

ASSEMBLING WEATHER

with J.R Carpenter

18 October 2020

Hi JR. I like your term "assembling the weather". When I started going to sea in the 70's a lot of the information you get today from satellites was collected by ships at sea all over the world. Every 4 hrs we would fill out a weather report form. It included or position, course and speed and then lots of weather data we compiled. We had to measure sea temp, air temp, dewpoint, humidity, we had picture charts to describe the clouds and sea state. All of this information was put into numerical format and transmitted via Morse code to shore stations. We assembled the weather. – a text message from my uncle, who used to be in the Navy

In this workshop we will examine the language of weather. Most of what we know about weather, including our daily weather forecasts, comes from an accumulation of direct observation of natural phenomenon. Hourly, daily, monthly, year after year – weather data accumulates in archives and libraries, ships logs and supercomputers, often in written form.

We'll look at poetry about weather. And we'll explore ways we cause use other language about weather as a raw material to create poetry. We'll look at free online resources to find inspiration in historical and scientific writing. How has weather been written differently over the centuries, by poets, pastors, sailors, and gardeners? How can using found language inject a fresh breeze into our own poetic process?

Before the workshop

Preparation:

If you have time, please read as many of the poems and extra materials as you can.

Just before the workshop, go outside or stand at a window for a few minutes. Observe the weather as closely as possible without taking a picture or writing anything down.

During the workshop

Introduction:

Welcome! I will introduce myself and say a few things about the workshop.

Exercises:

1. Remembering the Weather.

-- Take five minutes to write down everything you can remember from what you have observed about the weather around you today. If you haven't had a chance to directly observe the weather outside yet

today, write about what you think the weather is, or what the weather is like inside. Don't worry about poetic form. Just write down everything you can think of.

-- Discussion: What was the first weather you noted? What did you enjoy writing about? What did you struggle to describe? What did you find you have no language for?

-- Now, reread what you've written. Examine your language as if it has nothing to do with you. How might you rewrite your text using entirely different language?

-- How does the language we use to describe weather effect the way we remember it?

2. Rereading the Weather.

-- Take a look at Lisa Robertson's poem "Monday" in the EXCERPTS below. What do you notice about the poem? What patterns, rhythms, and repetitions? How do you think it was constructed?

-- Take a look at my web-based work, *The Gathering Cloud* in the EXCERPTS below. Note the lines on the top left of each page. These are all hendecasyllabic fragments of found text.

-- Open up the PDF of Luke Howard's essay, *On the Modifications of the Clouds*, first published in 1803 and skip to the Explanation of Plates on page 14:

http://luckyssoap.com/thegatheringcloud/Howard_modificationofclouds.pdf

-- Now scroll through the PDF with your eye and ear attuned to the strangeness of this language, written 220 years ago. What attracts you? What sounds strange to you? Collect phrases as you go. What kind of poem might you construct using only found language? How might a fragment or phrase of language from a historical source lend freshness to new writing?

3. Found Wind.

-- Take a look at the excerpt from "Notes Very Necessary" in the EXCERPTS. This poem is composed entirely of references to wind found in *The Voyage of the Beagle*, by Charles Darwin.

-- Open The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Voyage of the Beagle*, in a web browser. Use Control F to search the document for other keywords: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/944/944-h/944-h.htm>

EXCERPTS

Monday

By Lisa Robertson

First all belief is paradise. So pliable a medium. A time not very long. A transparency caused. A conveyance of rupture. A subtle transport. Scant and rare. Deep in the opulent morning, blissful regions, hard and slender. Scarce and scant. Quotidian and temperate. Begin afresh in the realms of the atmosphere, that encompasses the solid earth, the terraqueous globe that soars

and sings, elevated and flimsy. Bright and hot. Flesh and hue. Our skies are inventions, durations, discoveries, quotas, forgeries, fine and grand. Fine and grand. Fresh and bright. Heavenly and bright. The day pours out space, a light red roominess, bright and fresh. Bright and oft. Bright and fresh. Sparkling and wet. Clamour and tint. We range the spacious fields, a battlement trick and fast. Bright and silver. Ribbons and failings. To and fro. Fine and grand. The sky is complicated and flawed and we're up there in it, floating near the apricot frill, the bias swoop, near the sullen bloated part that dissolves to silver the next instant bronze but nothing that meaningful, a breach of greeny-blue, a syllable, we're all across the swathe of fleece laid out, the fraying rope, the copper beech behind the aluminum catalpa that has saved the entire spring for this flight, the tops of these a part of the sky, the light wind flipping up the white undersides of leaves, heaven afresh, the brushed part behind, the tumbling. So to the heavenly rustling. Just stiff with ambition we range the spacious trees in earnest desire sure and dear. Brisk and west. Streaky and massed. Changing and appearing. First and last. This was made from Europe, formed from Europe, rant and roar. Fine and grand. Fresh and bright. Crested and turbid. Silver and bright. This was spoken as it came to us, to celebrate and tint, distinct and designed. Sure and dear. Fully designed. Dear afresh. So free to the showing. What we praise we believe, we fully believe. Very fine. Belief thin and pure and clear to the title. Very beautiful. Belief lovely and elegant and fair for the footing. Very brisk. Belief lively and quick and strong by the bursting. Very bright. Belief clear and witty and famous in impulse. Very stormy. Belief violent and open and raging from privation. Very fine. Belief intransigent after pursuit. Very hot. Belief lustful and eager and curious before beauty. Very bright. Belief intending afresh. So calmly and clearly. Just stiff with leaf sure and dear and appearing and last. With lust clear and scarce and appearing and last and afresh.

Source: Lisa Robertson, "Monday" from *the weather*. (New Star Books, 2001)

The Gathering Cloud

By J. R. Carpenter

This is a web-based work, best viewed on a computer. It will not work properly on phones or tablets: <http://luckysoap.com/thegatheringcloud/>

Notes Very Necessary (excerpt)

By J. R. Carpenter

bent

by the steady

the force

of the running

before the

steady

soft air of the

gently

blowing gently

but steady

wind

blows steadily

from the southward

rather freshly

a little

offshore

wind

very boisterous

blows

over

tree branches

exactly

the damp winds

rain-

bearing

sheets of spray

borne

by the

full force

of the strong

wind

very strong

and cold

piercingly cold

impetuous

and extremely cold

sheltered

from the cold

the wind

was fair

being

not quite fair

behold

a gale

of wind

a heavy gale

of wind

a furious gale

of wind

arose this night

delayed

by successive

gales

heavy gales

of wind

unfavourable

winds

delayed us

blowing a gale

a gale

of wind

directly

in our teeth

behold

 a squall

with its rising

arch

and coming

fury

the storm

raged

full

fury

lulled

and roared again

through the rigging

north-west

winds

prevailing

sirocco-like

 winds

from the parched

deserts

of the interior

heaped up

fine sand

minute

rounded particles

shells and corals

flying

along the ground

a strong blast

cracked in the

wind

became stagnant

and irregular

in its movements

all still

except

the occasional

flapping of canvas

not even

the wind

not even

a breath of wind

there was no wind

there was no wind

a dead calm

perfectly calm air

Source: J. R. Carpenter, "Notes Very Necessary," *An Ocean of Static*. (Pinned in the Margins, 2018)

This is a Picture of Wind: A Weather Poem for Phones

By J. R. Carpenter

This is a web-app optimised for reading on a smartphone, though also compatible with a computer: <http://luckysoap.com/apictureofwind>

A Storm in 2K

By J. R. Carpenter

https://taper.badquar.to/5/a_storm_in_2k.html

National Meteorological Library and Archive

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/library-and-archive>