

# TOP BLOCKER



RECYCLED WITNESS	5
WALK, MANTICS	6
FULTON STREET	7
GABRIL	9
MEHTH	10
PULLMAN	11
CITY OF SYRUP	12
MEDITATION AT BLUE HILL	13
RED TWO PIECE	14
TO THE FRUITLESS RETENTION	15
BORN ON A MONDAY	17
PERSONAL	18
CURE FOR THE SEARCH	19
WILD AID	20
THANATOSPHERE	21
INTRODUCED AS IF NOT KNOWING	22



## RECYCLED WITNESS

In a sudden neck of air  
and feeling the spring, lonely guy  
gets vegetable tattoos. life hingeing  
on one acknowledgement, one nod  
that a complexity continues. can't place  
heal thy rhythm? venus is out  
and heading into april  
the pleasure of our function  
in full defiance of the weather  
eight wheels eight legs  
who die and get repeated.  
what do you mean *just* the joy  
of collision? situating in the universe  
is for nightmare people  
the past intact in the present, promising  
that once again a masochist will find  
his voice in the future. it's funny  
in spring, intuition has been working  
against me for years  
and with pedestrian aplomb  
the poets creep nearer to me  
cover their faces their calculated  
fluidity is a waste of time  
if what strokes it into communion  
with itself is an attitude  
of impairment. then you've just got  
more reality. lots of space  
and nothing sacred but the means  
available to cross it; lots of space  
and nothing sacred but the means  
available to cross it. you know  
what they say—normal life  
won't cut it and i would agree  
to empathize with your liberties  
and even the traces of conflict evident  
in the way you remove yourself  
but locks take keys, and you  
must be used somehow.

## WALK, MANTICS

Say that nature has no opinion  
and that the names of things out here  
are rendered to their right  
and panoptic position floating above  
nothing, above what seem just  
like trees. And that constant  
near-constant refusal to name is the state  
we'll instead pay to get into  
away from the aggressive *this has happened*  
of the outdoor moment, observing  
our words repelled, handed back to us  
through the grass in kansas or maybe  
utah, past the gnarled bodies of failed trees  
inside the hours of resplendent oddness  
I killed with a few idly chosen words.  
Multiple horizons, just lines  
not ready to be assigned  
to the pit of itself: a small, steady

Hacking sound in the wilderness.  
I will no longer hurl adjectives at a tree  
or chase through an interesting field  
my desire to be compared to,  
to be admired in, the assertive world of flame.

I will suppress my desire to personify.  
I will acknowledge more distance than I cover.

## FULTON STREET

having played in the dilemma  
of my natural alternatives, i hit macon  
    leaves shumbling mid-breeze  
their little barbed spikelets  
clinging to my shirt as proof of  
    one thing or another and  
    swoosh say the nikes  
    fruiting on the wires. mending up herkimer  
she's too much of a cop  
to conduit the harmony that surrounds her  
and too much of a bureaucrat to kill anyone  
    without first completing a form  
trapped in the cubicle of the awkwardly reviled

the kid she stares at her phone  
on the corner of franklin and fulton  
policing a corner that has no problem  
policing itself. thought is handed back  
approved, is lost. americano in the glee  
    of real largesse, stupid with debt  
    wonder at another beautiful day in the fist  
as it's deciding to be a fist

some day the struggles for power  
will be limited to a lucky few  
dubious last shimmer of a species  
but not today. tolerable, fair  
dead. and illegal, crushed  
in the demonstration of equality we  
precisely are not accomplishing  
whole streets of nothing but.  
to approach the street with language  
and waving your hat, verbally wearing  
whomsoever's putrid gift of speech

on fulton street. i reach the no more  
junk eat healthy halal is the answer  
spot and i praise my drunkard's swerve  
it's my honor to be down  
on fulton with my blind  
dose of easy freedom  
and pick up the pace of life  
maybe the life is mine  
it's been a plastic night in  
and it ends in the crown  
fried chicken where you are holding  
the other end of the dream  
of our mutual progress and in that  
holding there's produced gratitude  
or insanity for having been held  
by you at all. depends on the night  
and if i've continued to pound  
the word *you* into a weapon, spinning,  
bouncing it like an old screen  
saver in the cave of worried sleep  
where i remain allowed, i believe  
several denouncements per minute  
pointless though i am.  
who looks at fulton changes fast  
the death of chance for space  
to live just flaunts itself  
with more enthusiasm  
than ever now  
no one exhorts you to repeat  
i am *that* in fact the armed bureaucrat  
will insist that's not true  
which is your cue to kick his ego  
crutch into the machine  
making you skim skrill in the first place  
assuming you aren't already changing  
your mind about the dream  
where you can't stop saying i'll be here  
to someone who forsook fulton so long ago.



GABRIL

a man once stopped me  
times square, asked if i knew  
about the female creator  
or deity  
been scrubbed from the bibles?  
no. *jesus*. suppressed  
in the shibboleth  
of all abrahamic religions  
is the story of a girl bathed  
in tabernacular light  
to whom the word is green  
as it enters the mind  
she may have watched eli  
at shiloh, already traumatized  
by growing borders  
but whose poetry  
was aware of the kahin  
who shuddered she knew as the word  
entered them like an animal  
distracted by the moment of its death  
shudders and is so caught

am i like them  
    my hero, riveting  
    a roof in tijuana religions later  
incurably unhappy, endlessly nonchalant  
green as i exit her mind.

## MEHTH

the trouble with sundays  
is in your heart. a six of blue  
makes it the roof where you get  
tortured by the need  
for a sense of progress  
and development, dragging your feet  
in the superpower whose architects  
do apologize but in their narrative  
you die. they know  
you're the kind of person  
whose largeness of heart is unrest  
on that spectrum—  
jeff it passes by earth  
every 67 seconds should you want  
to peruse it or just laugh and present  
your life as working against you  
not the assembly of it  
but the breath of one non-clapper  
in a stadium of believers. is it a toothy  
mind-control money scheme  
you're out to set aflame? i love you  
and maybe that's benevolence, consummating  
our obsession with (sudden, painless)  
annihilation, with hugging cold harmony  
drowning our solace in the tau neutrino groove  
until finally a second chance  
in the last world, a chimpanzee or  
bonobo aboard an abandoned satellite  
orbiting the flaming chunks of planet earth  
starting at the nearest moon  
trying desperately to evolve.

PULLMAN

The frustration at being a person at all  
when i open into the arena  
snout a horse briefly  
tell it breakfast  
i can never know  
the power of bob  
this legendary gelding  
his sternocleidomastoid  
an oak root in my claw  
*one hundred percent riddle*  
some of the time, they need  
to know who's in charge  
says tess confirming  
every terrifying instinct  
i follow with the rope.  
it's the fraudulence of the everyday  
movements i make around him  
coursing back up the nylon  
births this queer inversion of power  
via intellection and thumbs  
over these twelve hundred cantering pounds.

## CITY OF SYRUP

There was nothing to be done about the lake, so we headed out to the field. I had given up trying to figure out how to leave. Others defined themselves only against the lack of better options. The local team was collectively exasperated, each player in turn succumbing to the bank, the love story, the new shape of their lives as determined by the private and hateful zealotry of some ex-lover or another, kneeling on purpose. They walked slowly toward the porch, shining like the death of a horse. They sat down and stared. Adjusted, curious, hungry. Later, they would return for a misty-eyed fuck in their van. I put on my ruined jacket, helpless to the fatness of the moment in which their smiles grew and grew, slowly germinating from invitation into threat. If you have no core, you can't be shaken to it, they said, touching the space around their neck.

MEDITATION AT BLUE HILL

*after Hass  
after Wenderoth*

Doing this tonight, and nothing else: sally forth with an opinion.

The idea, for example, that acknowledging a shared derision does more than just point to fussy self-hatred and call it structure.

That a hand on the back of your head, corresponding urgently with the one wrapped around the shaft, can shift and make you begin to cry, fall back into a fetal posture and cry for the next six to eight hours.

One must wonder: am I doing this right, this making of love?

Or the other notion, that all dismissals of the self with little waves of the hands are thinly veiled requests for death right there at the cash register, and nothing else.

We talked about it until early in the morning and my friend could not have been more sure of each word he said, fragments shining with the supreme confidence of a scared drunk man.

And I knew in my fertile turning I would never arrive at a conclusion.

That I was hated, did hate; drinking, veiling this way.

## RED TWO PIECE

On good days death belongs  
to life and i frolic like a dog  
in the sky that delights.  
And these trees take the layers off  
purple fume wound cloud  
in the joy-for-nothing light  
my i fills with a coordinate  
so large it obliterates all others  
the gut of chafing straws in the head  
melting into a single tubeless wind  
no longer at the hands of this other person  
but no longer exhuming from our worst parts  
those sweet, feral reasons to live.  
Fuck-mothering quirk alarms explode  
when you're not around, with me, on it  
when these fear lifters point to the floor.  
The inability to leave this scene  
as a kind of mobile hell cage  
    leaden poet behind the stick  
    peddling rayon flash  
    jack the six-pack joe  
    counter-balking at the news.

NEED TO GET A mind like a swimming pool  
    almost never  
    poisonous, signs indicating depth  
    along various points  
    in capital letters. No running  
    only sitting by watching  
    other people swim in it  
    no whistle.

## TO THE FRUITLESS RETENTION

Your mother was young  
she helped me  
in Macy's and died  
before you were born  
she helped anything  
that seemed in need  
of bursting.  
I remember her  
like a glass of water  
cool versatile contained.  
I had a shot to explain  
how close float  
could feel deft  
could carve us there  
and she was listening  
as the whole store  
complained the streets  
passing by weren't pretty  
enough and I blew it.  
Now I'm quick  
to cherish those  
quick to cherish  
logics of enlisting in  
comfortable expectations,  
certain knowledge  
of anything  
that doesn't threaten  
life but neither  
affirms it. So what  
if her grim companion  
was an excellent  
interrobang? I need  
to know more words  
how to put sentences together  
right, so I can gather  
the moving evidence  
that, by pointing to maps  
charting belief

in the possibility  
of radical change  
answers the question of when  
how drunk, whose flock  
what mystic  
always drew  
an ominous aura  
around her face  
and seems still  
to bring news  
of what it means  
to be able to stand  
the lack of something old  
to which to appeal  
during a rapid change of direction  
a deception so unspeakable  
so deeply normal  
that I was simply  
never suspected of it.



BORN ON A MONDAY

*for matthew yeager*

One withers at the dearth of chances  
to really get before the sun  
and although the sun is complex  
your job is simple  
weigh the burden of light  
set it aside  
deny a reversal  
glean still enough to survive  
the seduction of your fear  
by eyes that net  
the bling of death.  
This is your job  
and like all jobs is simple  
yet difficult enough for you  
to question the degree  
this job in particular  
merits continuing your life  
that intimidating cove  
with no floor or means  
to swerve so you might  
collapse into your brevity  
find the shift manager and confess your tongue  
in some associate's hair their buy one  
get one shoved under your fingernails.  
For surely tonight there is hair  
flung aside in a public  
vocal display of personal revolution  
and that it is midnight implies COMMUNION  
our seven cups fill with shine, throats with smoke  
and agreeing you're obliged to be seated  
across from the mirror tree  
its a cappella reflections of light  
so as to clearly see  
what shapes so well: PRIVILEGE  
RHETORIC, COTERIE, VIBE  
all disappearing into one another slowly.

## PERSONAL

At the house party: cowboys. The brunette one it comes up  
hates the critic, confusing the apparatus for the process  
out on the overloaded fire escape. Criticality on a death trap:  
it's too tasty. Attention shifts to the melismatic, three-minute song  
from inside as it plays it's gooseskin melody and everyone is suddenly  
all fucked up, furious and teary-eyed, dangling from it  
by the toothy force of their particular attachment.  
This guy and his friends *swear* upon the ring of common -  
but to drink for the continuation of their tribalism  
is what they will want from you, however educated  
they are, however inverted their patriotism, however  
surprising the angles of their disgust.  
This philosophy, seen blazing across recorded time  
and all its imbecile little fists, looking for some  
basic premise to reject: found it: happened  
in the background. It's a long, stupid melody  
crawling through the church, up the escape, and into the conversation.  
It turns out to be the entirety of your name  
in the mouths of the trees, on their carbon-slurping tongues  
filtering the star-wind of your ancestor's chuckles  
through their leafless appendages, covering the moon  
like a three-fingered corpse playing peek-a-boo with the sky.

## CURE FOR THE SEARCH

Involves a belief in my brother—his non-violent intent  
adopted name on no-fly list  
and how to set aflame the dull correctives  
his fear is always grabbing rules from—  
so Elyas here's to 30, look how already fluent  
in so many styles of self-immolation  
and valuation of pain we are. What briscance  
in the thoughts; what trust  
in debris, rubrics? Everything's not swell  
when mere info is used belligerently to connect  
two dumb-founded ends of constant banter  
like *favorite underwear* on the brain, two men  
hurling suitcases to the beats  
in pre-recorded, auto-tuned conversations  
lost in the positive vibe  
of the tarmac's negative space  
like umpteens gone wild  
with their neon semaphores. You are that, but so  
much else. You appear in the stories of quick thinking  
I cook up en route  
and pass around the dinner table  
while each family member in turn stabs it  
with a shard of their awful  
little day. I wonder if you ever think

*i will become pure  
energy i will become  
sunlight i will disappear  
no hopes/no remembrances.*

But he tends to switch me back on, crudely  
while somewhere 35,000 feet down  
nothing erupts (as nothing is ignited)  
and each thought  
decapitates the one in front of it  
after kindly allowing it to pass.

## WILD AID

plant it before it plants you  
haunts you to the start garlic  
prep some bed tell it wait  
wait in the ground like you think  
glean sisting fats on sun  
like a real fucking interpreter  
of the valley. growing plants  
on my face until my face dies,  
gets covered in paint and nails  
lays down its dar forever  
into some tiny photosynthesis,  
a machine to do far works  
no more. a grey fox  
humbles by and i don't remember shit  
to do. it's friday and cool  
beats get to be long  
cuts that collapse the core  
behind binaries; music the best  
doler of the balance  
between here and *there*  
where i have my finger  
in the loamy heart beat  
like an apocalypse in the soil  
for those millions.  
but does nature reward  
you for your stillness  
or do you miss the point  
and warble the plume  
shrink for the hope  
that others are planting  
with respect to local eternities  
reversing their spells  
and you reversing yours  
with all that disappointed ardor?

## THANATOSPHERE

This particular event is certainly a form  
of hatred. strange they love its light  
and title, feed themselves an image  
of perfect moderation  
post tenebras lux for a people  
who need ascension every day  
currents ever upward,  
selves escaping complete  
molecular re-integration  
into all matter—not  
likely. or maybe a life of sheer march  
into doubt is itself  
certainty, and a rut of dogma  
where whatever it is  
you've experienced just imagine  
all the opposites. this goes  
on forever, has gone  
with the unassailable  
fervor of religious people  
at night in rented space  
pair off, one feels  
or die gentle for later  
with not even the fervor of  
an addict in repose  
laughing in the shade of their skill.

## INTRODUCED AS IF NOT KNOWING

mister i've been waiting for no one  
and the facts all belong. that's the mandate  
i have. dogma is sufficient  
it does the chores of your leg angel  
that's the mandate i have. replay  
is placid. i'm a plant  
in this country, and on my ilk nozzle  
edge of the news is one identity  
on patrol. nothing new, all gleefully barren  
in its shrieking motivation and focusing glee  
to achieve living victory  
over the oldest vex, impossible questions  
what is gravity, where is the past lurking  
to knock you like a finishing move  
into the verdant, dusky mouth?  
such gleefully focus—and gleefully  
focus sensible yearn. honor to excite  
elite to be chosen, orbit in handful  
focusing handful loving the long haul  
missing the nightshow of consummate stars.  
so if we should die before we drown  
in neutral release, i let it slip  
we have made a kind of house here  
a home pit of allowance  
you can come right in, say  
*let there be a dome. light to roll blue—  
night to covet day*  
i won't stop you. i voted to stay  
and the strands of my hair slip whole  
through the jaws of your blade.



# sources/quotations

having played in the dilemma of my natural alternatives—Franklin Jones, also known as Bubba Free John, also known as Adi Da; *The Knee of Listening*, 1971 edition, prologue.

*The Trouble With Sundays*—title of a chapbook by poet Jeff Grunthaner, Louffa Press, Brooklyn, 2014.

*Meditation at Blue Hill*—Joe Wenderoth published a treatment of Hass's well-known poem, *Meditation at Lagunitas*, in which he dissembled, paid homage to, and mocked Hass's poem. This is 'after' both of these poems, and the way the latter speaks to the former.

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