is out of time. I will travel this summer to Prince George to pay my respects to Barry at his memorial. I was fortunate to know, interview, and collaborate with him on a bioregional anthology.

The daysong is all about time. How one spends their day is how one spends their life. Previous all-day writing ritual poets Bernadette Mayer and Pierre Joris are ongoing inspirations for this twice-a-year ritual which for us has come to settle on days near Imbolc and Labor Day.

2024’s daysong opportunity has a couple of things going for it:

- 1) The 18th Poetry Postcard Fest ends Saturday, August 31, 2024 and
- 2) September 1, 2024 is a Sunday, meaning you do not have to take time from work, if you have a day job, to write all day.

“...What I came to say was,  
teach the children about the cycles.  
The life cycles. All the other cycles.  
That’s what it’s all about, and it’s all forgot.”

For/From Lew, Gary Snyder



Your task, should you accept it, is to spend as much of the waking day on September 1, 2024 as you possibly can writing poetry. Yes, there must be pee breaks, meals, walks &c. I like to timestamp when I start and end each segment and try to hold on to morning mind as long as possible.

You should be alone and not responsible for animal care. Make arrangements. This is why we're telling you in June. Ask your spouse to stay with a friend. Prepare meals in advance, or at least have some bread, fruit, hummus and coconut water in the fridge. It's best to not even go out for coffee on this day. Consider the day as a ritual in the manner of the Personal Universe Deck. Give your editor's mind a day off.

Remember what Joanne Kyger said about journaling in 1997:

Yes, and in this daily writing, you don't have to think of it as "poetry," you don't have to think at all about what "kind" of writing you're doing. You're writing some kind of un-self-conscious open utterance, being as clear as you can, or as muddled as you want. You're not writing for anybody. It's spontaneous.

Joanne Kyger was a serious journal writer. Are you? If yes, there's a shit-ton of material there. If not, you have between now and September 1 to buy a couple of pocket journals and make some notes that might come in handy. At least things you find awesome, interesting or ironic. Maybe start writing American Sentences for a while to prepare. Kyger also had a couple of great ideas in that interview noted above that you can poach from such as the *architecture of your lineage* and a poem including the "religion" of your household. Days have cycles like years, right?

There may be events in the world you'll be reacting to, or events in your own life. If you participated properly in the Poetry Postcard Fest, you have at least 31 recent poems which you can re-read and see if there is a thread you had thought about at the moment of composition, but did not fully explore. The grafting method can also work for the DaySong.



Bernadette Mayer had no shortage of writing ideas, as listed here.

Examples:

**Bernadette Mayer's List of Journal Ideas:**

Journals of:

- \* dreams
- \* food
- \* finances
- \* writing ideas
- \* love
- \* ideas for architects
- \* city design ideas
- \* beautiful and/or ugly sights
- \* a history of one's own writing life, written daily
- \* reading/music/art, etc. encountered each day
- \* rooms
- \* elaborations on weather
- \* people one sees—description
- \* subway, bus, car or other trips (e.g., the same bus trip written about every day)
- \* pleasures and/or pain
- \* life's everyday machinery: phones, stoves, computers, etc.
- \* answering machine messages
- \* round or rectangular things, other shapes
- \* color
- \* light
- \* daily changes, e.g., a journal of one's desk, table, etc.
- \* the body and its parts
- \* clocks/time-keeping
- \* tenant-landlord situations
- \* telephone calls (taped?)
- \* skies
- \* dangers
- \* mail
- \* sounds
- \* coincidences & connections
- \* times of solitude

There's a lot of Sei Shonagon in that, eh?

You could include one segment where you write a title and then go out and hunt the poem as Eileen Myles discussed here.



I've written before that the DaySong is liberating, allows a poet to flex their long-form muscles after writing 31 short poems and must be done projectively. Sure, you can edit what you get on 1-SEPT-2024, but don't worry about editing. Bathe the right side of your brain in language and summer and perception. It's liberating.

peN  
7:18am  
4-JUNE-2024  
Casa del Colibrí

### Works Cited:

<https://paulenelson.com/2014/03/24/notes-on-gone-south/>

<https://paulenelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Inside-the-Day-Song-The-Temporal-Epic-.pdf>

<https://paulenelson.com/2021/03/15/mammal-grafting/>

<https://paulenelson.com/workshops/personal-universe-deck/>

<https://paulenelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/The-Architecture-of-Your-Lineage.pdf>

<https://paulenelson.com/american-sentences-2/american-sentences-handout/>

<https://poetrypostcardfest.org>

<https://paulenelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Sei-Shonagon.doc>

<https://paulenelson.com/workshops/not-me-my-hunted-poem-exercise/>

See also: <https://paulenelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Anno-Uno-Die-aut-septem.pdf>