

TED GREENWALD  
*from*  
COMMON SENSE

© 2008 Ted Greenwald  
All rights reserved

*Common Sense* (Kensington, CA: L Publications, 1978) was edited and published by Curtis Faville.  
It was typeset by Barrett Watten at the West Coast Print Center with cover art by Bob Kushner.  
Audio recordings of the author reading these poems are available at PennSound.

## GOES ON

The beat  
Comes out the speaker  
Bodies start to move  
Yearning to be  
Next to leaning  
On some other body  
They get up to dance  
Couples a common  
Denominator although  
A few threes and fours  
Can be seen  
Around the floor  
Spines showing through  
Clothes take on  
Unearthly glow  
As if all things  
Unthought of when  
In the course of events  
Have surfaced  
Having a good time  
Between songs  
Everyone stands around  
Breathing saying  
To each other  
What fun  
Is the next one fast or slow  
Can I have this dance  
Who wants to know

## THE PEARS ARE THE PEARS

the pears are the pears  
the table is the table  
the house is the house  
the windows are the windows

the car is the car  
the roads are the roads  
the streets are the streets  
the white line is the white line

the curves are the curves  
the thigh is the thigh  
the knee is the knee  
the arms are the arms

the eyes are the eyes  
the mouth is the mouth

## STRAIGHT ON BEARING LEFT

skies skid into Baghdad  
out of my mind copied, pieced  
together, studied and translated  
they get their oil from a 'well'  
as likable as chinese writing systems  
I grasp and share, like a popping beacon  
the complete experience of the sky's members  
whose i.d. cards are clouds  
(see conditions inside) and how they bend

A lulls B into seeing D  
R loves S but hates you  
Z snores as Y marks the spot with X  
ledge ages dawdle, and rush,  
as I pull plug out, and rug E

## AIRY RUSHES PUNCH

Airy rushes punch my shirt  
Through a window of sunset dirt  
And send me reeling like a lure  
Through the water nerves of America  
Once on the other side of somewhere  
I relax and become someone else  
Not that I behave different  
Just behave less often  
The sky offers me solace and office space  
And stars I keep in drawers  
Wear nothing  
But a little mist and halo  
I will imagine myself  
A sympathetic headlight  
Knocking on the door of the night  
To borrow a cup of sugar  
From the beautiful neighbor  
Who's moved in  
Without even the clothes on her back  
"Would it be possible  
To borrow a cup of sugar"  
"Sure Sit down, honey  
Make yourself comfortable"  
I ease into the big dipper

## COMPLETE BALANCING WEATHER MEETS

Complete balancing weather meets  
With the eye of complete off-balance brain  
Tottering through verbs  
Dew covers the shoe  
With minute observations  
Piling up in an organic unity life chair and sitter  
Dog floats in and pipe slipper and paper  
Sits partly over the instep of unshorn foot  
Snores like a saw through the glories of news logs  
The reader soon falls his head down in bliss  
Or is it a sleep without dreams  
In a city where the nose  
Comes occasionally to a water-smelling patch of haze  
On the face  
Moving toward the river in a phrase

## SEATED ON THE BACK

Seated on the back of my boat  
Fanning evening into my face  
My thoughts travel  
Across the river  
To the little town starting to light  
Yesterday I was over there  
Walking the streets  
Saying "Hey!" to neighbors and friends  
What are they doing now  
Coming home from work  
Kissing hello  
Sitting to supper  
Spending time with the old lady and kids  
Watching the news  
I have a hunch I'll never know  
In the cabin  
I've enough food for two  
Some books to take my mind away  
And a bed sleeping two  
The moon's high enough now  
To extend a toothpick of light  
Across the water  
For me to pick my teeth  
A gurgling and humming pacifies  
My lips  
As I prepare for bed  
Listening to fingers  
Humming off the ends  
Of the arms of the chair



## THE BOOK I TOSS

The book I toss is Boss  
It bangs against the walls  
And gets me working  
I watch the thin green  
Recede into a reed  
And think the time right  
To set the Boss right  
We argue  
Cops suddenly appear  
I throw them and Boss  
Out the window  
And unscrew my ankles  
I be my own boss  
I be my own police

## LAST FIVE MINUTES

The long and the short  
Of it is  
I have to keep pushing  
I feel myself  
Pushing against the  
Lead-in to beauty  
And take a hunch through  
With me  
Into the halls  
Where the everyday  
Seems like eternity  
There's no fooling around  
About something  
As serious  
As it is beautiful  
There's no match  
For the feeling  
That gets there  
When I get there  
And absolutely no sense  
Of duration  
And no telling  
How everything turns out

## WHIFF

An evening  
Spent talking  
Spent thinking  
About what my life would be  
If I'd stayed  
With a particular girl or woman  
I went with  
What would be  
If I'd've been accepted to and gone  
Where I applied  
To a different school  
Then the one I did  
Where I'd learned  
Different social graces  
Then the ones I have  
Where some of the material  
Values of the American dream  
Had rubbed off  
Enough to make me  
Live it out  
In the good-works sense  
If I'd settled down  
And settled  
For the foundation  
On a house  
For future generations  
Instead of assuming  
Immediately past generations  
My foundation to mine  
If I'd been  
A little quicker to learn  
What was expected of me  
And wanting to please pleased  
Going on that way

Through all eternity  
I've probably been saved  
From mere routines  
By a streak of stubbornness  
By a slow mind  
And tendency to drift  
By an emotional development  
That requires  
My personal understanding  
Before happening  
Feeling out the implications  
An emotion has in  
Form of expectation  
Before trying out and  
After awareness  
I sense a willingness  
To tell someone  
I know and like  
And sense the same from  
Anything they'd like to know  
About me  
And, at the same time, have  
A vast sense of privacy  
Which means  
There's no way  
I'll wear out my personality  
And its sense of continuity  
Although sometimes  
I feel empty  
But talking to  
Someone I like  
And trust  
And sense the same from  
I feel way up  
And after a long evening  
Of talk about this and that  
Feel wide awake

And feel the world  
Wide and awake around me  
And have a visual intensity  
In memory  
That, in near memory, dulls  
And throbs  
And grows vivid as hell  
When I bring it to mind  
Some time from then  
What my life  
Would've been like  
Under different circumstances  
Would've been different  
With its own  
Attendant ifs  
And its own what-might've-been  
But this way  
I've elected to follow  
And cast my vote  
Each waking day in  
I avoid  
The possibility  
Of taking the past too seriously  
Or feeling any bitterness  
Or sadness  
*This way*  
When my ship comes in  
I'll've passed out of mind  
Beyond the sight of land  
And won't hesitate  
For a second  
To look back on all this  
With fondness or remiss  
The air'll be clear  
The moon'll be there  
And you, whoever  
You are and hope to be,  
Will be here with my love

## ONE FOOT

one foot in the other world  
the other foot in the other world