



LIST FULL

bart plantenga

List Poems of Necessary Orderliness



Hot Dogs
Rolls
Mustard
Catsup
Napkins
Popcorn

1 structural
2 the masked
hell are the d
3 campus pigs
4 being an ou
5 classic clas
6 paranoia pi
7 intellectuali
eating fritos
8 passive resi

List Full

“How, as a human being, does one face infinity? How does one attempt to grasp the incomprehensible? Through lists ...”

- **Umberto Eco**

List Poems are Household Haikus of Necessary Orderliness in a world of hyper-exposed data, over-purposed texts, hyperbolic narratives & vulnerable people. We all make lists. Lists go way back — The 10 Commandments, ferchrissake! – & are currently all the rage. On internet, Trendy Top Tens, Top 3 Fails/Snogs/Apps/Cats – any & every subject – serve less as insight into our zeitgeist than as clickbait to monetize obsession or, as Maria Popova observes, “today’s favorite attention-exploitation device in an information economy of countless listicles & innumerable numerical headlines.”

Top 5 lists float across your screen almost daily, mainly as entertainment distractives, although they sometimes include eyeopeners about people you assumed you knew. Other lists like to-do, grocery, bucket or birthday offer comfort by framing reality, focusing your activities so that you’re not a headless chicken scurrying through our ominous over-amped day.

The list remains chiefly utilitarian; organizational survival. It may also be epistemological strategy, administrative tool, protocol, census, or listicle [written piece advanced in the form of a list].

In its utilitarian guise we may fail to observe the list’s covert scansion or its unselfconscious word foreplay that culminates in a daring segue, or the chance & oft inappropriate encounter of 2 musical sources, here extended to 2 or more words that have never before shared the same line, the same page.

List entries may work on us the way the rapid passing of static images at 24 per second allows mind to create fluidity. Still images become film ... & so, seemingly isolated, unrelated list entries begin to interact, bridge their segregation to create bold, tentative, speculative [Dada] poems.

Never having been conceived as poems makes lists interlopers, un beholden to poetic law, perhaps serving as poetic justice, as antidotes to the overly self-serious dictates of poetry, where purveyors insist a

poem can DO so much: regime change, paradigm shifts, illuminate the dusky, voice the unvoiced, rouse the masses, transform lives ... The list poem confronts the self-aware & haughty poem in the same way that punk originally confronted the pomposity of classic rock.

When my first wife, an artist, & I were preparing for a terribly unorthodox wedding, we produced long lists of our affinities stretched across lifestyles & families. Listing, for example, the naughty things both our fathers were guilty of. These lists of similarities across habits, upbringings, irritations, & backgrounds seemed to strengthen our bond.

What maps are to travelers & fingerprints are to forensic investigators, lists can be to a differently attuned reader, revealing diarist glimpses of our preoccupations, products, anxieties, locations & ambitions.

In ca. 1200, strangely – or poetically – enough, “list” meant “pleasure or enjoyment” & by the mid-13 c. “desire or wish.” How the noun “list” emerged in ca. 1600 to mean “catalog of names in a row” is not entirely clear. It probably derives from the Old French “liste,” meaning border, row, or narrow strip of paper. By 1610, the verb “to list” was already being used to mean “to put down in a list or to catalogue.”

Alan Watts observed: “order & randomness constitute ... the warp & the woof. Where in order, everything’s under control; in randomness, it’s all over – it’s a mess. But we wouldn’t know what order was unless we had messes. It’s the contrast of order & messes that order itself depends upon.”

In other words, “the conquest of nature, the task of making order victorious over chaos or randomness” using systems of order like lists transforms it into an unnecessary battle of society over wilderness, good over evil.

The lists, to the degree that they are poetic “organizations of human life,” comport themselves as if they’ve defeated chaos, when, in fact, glorious order [the list] thrives in a kind of harnessed, reconfigured, or more legible chaos in search of meaning, justification that is enhanced by cohabiting in the proximate presence of nature & other examples of chaos.

I’ve been producing playlists since I inaugurated my radio show in 1986, earnestly & meticulously keeping track of what I’ve spun. In a time before Mixcloud & Youtube, I proposed that playlists were a kind

of synesthetic literature, reading the playlist & imagining in lieu of actually *hearing* the show – other than during its actual broadcast.

Notable list makers include:

1. Thomas Jefferson: For example, his list, “Silver left at Monticello,” or his 246-page book cataloging his book collection.
2. Peter Mark Roget assembled *Roget’s Thesaurus* (1852), essential for all wordsmiths, in part as a way to combat depression.
3. Martha Stewart offered a list of how to *make a to-do list* to effectively manage the “otherwise overwhelming,” as David Wallechinsky, co-author of the *Book of Lists*, described it.
4. Benjamin Franklin, as Linton Weeks points out, “made a list of personal virtues that he determined should define his life.”
5. Vladimir Nabokov’s list of things he hated is legendary: “italicized passages in a novel, background music, canned music, piped-in music, inflicted music, journalistic clichés ...”
6. Jorge Luis Borges’ fictitious taxonomy of nonexistent beasts was so influential that, for Michel Foucault, its humor “shattered ... all the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age & our geography...” & set him on his philo-investigative path. Borges’ “Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge” has influenced a long list of writers, artists, curators, & anthropologists.
7. Mark Twain’s most famous list of amusing invective was “Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses” that enumerated the 18 rules of fiction violated by author Cooper.
8. Marshall McLuhan: “An inclusive list of media effects opens many unexpected avenues of awareness & investigation.”
9. Susan Sontag, in her 1977 diaries, considered the allure of lists: “I *perceive* value, I *confer* value, I *create* value, I even create — or guarantee — *existence*. Hence, my compulsion to make lists. ... The things ... won’t exist unless I signify my interest in them by at least noting down their names.” As an example, she produced a stream-of-consciousness list of likes & dislikes, random & poetic. For example, she liked fires, Venice, tequila, maple sugar candy, etc. Disliked sleeping in an apartment alone, cold weather, Robert Frost, German food, etc.
10. Graham Greene’s *Travels With My Aunt* has a character named O’Toole who admits “I count while I’m pissing and then I write

down how long I've taken and what time it is," illustrated by an actual list for July 28.

11. Rob Fleming, main character in Nick Hornby's novel *High Fidelity* is an avid "Top 5" listmaker.

Famous lists include New Year's Resolutions, Top 40 music lists, band set lists, *Schindler's List*, *David Letterman's Top 10 lists*, the lists in the pioneering *Spy Magazine*, *Harper's Index*, Nabokov's list of things he hated, the *Book of Lists*. Some lists, like those of Dutch jazz poet, Jules Deelder, enumerate the illuminating details of everyday life:

54% of Dutch families own a bible, 56% a cookbook.

LIST FULL's "poems" can ultimately be clothespinned nonchronologically to a timeline to serve as under-examined mnemonic milestones, anthropological samples, archaeological remnants – & poems that play by alternative rules. Positioned upon a template of an entirely different purpose, they provide speculative linkages & subsist without pretention, presumption, & expectation. Ultimately behaving a lot like autobiographical glimpses.

Read these list poems however you desire: aloud, whisperingly, as incantation, satirically over-the-top, via the mind's eye, or totally randomly – any interpretation is permitted. Bafflement is acceptable.

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- Linton Weeks, "10 Reasons Why We Love Making Lists."
- Maria Popova, "Susan Sontag on Why Lists Appeal to Us, Plus Her Listed Likes & Dislikes: How lists confer value & guarantee existence."
- Jorge Louis Borges, "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins," describes the *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, a fictive animal taxonomy.
- Umberto Eco, *The Infinity of Lists: An Illustrated Essay*, documents his studies of "the vertigo" & "giddiness" of lists, especially in the arts.
- Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.
- Lulah Ellender, *Elisabeth's Lists: A Life Between the Lines*.
- Liam Cole Young, *List cultures: Knowledge & Poetics from Mesopotamia to BuzzFeed*.
- Sasha Cagen, *To-Do List: From Buying Milk to Finding a Soul Mate, What Our Lists Reveal About Us*.

## List of Foot Messenger Deliveries

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**[I kept lists of items I delivered in 1979-80 for Choice & AAA Messenger Services in NYC]**

affidavits, divorce papers, contracts, model portfolios, lunch, basket of musk melons, stool samples, urine samples, Lord & Taylor purchases, skis, Bloomingdale's blouse that didn't fit, flowers, cough medicine, model portfolios, BxW photos of bridge in park, carpet samples, candy, x-rays, deli take-out [roast beef on rye], letters of undetermined content, franchise termination agreement docs, letters of questionable content, love letter [my assumption seeing smile of receiver], brown shoelaces for lawyer about to appear in court, wallet left in store, sculptures, prescription drugs, cigarettes, other drugs, metal shavings, mortgage contracts, job interview tie, missing condiments, real estate blueprints ...



## List of Candies 2017

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A trip to the local Big Lots discount store, Vestal, NY, 2017 was every bit as exciting as a safari for my mother [93]. We went in to buy a few essentials. I took my eye off her in one aisle & found her loading up the basket attached to her walker with whatever she could grab from the candy aisle shelves. I had to wrestle them from her desperate clutches with her swearing under her breath as I returned about a dozen boxes to the shelves – her nursing facility didn't allow sweets. It's not much of a stretch to say that this aisle was my mother's version of Amsterdam's Red Light District.

There were: Dots, Mike & Ikes, Bottle Caps, Sweet Tarts, Sugar Babies, Sour Patch, Boston Baked Beans, Red Hots, Gobstoppers, Chuckles, Swedish Fish, Jujufruits, Starbursts, Pop Drops, Sweet Tarts, Crunch, Caramel Creams, Lemonheads, Blow Pops,

Skittles, Cotton Candy, Laffy Taffy, M&Ms, PayDay, Twix, Mounds, Muddy Bears, Chocolate Raisins, Hershey's Kisses, Milky Way, Baby Ruth, Carome's, Sixlets, Cookie Dough, Almond Joy, Root Beer Float, Cherry Cola, Mentos, Twizzlers, KitKat, Black Cow, Bit-o-Honey, Nerds, Bottle Caps, York Peppermint Patties, Cow Tales, Cry Babies, Butterfinger, Good & Plenty, Gum Cigars, Jelly Belly, Jolly Rancher, Sugar Daddy, War Heads, Smarties, Spree, Junior Mints, GooGoo Cluster, LifeSavers, Airheads, Laffy Taffy, Milk Duds, Orange Heads, Pixie Stix, Pop Rocks, Slap Stix, Razzles, Atomic Fireball ...



## List of Near Death Experiences

There are things you never tell your parents. I dated 2 artists who also happened to earn their living as strippers in the Melody in Times Square. Admitting [bragging about] this was akin to scooping feces from the toilet & hurling them at their TV. That dumbfounded gaze. [Although, just before he died, my father admitted that he envied my dating many women including strippers.]

I never told them of my near-death encounters, hoping to spare them the shock & dismay of hearing how close they'd come to losing me. Or maybe it simply spared me from the humiliation of having to admit that, yes, I was stupid / careless / inattentive / heartless / deranged.

My mother & father are now both dead, so I can tell you that I have almost died a dozen times. Maybe more. Although if it was more you'd think I'd remember them.

I used to tell my daughter comforting, funny-illuminating stories about when I was young. Feel-good instants where I could seem fun, heroic or human: saving box turtles during a flood, building a treehouse, having to compete in sprints during school lunch hour to prove I was still the fastest, how my spotted turtle used to kiss me on the nose ... But never about almost dying.

I remember my father with great glee recounting his near-death story on the operating table, when his soul followed a column of ants wearing small lit candles on their backs to a dark hole in the wall.

In August 2018, I watched my mother die right before my eyes. How slender, how brittle is that boundary between death & life. I sometimes entertained thoughts of confessing: "By the way mom, I forgot to tell you; I've done some stupid things ..."

- **1962:** Sandy Hook, NJ. Almost drowning in the undertow at the beach. Somehow as if by magic, I washed ashore, delivered, gasping, dazed. I'd been dragged down the beach so far by these mysterious currents that I could not find my parents, their beach umbrella. The lifeguard stood high up in his chair, lifted me up on his shoulders & blew his whistle so that all eyes could suddenly be fixed on me. My

father came to retrieve me, which was good because he did not yell or blame me for anything for he too – I only learned much later – had almost died in the North Sea as a teen.

- **1969:** Finger Lakes, NY. My father decided to pass a truck going up a hill in our red Rambler Classic station wagon filled with camping gear & the whole family. He did not anticipate the engine not having enough HP-oomph to pass on a hill & halfway past the truck a car came at us head on, with my father veering off the road onto the shoulder & into a gully at the last moment. My mother was inconsolable, crying, screaming, flailing arms. To remind him of this incident to score a point always seemed senseless.

- **1972:** Richland Center, WI. I worked 6 months in a foundry & at the end of the summer I bought a 10-speed Trek bike, \$129, expensive at the time. On the inaugural ride I took it down a hill just past our house built in a pasture, not properly gauging the steepness & speed I'd built up. Before I knew it I was braking so hard I bent the front aluminum wheel & found myself in the middle of the 2-lane highway, having just barely missed being hit by a passing car by a spookily choreographed micro-second.

- **1973:** Middle of nowhere Ohio, winter. I was hitchhiking on the interstate. It's illegal, but I needed to get to where I was going, & the Staties picked me up, intimidated me, roughed me up, escorted me way out into the middle of some anonymous nowhere & just dumped me there, chuckling as they sped off. The echoes of sinister cops hooting & howling ...

- **1976:** Outside Detroit. Hitchhiking, I was picked up by out-of-their-minds longhair rednecks listening to loud, speaker-rattling radio as they pushed their souped-up 1970-something Malibu to a quivering 110 mph, swerving, side-swiping, passing everyone on this 2-lane road, yahooping out the side windows. I wrote the poem "hard bleeding (in) detroit (speeding & weaving thru town) 5/77" about this harrowing episode.

- **1979:** Times Square. Working as a foot messenger, I was passing through on my way to a delivery when a limo shot through a red light,

so I banged the side of his car in protest. The guy slammed on the brakes – dramatic screech – leaped out & aimed a pistol at me. “Bang,” he yelled, “If this was loaded you’d be dead.”

- **1980:** Union Square, NYC. Drunk, unable to find my way home, I pass out among the bushes in the park. I imagined communicating with the squirrels. When I come to I see I am not kicked to a pulp & that the world, spun faster by thousands of purposeful commuters is whizzing & whirling by a prostrate clump of pathetic/enlightened me on their way to their offices. Yes, a blackout either leads to another or it leads to awareness of the potential glory of survival.

- **1981:** Fort Greene, Brooklyn. Attempted mugging by a teen robber wielding a knife on Vanderbilt just south of Myrtle Ave. I confounded the kid, throwing him off his standard jibajaba by lecturing him on stealing from the rich & not someone poor like me with nothing more than \$1+ in my pockets. He took that one dollar, left the loose change & skidaddled.

- **1984:** Ocean Grove, NJ. Escaping NYC to live on the Jersey shore parttime, where body surfing became an irresistible summer activity. But riptides, extremely unpredictable undertow, sometimes came out of nowhere & it felt like the ocean was sucking you up to feed itself... & there I lie on the wet, hard sand just out of water’s reach, out of breath, glorying in the sun, the gleeful sound of kids at play on the beach.

- **1985:** Greenwich Village. Yuppies ascendant near Laguardia & Bleecker. 4 guys with loosened ties were pummeling a homeless guy with foot & fist for having the gall to beg. They wiped bodily fluids from their oxfords with paper napkins & continued. I intervened, & suddenly they turned on me with full force. I thought: I will end up in an unrecognized martyr death with nobody the wiser ... Enter this feisty young punk gal, who, through sheer attitude & vehemence, forced them to back off & retreat. & so, yes, I was rescued from eternal vegetable-tude by her.

- **1988:** Garden State Parkway, NJ. I was coming home from an overnight, 6-hr radio show on WFMU, doing as many of these shows as

possible [addiction?] before moving to Paris. I fell asleep behind the wheel & woke up in a gully in the center median, staring at the rising sun, slowly realizing how serendipitous this thing called life was. I'm pretty sure I've never told anyone this before.

- **2003:** Amsterdam, near Rembrandtplein. Riding my bike with Paloma on the back kid seat when a [getaway?] car comes screeching & careening at us, missing us by a centimeter. I'm pissed, so I bang the side of their BMW with my indignant fist, swear & ride off. This incenses them & they give chase for a harrowing forever 5 minutes, with them yelling in some Eastern-European-accented Dutch & broken English, swearing they will 'keel' me. After some time of chase-scene weaving, I discovered a narrow bike path between buildings & suddenly I was free & realized that righteous indignation is not always valued – or understood. I rode home via a perplexing labyrinth of back bike path maneuvers, expecting them, despite my efforts to dodge them, to pop up behind me [unreasonably so, like in movies when suddenly the criminals are miraculously on your tail again]. 2 days later my heart & thoughts were still racing. I avoided this part of town for a long, long time – years. But we never reconnected.

**List Found In Street [1984]**



Diet Pepsi - 64 ounce btl

Devil Dogs - 1 pkg

candy

vacuum cleaner bags

toothpicks

panty shields

pipe cleaners

NYCHD clean needles

buttered toasted onion bagel

KLEDINGLYST.

- parabats  
2 shirts (andengood)  
4 white parabats  
1 lange.  
3 long trousers.  
2 flannel hemden  
7 lp. socks. —  
3 dassen  
1 slip over  
1 shawl  
1 amesmpak. →  
2 ~~pyjama jaspe.~~  
kledingstuk  
1 colbertjasje. | +1 mark  
1 handdoek 2  
8 handdoeken. —

## List of Clothing to Take to Berlin, 1943

[Odd packing list for my father's 28.06.43 train departure for Berlin where he worked for 2 years as a forced laborer in various armaments factories (1943-45).]

2 shirts (underwear)

4 short pants

1 long 1 workpants

3 *borstrokken* [singlet or undervest]

2 flannel shirts

7 pairs of socks

3 ties

1 slip over [pullover]

1 scarf

1 bathing suit

2 pyjama jackets

1 training pants

1 colbert [suit jacket]

6 handkerchiefs

1 air gym shoes

1 ink pot

1 mirror

1 writing folder

1 pot of hair cream

1 spool of iron thread

4 shirts

books?

toothbrush

paper

school results

string

provisions: wheat flour, vitamins, cigarettes, condensed milk, bouillon blocks, oatmeal, beans

Maps are to travelers & fingerprints are to forensic investigators what lists can be for the inquisitive reader, fulfilling a haunting need to hold data & mind steady in times of uncertainty.

**LIST FULL**



1

**"profound, hilarious & miraculously present ..."**

• Edwin Torres

2

**"an essential book for anyone even thinking about writing a list poem."** • John M. Bennett

3

**Ambitious, autobiographical, & amusing, Bart Plantenga's new book exalts the humble list as ersatz literature."** • Jeff Wright

4

**"I laughed. I cried. I even had vivid dreams. It's playful & helpful – & totally enjoyable."** • Daisy Wake

5

**"like a secret, delicious stash, you'll return to this book again & again. The details are exquisite. Go backward. Go forward. Go nuts."** • Gail Offen

6

**"It's all about the quotidian quagmire. The bright flashes of insight & idiocy that mark our daybooks."** • Su Byron

author-DJ bart plantenga is very familiar with the absurd, hypocritical, fortuitous, & wobbly. He lists & lives in Amsterdam.

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