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Document A

Nicholson Baker, *The Anthologist*, New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2009, pp. 27-30.

Roz told me, Just go up in the barn and write it. Referring to the introduction to my forthcoming poetry anthology, *Only Rhyme*. She said, Just go! Just go up there and write it! You want to write it. Your editor wants you to write it. I want you to write it. Write it!

5 I said I couldn't write it, it was too awful, too huge, it was like staring at death.

She said, Well, then write a flying spoon poem. Go up there and write something. You'll feel better if you do.

10 She was right, of course. So I went up to the barn. The second floor is empty and has very few windows. It smells like what I imagine the inside of an old lute would smell. I brought up my white plastic chair, and I took notes, and I read, and I thought, and I took more notes, and I sang songs. It was a beautiful week in very early summer, and I felt as if I was sitting inside John Dowland's old lute. I sang a song that Sinéad O'Connor sings, "She Moved Through the Fair." And I
15 sang a song I wrote myself, that goes:

I'm in the barn, I'm in the bar-harn,
I'm in the barn in the afternoo-hoon.

I sang that one a lot. And I made up a new tune for Poe's "Raven."

20 But every time I actually tried to start writing the introduction, as opposed to just writing notes, I felt straightjacketed. So I went out and I bought a big presentation easel, and a big pad of presentation paper, and a green Sharpie pen, and a red Sharpie pen, and a blue Sharpie pen. What I thought was that I could practice talking through the introduction, as if I were teaching a class.

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25 And in order to be relaxed at the easel, I drank a Newcastle. Also coffee, so that I'd be sharp. And still I wasn't sufficiently relaxed, so I drank some Yukon Gold that I found in the liquor cabinet. No, not Yukon Gold, that's a potato. Yukon Jack, a kind of Canadian liqueur. It was delicious. It added a slight Gaussian blur. And then some more coffee, so I'd still be sharp. Blurred, smeared, but sharp.

30 At the end of the week I didn't have the introduction. Roz looked sad and hurt, and I felt miserable. She said, "Well, are you at least making progress?" I said I was, because I was, I was making great strides. But toward what? I was having a gigantic hopeless exciting futile productive comprehensive life adventure up in the barn. I was hoarse from singing. I said I thought I'd probably have the
35 introduction done after another week. Or at least a flying spoon poem as fallback.

Roz pointed out that I was going to Switzerland very soon, and that was really the drop-dead deadline: get the introduction done before Switzerland. And I agreed that it certainly was. I went to a used bookstore and bought another
40 anthology of Elizabethan verse – my fifth – and also the W.H. Auden/ Chester Kallman edition of Elizabethan songs, with a cover drawn by Edward Gorey. I was pleased to have that – it includes actual musical settings.

And I spent some time on iTunes, where I found a song I liked by a group called the Damnwells. It's called "I Will Keep the Bad Things From You," and it's
45 sung by a songwriter named Alex Dezen. At one point you can hear him turning the page. He's sitting there with his guitar, and he's doing this song, and he doesn't even know the words. He's just written it, apparently. He's just discovering it. And it'll never be as real for him as at that moment. He turns the page, and you hear the *schwoooooeeet*, and you want to cry.

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Document B

Daniel J. Boorstin, "Time Becomes Fungible: Packaging the Unit of Work", Chapter 41 of *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (1973), New York: Vintage Books, 1974, pp. 361-362.

"LOST TIME," said *Poor Richard's Almanac*, "is never found again." The work ethic was based on the notion that each working moment was unique and irrecoverable. There were morning hours and evening hours, and there was something different about the labor of each man. Each brought his own shovel to the coal yard, and shoveled in his own peculiar way, and any one man's shoveling was apt to be very different from another's. And somehow it seemed that this was not only right and proper, but inevitable. Man was the only measure of man. Life was a series of unrelivable, unrepeatable episodes. Time was a procession of unique moments – each was now and never again. The past was what had gone beyond recall.

In twentieth-century America even this old truism would cease to be true. For time became "fungible," a series of closely measured, interchangeable units. Time was no longer a stream and had become a production line.

CLOCKS AND WATCHES were scarce in the United States until the mid-nineteenth century. If every unit of time was vague and imprecise, then, of course, a unit of work could not be measured by the time it required. The contours of the work unit were necessarily uncertain so long as work hours were bounded by daylight and darkness.

Punctuality was not one of the virtues which Benjamin Franklin listed for his self-perception. And this was not surprising, since in his day, watches were carried only by the wealthy few. Others could not know the exact time unless they were near a clock. Travelers could not leave or depart on a precise, preannounced schedule. Washington or Jefferson or Adams judged whether a guest was late simply by whether he arrived after he was expected. The delightful clocks with sonorous chimes in the plazas of European towns (which wristwatched Americans now find quaint and charming) in their day were built to be a public utility. They were symptoms, too, of the fact that a common citizen could not afford his personal timepiece. Well into the nineteenth century a watch was an heirloom, to be worn pompously at the end of a heavy gold chain. The watch which Mrs. Abraham Lincoln wore on her wrist at her husband's inauguration was considered a curious piece of jewelry. The expression "wristwatch" did not enter English until nearly 1900. Widespread use of the wristwatch, and the universal awareness of horological time, did not come until

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35 after such watches had been worn by servicemen in the Boer War (1899-1902)
to synchronize the movements of their army units. Only when Americans could
afford to buy watches and clocks and had found ways to make them in
unprecedented numbers did they begin to wear wristwatches and to measure
their lives in minutes.

40 "Efficiency," an American gospel in the twentieth century, meant packaging
work into units of time. In a nation where labor was often scarce and always
costly, efficiency was measured less by "quality" or "competency" than by the
speed with which an acceptable job was accomplished. Time entered into every
calculation. An effective America was a speedy America. Time became a series of
homogeneous – precisely measured and precisely repeatable – units. The
45 working day was no longer measured by daylight, and electric lights kept
factories going "round the clock." Refrigeration and central heating and air
conditioning had begun to abolish nature's seasons. One unit of work time
became more like another.

50 And there were special American incentives to mark off and record standard
work-time units. Mass production was standardized production. Patterns for
making parts of uniform shape and size were only a beginning. The American
System of Manufacturing had required progress in the measurement of all kinds
of units and in the making of units to a standard. Henry Ford added the
techniques of flowing production. And after Ford, mass production also meant
55 assembly-line production, which required removing all uncertainty about the
duration of each task. Now the job was brought to the man. In order to keep up
production it was essential that each man's task be timed so that the line could
be kept flowing and not a moment would be wasted. The speed of the assembly
line, which now meant the speed of production, depended on the speed with
60 which the slowest task could be done. All this meant timing.

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Document C

Film still from *Safety Last!* (1923), directed by Fred Newmeyer & Sam Taylor and starring Harold Lloyd.

