“I’ve brought / you everything”:

The Complete Poems of A. R. Ammons

Volume 1: 1955-1977
and Volume 2: 1978-2005

(W. W. Norton, 2017)
Bad Goods

All my life I've been saving myself for something; I wdn't go here, do that: hello, death, I've brought you everything.
The Complete Poems . . .

gathers the 966 poems from his 22 books,

plus 103 he saw into publication but left uncollected in his books,

as well as 24 seen into publication by colleagues and collaborators over the decade following his death.
The poems range in length from one line, as in . . .

COWARD

Bravery runs in my family.
and . . .

THE STORY

Oblivion keeps the caterpillar bright.
... to five poems so long they were published as separate books:

*Tape for the Turn of the Year* (7035 lines)
*Sphere: The Form of a Motion* (1860 lines)
*The Snow Poems* (7783 lines)
*Garbage* (2217 lines)
*Glare* (5142 lines)
. . . for a total of 55,257 lines in the two volumes combined.
The Complete Poems also . . .

gives poems’ dates of first composition, when Ammons recorded those;

tracks variants in reprints and aims to establish authoritative texts of the poems;

offers endnotes detailing the poems’ publication and textual histories, and also annotating some allusions and other references.
So I Said I Am Ezra

So I said I am Ezra
and the wind whipped my throat
gaming for the sounds of my voice
  I listened to the wind
go over my head and up into the night
Turning to the sea I said
  I am Ezra
but there were no echoes from the waves
The words were swallowed up
  in the voice of the surf
or leaping over the swells
lost themselves oceanward
  Over the bleached and broken fields
I moved my feet and turning from the wind
  that ripped sheets of sand
from the beach and threw them
  like seamists across the dunes
swayed as if the wind were taking me away
and said
  I am Ezra
As a word too much repeated
falls out of being
so I Ezra went out into the night
like a drift of sand
and splashed among the windy oats
that clutch the dunes
of unremembered seas
So I said I am Ezra
and the wind whipped my throat
gaming for the sounds of my voice
I listened to the wind
and went over my head and up into the night
Turning to the sea I said
I am Ezra
but there were no echoes from the waves
The words were swallowed up
in the voice of the surf
or leaping over the swells
lost themselves oceanward
Over the bleached and broken fields
I moved my feet and turning from the wind
that ripped sheets of sand
from the beach and threw them
like seamen across the dunes
away as if the wind were taking me away
and said
I am Ezra
As a word too much repeated
falls out of being
so I Ezra went out into the night
like a drift of sand
and splashed among the windy cats
that clutch the dunes
of unremembered seas

20857 Collected Poems - Ammons
NR 004
1-6-67

Repeat incident to Aligot
6 Dec:

today I
decided to write
a long
thin
poem

employing certain
classical considerations:
this
part is called the pro-
logue: it has to do with
the business of
getting started:

first the
Muse
must be acknowledged,
saluted, and implored:
I cannot
write
without her help
but when
her help comes it's
water from spring heights,
warmth and melting,
stream
inexhaustible:
I salute her, lady
of a hundred names—
Inspiration
Unconscious
Apollo (on her man side)
Parnassus (as her
haunt)
Pierian spring (as
the nature of her
(12/6/63) (which is the
   title of my poem) I
decided to write
a long
thin
poem

employing certain
classical considerations:
this
part is called the pro-
logue: it has to do with
the business of
getting started:

first of all the
Muse
must be acknowledged,
saluted, and implored:
I cannot
write
without her help
but when
her help comes it is like
water from the heights
in spring--there is
warmth and melting--and
the stream seems
inexhaustible:
I salute her, lady
of a hundred names--
Inspiration
Subconscious
Unconscious
Apollo (on her man side
Parnassus (as her
haunt)
Pierian Spring (as
something of the
nature of her
goint)
Hippocrene
Pegasus, and so on, but
most of all she is a
woman, maybe
a woman in us, who sitts
they don't ask what is: bamboo shoots, tender, cool: they have a head man: they pair off & raise babies: they defend: they sometimes rest in clearings and groom themselves in sunlight: have our minds taken us too far, out of nature, out of complete acceptance?

we haven't remembered our bodies: let's touch, patiently, thoroughly: beyond vanity:

but for all our trouble with the mind, look what it's done: a fact at a time: a little here (there's the red ink turned into the light!) a little there: let's be patient: much remains to be known: there may come re-evaluation: if we don't have the truth, we've sneeu thousands of errors: haven't seen the jay: a sparrowhawk can stand still in a high wind, too:

coming home: how does one come home: self-acceptance: reconciliation, a way of going along with this world as it is:

nothing ideal: not as you'd have it: testing, feeling the way: ready to readjust, to make amends:

self, not as you would have it: nevertheless, take it: do the best you can with it: I wrote about these days the way life gave them: I didn't know beforehand what I wd write, whether I'd meet
but for all our trouble
with the mind,
look what it has done:
a fact at a time:
the red ink
turned into the
light
a little here (there's
a little there; there's
let's be patient; much
remains to be known: there may
come a re-evaluation:

If we don't have
the truth, we
have shed
thousands of errors:

reason for hope:
if we foreknew,
we would indeed be
meaningless:

haven't seen the
jay:

can stand still
in a high wind, too:

a high, changeable
wind:

coming home:
how does one come
home:
garbage has to be the poem of our time because
garbage is spiritual, believable enough
to get our attention, getting in the way, piling up, stinking, turning brooks brownish and
creamy white: what else deflects us from the
ersors of our illusionary ways, not a temptation
to trashlessness, that is too far off, and,
anyway, unimaginable, unrealistic: I'm a
hole puncher or hole pluggert stick a finger
in the dame (dam, damn, dike), hold back the issue
of creativity’s flood, the forthcoming, futuristic,
the origins feeding trash: down by I-95 in
Florida where flatland’s ocean- and gulf-flat,
mounds of disposal rise (for if you dug
something up to make room for something to put
in, what about the something dug up, as with graves:)
the garbage trucks crawl as if in obeisance,
as if up ziggurats toward the high places gulls
and garbage keep alive, offerings to the gods
of garbage, of retribution, of realistic
expectation, the deities of unpleasant
necessities: refined, young earthworms,
garbage has to be the poem of our time because
 any garbage is spiritual, believable enough
to get our attention, getting in the way, piling
up, smelling, turning brooks brownish and
creamy white: what else deflects us from the
errors of our ill-chosen ways, not a temptation
to trashlessness, that is too far off, and,
anyway, unimaginable, unrealistic: I'm a
hole puncher or hole plunger: stick a finger
in the dame (dam, damn), hold back the issue
of creativity's flood, the forthcoming, futurist
the origins feeding trash: down by 95 in
Florida where flat land becomes ocean or gulf
mounds of disposal rise (for if you dug
something up where would you put what you had
dug up when the hole was full (as with graves)
- the garbage trucks crawl as if in obeisance,
as if up zigzags toward the high places gull
and garbage keep alive, offerings to the gods
of garbage, of retribution, of realistic
expectation, the deities of unpleasant
necessities: refined, young earthworms,
drowned up on macadam by spring rains, moisten
out white in a day or so and, round spots,
Well, the editor here -- a president here -- finds "stick a finger in the dam" overly risqué and has rendered an objection. For myself, I do think that it lacks something as a figure of speech, or is it a pun? Whatever, it comes off as on for quite a while after you read it a couple of times. Is there, um, so other way to say this? Too late. What would I put in its place? (Over)
I'm trying to establish a kind of wide-sweeping narrator so as to get through the garbage and "garbage" later on.

And it means to be taken as being seen a freedom slip.
the hills are alive with indifference,
a trembling, high-voltage

who-gives-a-hoot: I am so glad I
feel it so strong: they are not

after me, the hills, nor is anyone:
and I am not responsible to raise

them high or treed or consoled:
mountains could bother them: but I
don't care: mountains don't bother
them, though, because mountains,
too, are indifferent, only bigger:
no imperatives are delivered from

the peaks—except, of course, it's
hard to get up them and not much
easier to get down: but I don't
have to follow lofty urgings

ignoring which could bring pain:
except, perhaps—"don't stand below

high boulders on a deforested slope
in pouring rain": I mean, one does

have to mind the constitutions and
configurations of things: pay no
Look for this seal to identify the non-prescription medication most recommended by your Fay's Pharmacist.

If you have special needs or are getting medication for a child 6 years or younger, always talk to your Fay's Pharmacist first.

Ask Your Fay's Pharmacist
I talk to him and explain. He is at the University Hospital.

He is in a major hospital for mental health issues. I am not sure if he is doing well.

I feel it is important to keep his life on track.

I do not know what to do. I am not sure what to do.

I wonder what to do. I do not know what to do.

I wonder what to do. I do not know what to do.

I wonder what to do. I do not know what to do.

I wonder what to do. I do not know what to do.

I wonder what to do. I do not know what to do.

I wonder what to do. I do not know what to do.

I wonder what to do. I do not know what to do.

I wonder what to do. I do not know what to do.
Finishing Up

I wonder if I know enough to know what it's really like to have been here: have I seen sights enough to give seeing over: the clouds, I've waited with white October clouds like these this afternoon often before and taken them in, but white clouds shade other white ones gray, had I noticed that: and though I've followed the leaves of many falls, have I spent time with the wire vines left when frost's red dyes strip the leaves away: is more missing than was never enough: I'm sure many of love's kinds absolve and heal, but were they passing rapids or welling stirs: I suppose I haven't done and seen enough yet to go, and, anyway, it may be way on on the way before one picks up the track of the sufficient, the world-round reach, spirit deep, easing and all, not just mind answering itself but mind and things apprehended at once as one, all giving all way, not a scrap of it holding back.