

THE ROOMS, THE STREETS, THE NOVEMBER BEACHES

A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by
Thomas J. MacMorran
May, 1973

692685

PREFACE

I suppose that every person who considers himself an artist feels that his work is its own best explanation and not only resists any implication that it would be incomprehensible to another, but also feels that to reduce himself to the level of explaining the obvious indicates that his audience must be composed of cretinous philistines. Always there is the implicit threat that his work is actually unintelligible and that, by offering an explanation, the poet is at once making an apology and an attempt to salvage what little worth there is, what few communicable ideas there are in his work. Upon reflection, however, the need, indeed, the absolute desirability of a preface makes itself immediately apparent.

Any work of art possesses certain complexities. If the artist is concerned with the clear and comprehensible communication of his vision, his perceptions, and the means by which he can more effectively make known not only his themes and techniques but also his sources and influences, he owes it to himself and his audience to make available whatever information he can. I have often observed that the ego is the greatest hindrance to communication and understanding. I should like to attempt to suspend my ego and

devote a few words to my art in the hope that, instead of offering apology and justifications, I may illuminate. That the work has its shortcomings I am all too aware. The poetry is never finished; it is, as Valery is reputed to have remarked, "abandoned." But it is abandoned only to be returned to, to be picked up and reworked, sometimes several days later, sometimes years later. The artist, in my opinion, should never hesitate to show work he considers to be good work. He should, on the other hand, never attempt to call finished anything but work as perfect as it is within his capability to produce.

The poems in The Rooms, The Streets, The November Beaches consider many subjects and possess several consistent themes. There is one theme, however, that evolves out of the collection that could be said to be the major theme running through all the poems: that of the process of one's discovery of his selfhood as it relates to men and the world, and as it relates to one's position in the cosmos and in time. Such a discovery is an exploration of awesome and occasionally frightening realms; it is the acquisition of sometimes exhilarating and other times debilitating knowledge. What one discovers to be true of and for himself often puts him at odds with the perceptions of others; the explorer finds himself at such times on the dark side of truth, where he must find his own truths, and where, moreover,

he must learn to incorporate these truths into his own life. Often these truths are disagreeable ones, but their unpleasant nature renders them no less true and no less necessary to be honestly assessed, weighed, evaluated, understood, and finally, incorporated. Indeed, the major difficulty, one which at times assumes almost unbearable proportions, is the necessity to maintain a total and unequivocal honesty. The temptation has occurred too many times to gloss over an idea or an expression to make it somehow more compatible, to make it somehow more agreeable with concepts of what constitutes the poetic. In all fairness, it must be said that I have not always been able to avoid softening some of the things I have had to write, tailoring them to fit a more traditional idea of what is acceptable to consider as poetry, as opposed to more prosaic biographical or philosophical reportage. This difficulty will be with me always though, and I have had enough success at overcoming it to know that I will be able eventually to triumph over the temptation to see myself in too sympathetic a light. It is, I would submit, the most difficult thing the poet has to do to discover what his poetry is, for he must first discover his perception and expression and then he must accept them. If he is honest with himself, he refuses to accept any substitute, no matter how seductively tempting it may be.

Self-discovery may well be considered to be the search

for the center of all knowledge, for whatever definitions may be given the term 'knowledge,' one, certainly, must be the ordering of one's experiences and the relation of those perceptions to some systematic order of interpretation, even if that order goes by the name of chaos. The search for knowledge represented in this body of work is an on-going process, one which is not terminated with the last poem in the last section of the book. In a way, the lack of any definite conclusion will help the reader understand the arrangement of the poems. Within each section the poems are arranged in a more or less chronological order. Each section, however, is made up of poems that were written at various times and the dates often overlap. For instance, a poem appearing at the beginning of the last section, The November Beaches, may well be a contemporary of a poem at the beginning of another section. For a specific example, "A Tiny Warfare" was written roughly about the same time as "Documentation." The reason for such an arrangement is, I hope, made apparent by the sequence of titles and their positions. The Rooms and The Streets are obvious enough references if one considers the over-all theme of the acquisition of knowledge. Even more than reflections of the obvious, the contemplative and academic setting of The Rooms and the active and worldly setting of The Streets, the titles suggest the poles of normal experience: that

of the intellect and that of the emotion, or physical experience.

These two poles are not isolated phases; they are part of the totality of experience. That I have been actively involved as a student during the entire time of composition has necessarily reflected itself in the theme and content of the poems. At the same time, because of travel and personal conditions, my scholarship has extended itself by necessity into the realm of "the street." Each is a separate knowledge, often divided by the uninitiated as to viability, the rooms of the academy being removed from the harder realities of the street. From my own perception and in my poems, the interrelationship of the intellectual and the emotional, the spiritual and the physical, and the theoretical and the actual become components of the entire perception. Setting these components into different areas of definition serves not to distinguish them one from another, but rather to demonstrate their essential interrelation.

There remains then, something to be said about the third division, The November Beaches. Before the collection was completed, I must confess that I considered the first two sections as separate entities denoting different realms of experience working, if not essentially at odds with one another, then at least in contradistinction. Their unity only became apparent to me as I worked on the

last section, The November Beaches. There, all the opposites began to come together; the intellect joined the emotional, the theoretical merged with the actual, and the spiritual with the physical. In the title poem, "The November Beaches," this marriage is most readily apparent. The imagery is graphic and physical; the outrage of the speaker and the solace nature provides are strongly and movingly stated; and the movement of the poem from the desire for a union with nature to its actuality is smooth and sure. The reasoning behind the theme is, within the context of the entire collection (none of the poems in this collection are completely independent of the others; some may stand better alone than others, but they are all part of the same continuum), consistent and credible. "The November Beaches" is not the strongest poem I have written, nor is it what I consider to be my best. But it is the most honest and in all likelihood one of the best articulated of my poems.

The last section is the beginning of the harvest of the two previous sections. It deals less with the acquisition of knowledge than with the first hesitant steps one must take to transfer knowledge into a workable body of wisdom. It is the first tentative step away from training and into use, the first attempt to regularize themes and move into a more profound level of awareness. A couple of the early poems still bear at least the possibility of

various thematic interpretations. I refer here to "A Tiny Warfare," and "Facades," which can bear scrutiny both on the political and social levels, as well as on levels of perhaps a more permanent importance. The November Beaches begins the process of defining the major themes with which I plan to continue for some time to come. They are few in number but, I believe, the only themes that are important enough to deserve as intensive attention as I am capable of giving. One of these continues in the vein of the poem "The November Beaches:" the theme of the individual, removed from the capability of revolt by a society that swallows revolt. He is forced, ultimately, to step aside from society and fall back within himself to discover who he is and what his purpose may be in the greater context of eternal processes. This theme is introduced in the title poem of the last section and sets the pace for the last poems of The November Beaches, notably the last three poems. It is to be carried further in a sequence presently under meditation and tentatively titled Anthems of Liberation, poems which will attempt to incorporate the spiritual into the physical life, poems which will chronicle the attempt at temporal unification of traditional spiritual opposites.

To return to the present collection, however, there is one more item of importance to be mentioned as regards themes and purposes in my work: the necessary incorporation

of the biographical into my poetry. It would be pompous and indeed naive to attempt a definition of art or poetry that would apply to all art or artists; I can only state what seems to be valid for me at the time of this writing. Art is not and can not be a reproduction of reality. Realities are; they exist. The things that happen around me, the things I do, say, think, experience and endure are all woven into the fabric of my poetry. Every poem I have ever written has had its base in the realities of my physical, mental or spiritual existence. A term which may help here is one that is often heard in discussions of Hermann Hesse: the "spiritual realm." Hesse's works are his spiritual autobiography. My works, as thin and inept as they are in comparison, are my own spiritual record. They are the depiction of things seen, thought, or simply intuited. One of my few readers once remarked that my poems were to him like a gallery of paintings, some large and well-orchestrated, but most like miniatures, small windows looking outward and inward to scenes that, while they are self-explanatory, are also transparently demonstrative of larger perspectives and truths. If the poems can produce such an awareness in a reader whose interests do not lean particularly toward modern poetry, then I am satisfied that they are at least reasonably successful vehicles of my perceptions.

Poetry may be as natural to man as breathing, but I

suspect no poet ever sat down and conscientiously practiced his art without reading what others had done. The old saw about one's being influenced by everything he has read could never be more true than in my case. The sources upon which I have drawn are as numerous as they are confusing. At the conclusion of this thesis I have included a highly selected working bibliography with brief, general annotations. In the body of this preface, I would like simply to note some of the more profound influences on my writing in three areas: technique, theme, and diction.

Though many concrete examples of the influences exerted upon my writing by others lie buried in folders and envelopes of unsuccessful poems, the influences nevertheless made themselves felt on my writing. One such influence was Dylan Thomas. Through his poetry I developed a strong interest in meter and flow, in music. For some time I even attempted to use language like his, only to discover that I had to find my own. I was never able to sustain a long line as Thomas did, but I did develop a healthy respect for using the unexpected word. An example of Thomas that demonstrates his rhythm and his rhetoric is the first stanza to his "Poem In October:"

It was my thirtieth year to heaven
Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood
And the mussel pooled and the heron
Priested shore
The morning beckon

With water praying and the call of seagull and rook
And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall
Myself to set foot
That second
In the still sleeping town and set forth.¹

Perhaps the poem in this collection with the strongest Thomas influence is "Dum Cor Dolet Intus," though examples of his influence appear in many more of the poems.

T.S. Eliot exerted as strong an influence as Thomas, though in an entirely different way. Through Eliot I developed an interest in the long meditative poem. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"² served as a model of poetic voice for me for some time. Eliot's concept of the objective correlative, however, played havoc with my desires to incorporate personal experience into the poetry. The schism between Prufrock's situation, the cocktail party, and his interior reality of alienation, his mental walking the streets, creates a personal statement without becoming personal in itself. Attempting to work within the framework of an objective stance, while generally unsuccessful until recently, and also while generally unsatisfactory for my type of poetry,

¹
Dylan Thomas, "Poem In October," Collected Poems (New York: New Directions, 1957), p. 113.

²
T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1962), pp. 3-8.

was nevertheless a very valuable test against a too strongly emotional or embarrassingly personal poetry. Two of my poems, "The Sunday Walkers," and "Sunday Morning Coming Down," reflect this work with an objective voice that bears the influence of Eliot's poetry.

A major and continuing influence on my poetry is to be found in the poems of Emily Dickinson. Her genius for compression and the intensity of expression in her brief poems have stood as symbols of poetic quality for me for some time. In her poem, "I reason, Earth is short," for example, in twelve short lines, none of which runs over five words in length, she creates a vivid picture of her anxiety over the lack of absolutes even in death and the promised afterlife: an anxiety all the more powerful for its brevity of expression.³ Compactness and concentration such as hers are two of the most important qualities I seek to impart to my poetry. The more compact and concentrated the poetry is, I think, the more intense its impact on the reader.

I have also been aided and influenced very much in the discovery of my own voice by friends who shared my interest in poetry. Through discussions primarily, but also by means of reviewing notes and manuscripts of our poems

³ Emily Dickinson, "I reason, Earth is short," Final Harvest: The Poems of Emily Dickinson, ed. Thomas H. Johnson, (Boston: Little, Brown Co., 1961), p. 54.

which we freely circulated among ourselves, we all sharpened our own critical eyes, and, in turn, this reflected itself in the poetry. Robert Williams, Linda Lovell, and Michael Murphy, three friends from three separate periods in my poetic development, shared by their wisdom and ideas in the growth of my work. Their influence has been both of a practical nature, and in ideas. Williams was responsible for my first publication and taught me much about the art of reading poetry aloud. This, in turn, created an awareness of the importance of metrics that continues in its influence to this day.

Miss Lovell influenced me by her sharp, often brutally honest appraisals of the effectiveness of my poems. Through her criticisms, I learned the necessity of maintaining a logical coherence between the ideas within a poem. Her influence was of great importance, for it taught me never to take a reader for granted.

Michael Murphy is an unpublished, unknown poet who has served me, through our long friendship, as an intellectual stimulus, both in our discussions about poetry when we are together and in our heavy correspondence. Active relationships with other poets force one constantly to hone his thinking and keep ideas under constant revision. Their influence is perhaps not so large upon the whole body of work as it is necessary to the quality of that work.

Two poets who have received relatively recent recognition and exposure have exerted a profound influence upon my poetry both in terms of style and technique. Sylvia Plath opened the doors to a potential of violent energy in language by her unusual juxtapositions and associations. An example of her high-energy language is her poem, "The Hanging Man:"

By the roots of the hair some god got hold of me.
I sizzled in his blue volts like a desert prophet.

The nights snapped out of sight like a lizard's
eyelid:
A world of bald white days in a shadeless socket.

A vulturous boredom pinned me in this tree. 4
If he were I, he would do what I did.

The texture of words like "sizzled," the graphic and concrete quality of metaphor, as in "The nights snapped shut like a lizard's eyelid" have enlivened my own use of language to a very great extent. In my poem, "I Have Lived Another Year," for example, the selection of the word "revolve" and the picture of the "hard neon bar" are but two of the beneficial results of reading Sylvia Plath. I am still in the process of studying her rhetoric, but my first reading of her poetry reflected itself immediately in my own work. I could never copy her; I would never want to.

4
Sylvia Plath, "The Hanging Man," Ariel (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 69.

Yet, by reading her work I have discovered a new freedom of diction and association and a new power in ordinary language that will continue to be made manifest in my own work.

The most obvious influence in my recent work, however, has been through the poetry of the Canadian poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen. Through Cohen's work I have learned the effectiveness of meter in establishing mood in poetry. I have never worked in regular forms before, feeling that communication of theme was of paramount importance. If one of my lines happened to scan well after it had met the demands of brevity and communication of an idea, then it was well and good. If not, then it was a matter of indifference to me. Williams made me aware of the use of meter in the public presentation of poetry, and that began the change in my thinking that resulted in a revision of my attitude toward rhythm. In my latest work, particularly in the poems in The November Beaches, I have turned to metrical constructions in the attempt to allow my reader to feel the pace of the poem in much the same way it came to me, thereby coming closer to attaining the meaning I want to impart to the language. In "Hunters," "The Cure," and "Lines To Old Lovers," I use a very definite rhythm extensively. In later poems, "Caligula," for example, I loosen up the meters, attuning them to my own breathing rates as

I read the poem. The virtue to this loosening of meter is that the poems do not have the "sing-song" effect of the more tightly regulated rhythms.

Interestingly enough, I discovered Cohen at about the same time my own thematic concerns were undergoing a change toward the direction of his themes of renunciation and alienation. How successful my own poems that bear his influence will be in the future remains, of course, unknown. I know for a fact that his work has helped me immeasurably in my own attempt to find my poetic voice. His imagery opened up my own resources, and that is perhaps his most significant influence on my poetry. No longer do I feel constrained to use the 'poetic,' even when the poetic has become "hip" language of fashion, relevant to only a few and very much restricted to this point in time. Everything is usable, and Leonard Cohen's poetry helped me to learn to use the imagery of my own physical and mental environment, imagery as diverse as love letters and the relief of the junkie getting ready to "fix up." Cohen's use of unexpected but effective imagery is nowhere more apparent than in his poem, "I Stepped Into An Avalanche," which I quote in full, not only to demonstrate his remarkable imagery, but also to show his meter.

I Stepped Into An Avalanche

I stepped into an avalanche

It covered up my soul
When I am not a hunchback
I sleep beneath a hill
You who wish to conquer pain
Must learn to serve me well

You strike my side by accident
As you go down for gold
The cripple that you clothe and feed
is neither starved nor cold
I do not beg for company
in the center of the world

When I am on a pedestal
you did not raise me there
your laws do not compel me
to kneel grotesque and bare
I myself am pedestal
for the thing at which you stare

You who wish to conquer pain
must learn what makes me kind
The crumbs of love you offer me
are the crumbs I've left behind
Your pain is no credential
It is the shadow of your wound

I have begun to claim you
I who have no greed
I have begun to long for you
I who have no need
The avalanche you're knocking at
is uninhabited

Do not dress in rags for me
I know you are not poor
Don't love me so fiercely
when you know you are not sure
It is your world beloved
It is your flesh I wear 5

5
Leonard Cohen, "I Stepped Into An Avalanche," Select-
ed Poems, 1956-1968 (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 217-218.

There are some things in Cohen for which I do not care, such as his inconsistent use of punctuation and an occasional image that is embarrassingly grotesque, but, for the most part, I like his poetry and have greatly benefitted from reading it. It is as if I were afraid to use the objects and scenes of my own experience because they seemed poetically invalid in the face of all that has come before. Cohen changed all that. The use of definite meters has enabled me to create some very satisfactory poems.

The influences are without number. If I have learned craft from the poets, I have learned even more about myself and my thought from writers in prose: Henry Miller, for example, who first opened the possibility of being a writer to me; Lawrence Durrell, who showed me how complex even the simplest emotion can be; Jack Kerouac, who shared his vision of an America gone sour that prepared me to understand the experiences depicted in The Streets. There is Dostoevsky's The Idiot, in many ways similar to Kerouac, only grimmer and perhaps based more in a permanent reality. There are the writings of Hermann Hesse, who has become in recent years a spiritual father to me, not because of The Steppenwolf alone, but because, having read many of his novels, poetry, and essays in their order of composition, I have grown to know my own search. Thomas Mann, in Doctor Faustus, who has, in both the character of the narrator and in the charac-

ter of Adrian Leverkühn, defined the forces of my consciousness that do battle and that must be brought into harmony. Finally, there is the influence of Jerzy Kosinski, whose lean prose style in Steps has taught me more about the practice of economy in the writing of fiction than any book of recent acquaintance, and who has also been the first writer I have read who stylistically reflects the moral and spiritual void in which mid-twentieth century man finds himself, a void Camus anticipated in his writings and for which his Christian existentialism is inadequate. The list of influences grows with practically every book I read.

In addition to noting the basic theme and several of the influences on the poems in this book, I would also like to consider briefly the development of style that takes place in The Rooms, The Streets, The November Beaches. I learned, as I put the collection together, that style is not so much a decoration one adds to his medium as it is a truth of expression that rises from within: a gravitation toward honesty of expression as well as honesty of content. In retrospect, I can see that each section reflects distinctive characteristics in the development of my own expression.

The first section of poems demonstrates a certain artifice in the poetry. It is the result of the attempt to set my rational processes into a preconceived 'poetic' diction by using strange word orders and unusual juxtapositions

in the attempt to nudge the reader's awareness into the possibility of several levels of meaning in the poetry. In the first stanza of "The Devotion," for instance, the artist "pretends to" his art. This pretending is in all seriousness, but suggests at the same time the sense of doubt he feels about the honesty and ability of his effort as well as the concern he feels with meeting a preconceived notion of what art is. This stylistic device appears in poems in all three sections, for it reflects very accurately one of the periods of development in my art. These phases of development, rather than being separate and distinct, all overlap and often reappear, much as the philosophical themes do. In this first section, the themes and perceptions are all of a more intellectual, i.e. rational inclination, and I needed to satisfy an aesthetic demand at the same time. I tended, therefore, to dress my articulations in language I considered at the time to be a more poetically viable diction.

The problem with this artifice is that it renders the themes more obscurely than a clearer diction would. In the effort to compensate for what was often not a very poetic theme or perception, I sought to overcome the excess of rationality by an excess of artifice.

In the second section, the thematic concerns shift to the area of physical experience and the use and order becomes more 'real' in the sense that the poems become more

open and direct statements of experience of all kinds. Often the poems are merely the depiction of experience without further reflection, as in "Fever." The possibility for more than one level of interpretation is still there, of course, but the language becomes much more concrete and readily understandable on the literal level. This second stylistic development seems to have come about in reaction to the excesses of the first emphasis on the 'poetic' in the attempt to describe the essentially rational. Now artifice is brought into balance with a more rational presentation. This development improved my poetry, I believe, because it exerted a stronger discipline over my expression. Because the nature of the experiences in The Streets is of a more emotional emphasis, often of a very high intensity, the discipline serves to render the type of material the poet of the earlier period would term 'poetic' in a more rational and controlled way, thereby being clearer about the levels of meaning. There is nevertheless still an excess of artifice in this second phase of stylistic development, but the expression is gravitating toward a more capable honesty.

In the third phase of development, one primarily visible in The November Beaches, a new element is added; a more serious control becomes evident in the appearance of a more pronounced meter. Even when it is so heavy-handed and blatant that it dominates the poem and thus commits the

same weakness of excess that occurred in the previous two periods of development, it further enhances the ability of the poetry to convey meaning. After an initial excess, however, the use of meter becomes mellowed and becomes supportive of the purpose of the poems; it takes its place among the totality of components, whether they are called artifice or reality, myth or truth. "The November Beaches" is perhaps the best incorporation of all these elements together.

This conscious control has two other effects that manifest themselves in the poetry. One is in the way the control affects one's use of experience and reason. He now directs it to the end of understanding the other components. This becomes a direct inquiry of life, its meanings and directions, and a pursuit of truth in the answers he finds, truth that must not only be confirmed by reason, but also by emotional, intuitive and spiritual criteria.

This direction in the pursuit of truth must be expressed with the utmost precision, whether metaphorically or as directly as possible, whichever means lends itself better to the poem at hand. This, in turn, necessitates a very exact and controlled use of language, vocabulary, and rhythm.

Always there is the possibility that the language and imagery relate too exclusively to the perception of the translator of the various realms to be widely understandable. That does occur sometimes in the poetry, but now I am aware

of the problem and I am contemplating its resolution to an acceptable and useful harmony with the other elements of my poetic configuration. Its resolution will come.

The Rooms, The Streets, The November Beaches are the result not only of my own creative effort but also the willingness of the faculty of the department of English and indeed the department itself to allow me to pursue knowledge in a way relevant to my future development as an artist and a human being. In response to their enlightened willingness to take a chance on my seriousness of intent and desire to do my absolute best, I feel a few words about the original intent and subsequent realizations I have had about this project would be in order. In the letter I submitted to the graduate committee proposing a creative thesis, I wrote that I wanted to discover whether or not I could create a worthwhile body of work in a limited period of time; I sought, in other words, to allow an exercise in artistic discipline to be a thesis for a graduate degree. This exercise has demonstrated several important things to me, things that have made the production of this thesis a valuable learning experience.

I have discovered that I can work under a time limit; if forced to work at a certain pace, I can do better revision of work than I would were I unhampered by time. This is valuable knowledge. My emphasis is upon quality only. There

are poems in this collection that will undoubtedly go under the knife many times before I call them finished. There are others that may not survive the next review of my work I undertake. No matter what may lie in the future of these poems though, one thing is certain: there is not one poem in this collection under which, at this period in space and time, I would not be willing to sign my name. There is not one poem in this collection that was included for expediency's sake; there is not one poem here designed to flatter or offend. Every poem is genuine; every poem belongs.

I have also discovered something I suspected all along. It is impossible for me to sit down and write a first rate poem off the top of my head. There was a time when inspiration alone sufficed to make a poem. "On Watching A Plain Girl Eat Her Lunch" is an example of that. It is a good enough poem, though by no means my best. It is also one of my oldest. I wrote it in a moment of inspiration in a cafeteria. It took me roughly three minutes to write, and I have changed but one word in it from the original draft. Such things do not happen often though, and I know that Hemingway's remark about writing as ten per-cent inspiration and ninety per-cent perspiration is all too true. The occasional inspiration still comes, but my concerns have grown and my themes have developed to the point that inspirations take their place as supportive of larger bodies of work in progress. If any-

thing, this thesis has caused me to revamp a hitherto undisciplined and haphazard methodology into one which, while tailored to my particular needs and demands, is nonetheless systematic and productive. Sooner or later, no doubt, I would have reached this conclusion without the aid of a thesis. I can only wonder how many good poems, even how many excellent and memorable ones, would pass me by before I had that realization.

Another thing this thesis made me do was to evaluate my themes and discover if there was any coherence in my work. I was prepared to turn in a collection of occasional poems, had it been necessary, but, happily, I discovered that there are indeed several themes that occupy most of my attention and that these themes have found their way into my poetry since I first contemplated them. I was pleased to discover that these themes appear in nearly all the poems. Emerson's advice that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds is never far from my thinking, as anyone familiar with my personal life can testify, yet, as I wrote earlier in this preface, there are, to my way of thinking at present, only a few themes that I care to treat, and I feel that they are themes of profound importance. I was pleased to discover that I had been working with what I wanted to work with all along. The strange power of art: the magic of it eludes the artist perhaps most of all.

Most works of art are, I believe, individual efforts made by individuals. I alone have suffered for these poems; I alone have written them. After the influences have been assimilated and used or discarded, after the reflections and discussions have faded into the night, I have been alone with my pen and my perception. I have no one to thank for my art but myself.

But poetry that remains in a notebook, unread by others, is a waste. The man who says he writes for himself alone is either a liar or a fool. Without the aid of several people throughout the years, I would have been denied the necessary critical and scholarly comment that enables me to improve my art.

I would like therefore to extend my appreciation to those who have been helpful to me in my attempt to define my art in this thesis: Dr. Irving N. Rothman, Mr. Sylvan Karchmer, Dr. Don Harrell, Dr. Tom DeGregori, and my friend, Mrs. Marian M. Orgain.

THE ROOMS, THE STREETS, THE NOVEMBER BEACHES

An Abstract of a Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Thomas J. MacMorran
May, 1973

THE ROOMS, THE STREETS, THE NOVEMBER BEACHES

The Rooms, The Streets, The November Beaches is a collection of poems that has as a central theme the process of self-discovery. Each section corresponds to a facet of that process, The Rooms being the academic and intellectual growth of knowledge, The Streets depicting the emotional side of knowledge and experience in the world, and The November Beaches presenting a synthesis of the emotional and intellectual to provide a basis for the investigation of the spiritual. The entire body of poems is an attempt to discover one's spiritual identity by a process of acquisition and use of knowledge of the self built on reflection and experience.

An annotated bibliography at the conclusion of the collection lists selected authors and works that have been most influential in the development of the author's thought and art.

CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE.....	iii
THE ROOMS	
The Rooms.....	1
On Watching A Plain Girl Eat Her Lunch.....	2
Documentation.....	3
Viewing Botticelli's Venus.....	4
An Urn For Diogenes' Ash.....	6
A Question Of Limits.....	7
Insomnia.....	8
A Matter Of Alternatives.....	9
Sunday Walkers.....	10
Concrete Research No. 7.	12
The Devotion.....	13
Last Day In February.....	15
Pastoral.....	16
Afterglow.....	17
A Jealousy.....	18
Octogenarian.....	19
Deathbed.....	21
Diminishing Return.....	22
Conversation In The Empty Night.....	23
After Bad Instruction.....	25

	Page
You Read In Ancient Books.....	27
For Mary And Jim.....	28
To The Various Widows.....	29
THE STREETS	
The Streets.....	30
Three Moments.....	33
For Peggy In September.....	35
War Song.....	36
Dum Cor Dolet Intus.....	37
Fever.....	39
Introduction.....	40
Consummation.....	41
Jimi Hendrix Sings <u>All Along The Watchtower</u>	42
C.O.	43
Eucharist.....	45
Courage.....	47
Mohlstrasse.....	48
November Snow.....	49
Winter Sparrows.....	50
Barbara's Roses.....	51
A Love Song.....	52
A Diplomacy Of Love.....	53
The Acquaintance.....	54
Six O' Clock News.....	56

	Page
Afternoon And Evening.....	58
Before The Storm.....	59
Untitled Sequence.....	60
Meditation By A Lake.....	63
Acid Quartet.....	65
Sunday Morning Coming Down.....	66
On A Wall Overlooking The Neckar.....	68
Continuum.....	72
Offensive On Dowling Street.....	73
Retort To Myself.....	75
Departures.....	76
Hawk And Swallows.....	78
Untitled Poem.....	79
Dead Ends And Detours, No. 1.	80
Dead Ends And Detours, No. 2.	81
Scapegoats.....	82
THE NOVEMBER BEACHES	
A Tiny Warfare.....	84
Facades.....	85
Of The Manifold Routes.....	86
Between Roads.....	87
Death Will Not Deliver.....	88
Hunters.....	89
Martyr For The Cause.....	91

	Page
The Cure.....	93
Lines To Old Lovers.....	95
Winter Solstice.....	97
Caligula.....	98
The November Beaches.....	100
Autumn Sunset.....	102
The Lights Of Paris Bridges.....	105
I Have Lived Another Year.....	107
Natural Selection.....	108
Meditation Before Sleep.....	109
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 111

THE ROOMS

The Rooms

For the dull man the world moves
of itself, the stars revolve
unnoticed, the night is time
for sleep and entertainments.

The house of thought has many rooms;
the congress of men gathers to reach
beyond themselves for understanding,
their light illuminates the shadows.

The arrangement of our motion
whispers familiar sounds to me,
the measured cadences of time
urge discovery of a plan.

I would understand the motions
of the mind, heft great books
and read the thoughtful words of scholars,
make their knowledge teach me my own.

I will take up the lamp and open the book,
I will light the darkness of my halls;
the mansion of the mind has many rooms
that echo in darkness the dull man's curse.

On Watching A Plain Girl Eat Her Lunch

You are alone and quiet,
your eyes, deep, search
the room for your knowledge
in the eyes of others.

Once you were history,
the miracle of your birth
came before your notice;
you take food and live.

You grow as the fruit
once grew before your hand
touched it, grew unseen
and harvested for your purpose.

And yet you are quiet
with the secret of your life;
the magnitude of your presence
is a beauty beyond style.

Documentation

According to the usual
and reasonably reliable sources,
I was drawn in the traditional
route through thighs; it,
substantiated by a tiny foot
on black paper--typescript white,
as if photography could substantiate being.

I never checked the foot-
print for accuracy, never
sensing forgery important,

and don't care to remember too much
why events I can't control
should risk so much care;
do we move a galaxy
when we foster life, do
we split clusters of atoms
when we die?

Viewing Botticelli's Venus

Then once it seemed
no more than another
motion where movement
was no stranger,

there has never been stasis
outside decay, never
more than progress
and rest.

There, beginning was a step
in time, the breath
of air, life now conscious
bore first knowledge.

What is there to learn
that is not necessary:
there is nothing too small
for our attention,

nothing too great
for conception. This
curl the sea might once
have signified all knowledge.

Imagine then the adventure
may once have been a woman
mounting from sea to land,
heavy with seed and wisdom.

An Urn For Diogenes' Ash

He hailed the night
in his search;

I capitulate man
and go the route
of stars.

I lift the searing lamp
and burn my eyes
at unfolding

night.

A Question Of Limits

O

word,

alone

you are

without end;

it is only

in groups,

like men in a mob,

that you are

a prisoner.

Insomnia

A thousand images float up,
the darkened room a theatre
of my living history.
Turning on a spit of thought,
familiar things like walls
pass my eyes, roaming in the dark.

What strange place is this,
the echo of my breath, my blood
is charging through my mind.

I notice little things in the dark,
the tautness of a muscle as I turn,
the slow discomfort of a pose held too long.
There comes a repetition of the day,
the conversations of a hundred friends
haunt the creeping night within these walls.

The secrets echo deep behind my mind,
too tired to care but not too tired to fear.
I ache for light to pull my eyes to thought
and end this looking inward in the dark,
this vibration of a thousand ghosts
that makes me wish I had been born blind.

A Matter Of Alternatives

So saying as if speech
could let off the strain,
the young man with bent shoulders
nodded and spoke to the night window:
If I must live then, let it be
removed to the ideal.

Then he looked once more
at the woman sleeping, he
shrugged for the thousandth night
the ideal before lighting
his last cigarette,
the bright point of fire
and undisturbed drift of smoke
confirming the ease of silence
over the circular energy of strife.

Sunday Walkers

With the mechanical precision
of centuries of tradition
you can forecast their appearance
in the afternoon, the German winter
groans behind the hills
and the burnt colors of fall
tremble on the brittle trees,
unseen by the staunch
patriarchs in coats and ties
marching through the woods
as their fathers did,
and their grandfathers did,
and their fathers before them.

Through the woods and over
the hill, to a gasthaus in a clearing;
beer for the father, coffee and cake
for the mother, ices for the kids
before the long walk through the woods
to supper and to bed.

Year in and year out
the trails remain, the
seasons change, the Sunday

walkers come and go
unsmiling in their collars
and choking in their ties,
stern hands behind their backs
as they watch the joyless ritual
of their moving feet
between the beer and supper.

Concrete Research No. 7

Invisible and silent,

distant and patient

as the stars, a u

n

i

v

e

r

s

of space

& time

t

h

e

t

h

r

o

u

h

c

h

e

s

b

e

t

w

e

e

n

us;

we draw breath together,

hear our voices, our eyes

test the void, and yet

light years stand between

our ever touching.

The Devotion

A guitar on his lap,
he sits on the bed
and pretends to art;

his fingers search,
lose and find their chords,
strings tremble sound,

his hands labor
as separate craftsmen.

Silver light from the stars
illuminates his anguish,
the prayer etched on his face
flies from silent lips
stretched with pain
and raw from begging forgiveness

of the universe; he
is chained to the same
city of stone
and gnawed by the same
voracious wings,

he too
would articulate
the impossible.

Last Day In February

Three days of flakes now,
drifting down from the lead sky
in lazy circles; two days
they melted into the thawed
ground, on this they win
and remain in white number.

Used, finally, to the snap
and brittle hardness of cold,
I laughed at the feather touch
of snow melting on my cheek.

And now the third day,
I, dressed in the old clothes
of relaxation and warmth,
feel again the December prisons;
I will spend the day
by the bright window

reading Chaucer,
the reassurance of April.

Pastoral

Of the fields frozen now
like earth's rib
penetrating the frost
and patient, the icicles
drip from the harrow's tines.

Tend, I am reminded
of the whore's neutrality,
tend her and she may
provide the lives
with nourishments and death;
 so often
we tread the knotted vertebrae
of winter furrows, sowing
anthropomorphia in our path
and watching the rusty decomposition
of our tools of spring.

And from the ridge the rippled fields
slip away, a passive sea
sailed by factories and trains,

blown by snow
and swallowing all but time.

Afterglow

An ecstasy quicksilvers
through my veins; each
line, each lettered word
and space for thought
is a dance with heavy feet
on the golden thread
between the release of madness
and the narrow dictates
of communication.

Midwifing a poem,
I leave off reluctantly
and hope against needles of fear
that each song I make
may not be the last.

A Jealousy

The elder assumes a wisdom
and the novice hands a poem
fragile as dead leaves.

And the role sheds itself;
eyes that are old with trying,
old with certain resignation,
hide wonder that his opinion
would bear value
and he fears his aged judgement.

The words sound wooden;
electric points of fear
and yellow jealousy
taste bitter on his tongue,
and he ruefully praises
his certain successor.

Octogenarian

There is a mystery
only age can solve.
What is there to learn
from you, what is there
for you to tell me?

I think I understand
your silences, words
are always futile when your care
is so great; the only thing
you tell me is of time,
the only thing I have, you say.

I know better than you think;
I learned much one night
when death stared back
from a black and rain washed
window. The highway leads nowhere;
it is all transit; there is no home.

My arrogance astounds you,
do not be bitter, do not
hate me.

If you don't believe
the things I know
what does it matter to me
what you think? Our eyes
are different ages, the world
we see is the same.

Deathbed

At times it seems far too easy,
we close our eyes to sleep or dream
and a universe disappears.

Or we wait in a sunny, dusty silence,
the dying man we watch closes his eyes
and is no more.

(We expect for a fleeting moment
that he will awaken as we wait
uncertainly watching him
before we shut the door).

Diminishing Return

My words burn
the first page

and make black, cold
marks on the second;

insatiable the moment
of composition I burn,

and mere crawling labor
when I lift my pen

the second time
to translate myself.

Conversation In The Empty Night

Old Canute, in your chair
as you watch the waves
I watch you from the advantage
of a thousand years and know
your thoughts perhaps as well as you.

Some things do not satisfy you;
some things should not be attempted.

You must have known that too
as you ordered the sea to retreat,
I know it now as I have known it
since my first articulation.

If you hear me across time,
old king, would you not agree
that if the whole game is lost before birth,
we might as well make our efforts

and pass the heavy time of waiting
building each his private meaning?

We can sculpt kingdoms in the sand
and watch the night and tide destroy them;
we can create history and forget,
laugh with the sweep of our hands
and smash the towers of our dissatisfaction.

After Bad Instruction

In a moment of reception
I forget my awe
and listen to the world.

Somehow the same books
become liars. No, somehow
they just become
another question.

There are a few
who really want to know
how God hides in volcanoes,
how Shakespeare wanted
to make his way in the world;
there are those
who seek to live
in a greater context.

Yes, a moment of reception.
I place you now
at a meeting of the board,
good doctor, your notes
are well prepared, you read

almost metrically, your presentation
seems to slide through the hour
slick and forgettable as popular music.

With my complaint
I belittle myself;
you, like my books, are innocent,
another victim of having to live.

Yes, in a moment of reception
I forget my awe
of you who hold my mirror.

You Read In Ancient Books

You read in ancient books
the exploits of the heroes
who never knew defeat.

Dressed in paper covers
a goddess drenched with sex
turns your dreams to stone.

And when you read the prophets
inviting you to death
you'd rather watch T.V.

It's all in time and in your dream;
the movie of your life plays on,
the role, it seldom fits.

The movie of your life plays on,
the epic of your days revolves,
there is little else to do.

At least your men and women bleed,
share their lust and discontent,
they keep you entertained.

For Mary And Jim

The future
is tomorrow's
memory
and we only know
we walk toward sleep
wrapped in loneliness,
we walk our days
holy and separate,
we must build
what peace we can
from that.

To The Various Widows

O woman you laugh and cry
with me, never knowing
I need you more than sleep.

There is no food for my hunger
and you are insulted, I
cheapen your worth
with my meddling in words
when I punctuate the fecund night
with turning pages.

You question my design,
my shaking fingers tolling
marks, seemingly idle,
how do I tell you
of light and struggle, knowledge
laughing at the ebb of pain?

One day you will know me,
I will smile and you
will forgive my thought
when your body cramped
with desire; one fine day
when my mind escapes
the measured cadence of necessity.

THE STREETS

The Streets

1. The voices of the dead

crackle dry as leaves;
enough then, when I slam the book shut
only a sudden flurry of dust
remains after the great noise
of carefully reasoned decisions.

Each man writes his own history,
each must find his own language
where he lives; the teachers
leave off teaching what they learned
and facts remain, the cold hard rote,
the common question, the temporary answers.

It is light outside, the cold day
hides less than the briars of rhetoric,
the street demands no commitment,
no argument; it abides, it waits
indifferent as a whore, inscrutable
as a seasoned diplomat.

2. As real as pain it waits with no lesson beyond the closeness of the dark house.

where the smoked-up lamp makes the shadows crawl,
where time and the heavy weight of history
offer no reasons to go on living
and make my thoughts no more than theft
from the minds of others searching for answers,
from the sweat and tears that bind their words
and make their visions once more imperfect.

It is all a form of knowing, it is all
involved in seeing with the heart.
Each man writes his own history, carves
his own epitaph in the stone, each
man is his symbol to himself.

3. To live or end it is the question

I must ask myself. My books
shrug in their jackets; they are full
of questions too, thousands of words
suited only for their authors.

No, the books feed only one hunger
when I starve for answers and truth.
Great nature shrugs, indifferent and cold
and I turn to what I have to use,
I turn to the world of men.

Outside this room a pathway winds
into an alley, into a street;
outside this town a highway winds
through complex cities and down to the sea,
down where it all began.

Three Moments

for Jyl Campbell

1. Before we were thought
and heavy with it in our mouths
to take time before union.

Now quick time is all we have,
and having is memory and plan
and giving time back when it is done.

Perhaps it was the short taste
of fruit and wine, the sound
of a harpsichord in a late hour.

Before we were thought
we were synthesis, this moment
made before dawn and its change.

Each day is a challenge or a threat;
we enter as the door, once half open,
shuts behind us, quiet on its hinge.

It is difference; our words are useless
not of themselves but in our act
when we touch truth and make a god.

2. There the stars exploded like needles
pointing love and death upon the sea.
They seemed to beg invitation to our plan
when we saw death, waiting without hate.

I believe the sea will come again
and you and I will go again into it;
I believe the lightning of our days
will pass our vision like a sacrament.

We will not know our history
beyond the speculation we can make;
I know we cannot build a plan
before the flux of days comes to erase it.

After the dawn, the burning day
came red over the sea in our laughter
where we came bearing gifts in the night
and made an altar of our moment

when we tasted our bodies before the sea.

3. Your fingers around mine,
loving, warm and laced to me
offer their firmness for this moment,
the only demand I make.

For Peggy In September

You blow across the chaos

of my dark world, you

are the quiet wind the world knew

at first dawn, you are the peace,

the red sky and fecund silence,

you are genesis.

War Song

The promise of ice
and black winter comes
to make a play at change,

it buries the city
with expected snow,
people die, winter is constant.

Poets come and talk again of spring,
their speech of hope
never seeming serious.

At funerals, more speech,
this worn talk of rebirth,
and always the sound of digging

and the dirt rattling down
to dance in triumph
on the lids of the dead.

Dum Cor Dolet Intus

Now I can see it before my eyes,
the crabbed hand and finger hook
beckons me to death.

Before, the tempter never came,
but that was when a child enjoyed
the smell of burning leaves;

and this child now in the copper sun,
a bent and older man who smiles,
would run with his words to the fire.

But I hear the sea and the laughing wind
and the tangled sounds of little men
catch the wind in nets.

No, not death, though I may want it,
I, a reedy man in the wind
will bend once more to love.

But I feel it in my eyes
how my fear laughs out at the peace
that I would think to make.

And I can hear it in the sounds,
how the tide mouthes and the heron's cry
invites me to my death.

Fever

It tastes of mortality,
the crack in the perfection.

Beneath the surface of my skin
heat seethes like magma in my veins;

beneath a changeless panel of ice
currents rage and waves of pain

surge and beat like angry tides
that rock an inland sea.

Introduction

Before the dark countenance,
the spectre of my laughing self,
doubt floods your eyes
and ignorance enters my sound.

Do you mind
lovely woman? I do not
know you now as I once did
before we heard our words;

it was elemental,
the first rush of heat,
the litheness of your leg
and lazy curve of your breast,
the wordless knowledge of you,

do you mind
lovely woman if I do not
wish to hear you speak,
my whispered words themselves
ending what I had built?

Consummation

We are the alpha and omega
at this moment,
the universe becomes finite
for our spell.

But all too soon it is done
and we become mortal again
and return through the fading fire
to ourselves alone.

Worship comes in other ways;
some would make of you
a great stone building
managed by men in black,

where sacrament
is parcelled out in time
and infinity is made
of quick words and greater silence

and money sealing the bargain.

Jimi Hendrix Sings All Along The Watchtower

Hendrix sings Dylan,
one dead to life, the
other dead to this life, it
is all one; they are both
leaving the watchtower
to other seekers of earth
bound answers. Poet and singer
wrapped together in the magic
of chords--somewhere beyond
the rattle of money
one laughs and shrugs,
wishing he had more time
to think, the other grinds
and strangles his guitar, alive
in plastic canyons, courting death
to end the loneliness, hovering
in the air behind my back,
watching, black eyes of knowledge
and distance, watching
me ache to name the place
I plan my own desertions.

C.O.

I will not catalogue
my ignorance
by quoting memorized passages
to the greedy merchants of death.

Judges and executioners
absolve themselves
behind a neutral lottery, who
are they to take lives?

I do not fear
my ignorance of God
in the eyes of men
who thread their debate
with the cheap blood
of young strangers.

I do not acknowledge
their names of coward and traitor
when I daily face
the cost of love,
the short joy of breath
and the unending pain
of understanding, when

I choose men over flags

while the elderly men
who start wars and usually
survive them
demand we die for their madness
and sing with them
a patriotic song
and invoke their convenient god
and ride with them

as their rotted ship
snaps its keel

like a matchstick
and continues to sink.

Eucharist

With money it's not
too hard, perhaps
we could call it honesty,

goods and services; she
takes off her things,
I, slower, remove mine.

Washing, somehow sacramental
practicality, hic ille est
sanguinem meum,

she lies down wordless
and I look her over
pretending, the lie

begins, the knees part
and rise, hic ille est
corporem meum.

I move to the soft altar,
eyes shut and offering
silent prayers of length.

Our breath heaves and labors
to release; awaiting truth I miss
the ultimate silence

and too soon over, as always,
I lie in my dream
as she watches a fly

explore the naked bulb,
the one illumination
through it all.

Courage

Overcoming biology,
the warrior leaps
toward death,
runs forward, like
his nation, forward
in defense.

Overcoming bio-
logy, he does this;
overcoming probability
he survives

and is awarded temptation
to do it again
dangling on a ribbon
around his neck.

Mohlstrasse

To know time then, to sense
more than the linearity
of my short and barren years.

My window eyes the rain-washed street,
empty and silent, stripped for winter;
the sun animates dust briefly
before hiding behind clouds,
old grey wool gathered in knots.

A car swishes by parting
the street; this
could be Seattle or Austin
for its familiarity, Des Moines
with cobbles and dark puddles
near the trains.

Time, time. An aged crone
who would have delighted Breughel
creaks through the ganglia of steel,
oblivious to the light, the black monsters
loud and belching smoke, she picks
her way, gathering sticks and rags,
providing against winter.

November Snow

It is as habit, arising
and stumbling from the dark
once again into life,
the ritual of dress,
the reassurance of coffee
before I part the curtain
upon the white reminder of time;

somehow the pleasant surprise
hides the nagging sense
that it is another year
melting into the still-warm earth,
somehow the change it makes
keeps up my interest; I shall enjoy
pulling on my winter boots.

Winter Sparrows

Out of place, like leftovers
from a history better forgotten,
they sing on the frosty ganglia
of bitter winter branches;

maybe it is the pure desolation,
the empty absolutes that snow
and ice make, I don't know
what it is that enhances their song.

Maybe it is me, the surprise
of the unexpected awakening
to the gaudy chirping of brown lumps
who clutch together in song

in the fast silence
of a winter dawn.

Barbara's Roses

On the first day
the buds almost dried and died
of want; I was gone
and you left them like an offering
on the first day by my door,
on the critical first day.

On the second day
the buds exploded in the glass;
like two bright wounds
they trembled in my thoughtful hand
before I returned them to their place
on that decisive second day.

On the third day
the leaves grew brittle, beginning to dry;
the magnified illusion of the stem
still sucked life from water;
the silent crimson lips
begged my eyes for longer life.

A Love Song

Trickling an endless
patience of words,

do I make myself
open to you

or is it my attempt
to enter your life

before we part?

A Diplomacy Of Love

Our words are impatient birds
as we hold them,

not wanting to believe
that they are not dead,

not wanting to free them
before decisions are made.

And when you speak
they come a far distance;

it is as if I were waiting
on a street, hearing

the pointed screams
of shining black birds

as they knife across the roar
of desperate traffic.

The Acquaintance

for Stanley, the Fly

Two or three days now
he came in the window
and I tried to kill him.

Brutal explosions of my hand
on the blanket, the slap
against the stone wall
and subtle lightning sweeps
of my clumsy hand.

And then the ultimate attack
on this nuisance
I was taught to kill,
a slow, quiet stalk
and crash a notebook
on the table.

Capitulation or resignation,
perhaps I shall call it realization.

I laid bread crumbs on my desk,
gave him a name

and let him walk on my poems
where he rubs his legs
and shits and doesn't care
that he cannot read
as long as he has wings.

Six O' Clock News

My informer reports the same,
his cautious monotone
betrays no panic, his
eyes hide behind a dial.

His words are the same as yesterday,
as tomorrow. The names change
but the plot remains the same.
The world grinds on like a soap opera.

Prices rise and fall, he says,
someone dies and the evil he worked
is forgotten in the rush of eulogy,
fires, murder, madness and money,

movie stars smile and divorce their mates.
A truck driver fell off an expressway bridge;
he escaped death with a broken back. The banal
prevails, he talks of sports and the weather.

History happens too fast for us now;
revolution would be to unplug the voice.
But there is little point in being a martyr
when even suicide must compete with the commercials.

A soap opera, a game like monopoly.

The international cartel of fence watchers
continue to shake their fists across seas
and smile across tables as they seek more scars.

Afternoon and Evening

We resurrect ourselves
in a moment
though we seem to stand
so near to death.

Perhaps it is the distance
of an afternoon's walk
where behind the circular
frenzy of streets,
an old man
with a heavy head
and a stick
between his knees

nods and waits to die
on a shaded bench
by a church;

perhaps it is the distance
of refreshment and quiet
candles, strings brushed
for dark music
and young women talking
of their growing
need for a child.

Before The Storm

All things become uncertain
before the wind commits itself;

the dark coil of thunderheads
swings slowly together around the hill;

the silent silver sky behind them
flicks cold tongues of lightning;

the pale white sun, a snake's eye,
promises nothing beyond the moment.

Untitled Sequence

1. We come together
and spend time
pretending we are not
alone.

I must exercise
a delicate diplomacy
with you: we sense
the fragile bridge
to each other, we
inch toward understanding
with all our weight
straining the silken thread
of definition.

2. It is the hopeless labor
of knowing another
when his words alone
shoot me down
dark blue corridors
of definition,
love to fear
to suspicion,

the hollow
 coiled
tunnel echoes
facades of myself
who scream silently
 behind glass frames
along the way;

it seems I fall forever
until I am shot
into new directions
 and dimensions
by another impulse
of sound.

3. Grinning like a Chinese dragon

I look into my own eyes:
they are tight and ringing like drums.
The heart beats with terrible knowledge.

Electricity powers my vein,
I want to make grasping claws
of my shaking fingers.

I answer questions and speak
from far away, wanting to care,

wanting to show some voice
that I hear it and respond.

And I know in spite of all
the talk of caring
I am only in it for myself.

We dot the sea of night
like luminescent islands.

Meditation By A Lake

Later, the question
and answer of existence
become one and resolve
each other in the cadence
of our breath.

Earlier, before the sun
refused to shine again,
refused to give back
the afternoon games,
the terrible knowledge came.

Beyond words we are alone
veterans of many hidden wars;
the fire fragments on the water
and our histories burn
like so many shipwrecks.

The night creaks through time,
wrapped in silence we toss
pebbles to shatter the still water
when the silences last too long,
when the fire intensifies our vision.

Into pain I fell from night,
I fall to night, alone, beyond men,
beyond words breath begets breath.
The stars wait outside of time for me
and dawn hangs forever behind the trees.

Acid Quartet

1. The distance would not matter to you,
I return from a long way
and do not dwell too much on myself;
let us wait for the next unbearable moment.
2. From deep within a silence that haunts me
I chase a dragon that shows me no face.
Too strong for a dream, invisible and real,
it waits in a coil and plots my defeat.
3. Your eyes smile and wreath delicate flowers
of sympathy. O you are too far away
and I have thrown up my hand before you
but I do not know if it pushes or pulls.
4. And you pass on, the moment we touched
made a small wake that faded and was gone.
My life is a dark pool, my face is the shore.
The storm in the center moves the grains one by one.

Sunday Morning Coming Down

Subtle as windows and doors
closing when trouble fills the street,
the trivial noises of defense
and personality
fill in the troubled gaps
of silence. At last
we can pretend and believe
we are no longer alone
again, at last we know
we are again the realities
we foster when we can no longer stand
to look in each other's eyes.

The Sunday bells,
the empty windows
and ragged blinds hang
over the glittering desolation
of Sunday morning streets.
The first few cars of the pious
whisper by the corner, the
morning groans to activity
and makes me long for silence;
the songs of children

echo down the street,
the warm sun
offers a testament
to the familiar
sense of order, the
clock ticks like water
dripping in a swamp.

On A Wall Overlooking The Neckar

1. The kayaks on the river
could be galleys.

A small imagination prods
and I am called outside
myself; an allegory of lines,
the small boats pass
like clumsy windmills,
the blades flash, the oil
on the water stretches
and explodes a thousand
agitated suns, the satin
waves, the small flecks
of dancing light.

2. The old wall of the city
meets the water, crumbling
stone patched with concrete,
a willow leans beside
Hölderlein's tower of mad dreams.
Even then the students
poled their long boats on warm days;
I have seen the room on the Münzgasse
where the bad ones were locked up;

below me by the willow
my gypsy acquaintance
breaks bits of hashish
and changes money
for the scholars.

3. It is all a form of learning.

Nothing matters beyond the attempt
to understand beyond my moment.

Once I could read and meditate
greatness, once I could believe and argue
and hope to change things.
Strange now, I remember a passionate fight
with a class one day, the argument
pitted God and Blake, truth and Yeats
against the narrow smallness of our lives.

An older woman, middle-aged and devout,
attacked my irreverent suggestions
that "The Second Coming" was great
because it exposed our hypocrisy
when we, knowing scholars, agreed with it.

The argument raged for an hour,

the professor threw up his hands
and we tore at each other like rabid dogs
till the hour was up and we left the room
unchanged by our anger, our righteousness
shaken, but safe from enlightenment.

4. One of those instants of awareness
sneaks up quiet as time
and washes past me.

The grey sky admits the sun
once more before the night;
everybody is gone, a cold wind
will soon sweep along the wall
and make the willow rustle.

Somewhere the picture comes of itself,
I, sitting on the wall,
stoned and tired of everything,
crumbling stone and the passing river,
I have yet to go to the East
but a withered old man
emerges like mist, gathering in a dream,
he threads the eye of a crowd
and goes to the Ganges
once again to die assured.

An instant, as I said.

Evening crawls through the alleys
and the last man rows, hunched
over his oars, a girl
reclines in the back, the boat
old and brown as earth,
glides without noise into the night.

Lights burn in the scholars' rooms,
the wise men meditate in darkness,
the river says nothing and the night
hums with the calm lust abiding of April.

Continuum

Fast as synapse
and softly as breath,
three brown sparrows
define the dark blue sky
with an ellipsis.

Offensive On Dowling Street

Now I hear nothing,
where Dvorak celebrated
his new world a moment ago
now is a series of clicks;
I am too tired to turn it off.
Outside the rain is eternal,
the drops, patient, linger
on the window, the night
is full of needles, the water
runs through the street like a vein.

Inside now it is quiet
as America vibrates in the night.
Prowl cars hiss through streets of crushed bone
and broken glass, predators
with spotlight eyes.
The few figures passing hesitate
and quicken their pace to the corners
and watch the shadows behind them.
Time ticks like a bomb as we wait.

Somewhere across town
behind the guns and bottles

of gasoline, the shadowed faces
tight with fear
sweat through the darkness,
they duck the lights that flash and pass
against the window, they grind their teeth
in fear and desperation, they wait to start
their dead revolution.

Retort To Myself

What difference does all this pompous doubt,
this twisted image of myself make?

I am invisible.

I am too concerned about appearance,
too aware of invisibility
to remain sane.

I should let madness take me to heaven
where being alone is no longer a problem;
I should do many things; I should be courageous.

Instead, I will go on dreaming
of the unknown day
I will forget to guard myself,
I will go on dreaming
of the day I will do
something important for myself
without the fear of consequence,
without the fear
of too much exposure.

Departures

1. Once again it is time
for the assessment
of baggage, once again
I wait on platforms.

Movement is its own meaning;
what is past is dead,
what is coming
is mostly chance.

2. Today, yesterday, a month ago,
it all becomes one now, it all disappears.
Green as a snake the long train waits,
gorged with tourists and merchants,
the salt of the earth.

Here is where it ends and begins;
here is where you can find freedom,
here is where you can taste the loneliness
of the one outside the chains,
the one who seems outside demands.

Once again it is time for a change,
there is snow on the platform,

there is ice on the rails.

The bag that I have now is not too big.

I take what I need and I dump all the rest.

3. The white fields blur into the sky
and the train cracks the distance over the track.
Old women in black, hard men with great hands
sway in silence and keep to themselves.

Towns whip by looking like toys;
old Europe homogenized, just like the States.
It's all the same, the places don't matter,
Coca-cola and Bayer, Manhattan and Munich.

And once again it is time for assessment,
I remember the faces one by one,
some with deep eyes that read like epics
and many with eyes like mirrors or like wood.

The train rattles on toward evening and darkness.
The past becomes waves across a dark pool;
reality beats into time, into distance,
and memory's myth falls through dark empty space.

Hawk And Swallows

Above the manifold game
we call necessity
a golden hawk turns
leisurely, tight circles
and scatters the aesthetic dance
of dark swallows.

Untitled Poem

for Mary Anne Mayfield

So often it is no more than a sigh
in the dusk, a sound of transit
between love and rising, between
what is imagined and what is.

So often it is a construction
of our words and eyes, delicate
as cobwebs, intricate as dawn.

Unspoken, the pact exists
and we renew ourselves each time
we meet, we renew our celebration
and do not dwell on future partings.

Dead Ends and Detours, No. 1.

No matter, no matter
creaks the good old boy
on the bench, it
doesn't matter now
he says, he squints
away to the distance
white and hazy, grimace
lines his face like a prune,
like a studied effect.
Nope, no matter he says,
you musta screwed up
back yonder up the road
he says, when you chose
the wrong turn at the beginning.

Dead Ends And Detours, No. 2.

All this distance the same grey branches
clicked like bombs in the cold,
all this distance
from the main roads.

It is too late to turn back now.
It is much too late.
I can follow this track, this
parallel rut to the end.

There may be a place to turn around,
there may be another road,
a house, an intersection.
Maybe I'll just run out of road.

Scapegoats

The philosopher in the back corner raises his glass
and salutes his audience.

Every time a black man objects to something
it's racist, the man says, every time
a white man complains it's the communists,
radicals, big business, fascists, longhairs...

He pauses to drink,
watching the nods over his glass.

The Arabs hate the Jews, he says, the
Jews will always have everybody else,
The Russians have the Chinese and the
Chinese have the Russians, they deserve
each other, he says, the third world
hates everybody white for colonists.

He talks until there is no one else
to fill his empty glass
and then he stumbles the dark streets
home, cursing the masses
for their limited vision that holds back his plans,
for their limited willingness to slake his thirst

long enough, for their imposition
of such a barbarous world,
filled with necessity and trivial pains
that drag at the heels
of such obvious genius.

THE NOVEMBER BEACHES

A Tiny Warfare

A tiny warfare
of sparrows
obscures the afternoon's
plan;

They fight
for more crumbs
than they can eat

on a windowsill
above a screaming
street

they never notice
for their blurred
and thrashing
wings.

Facades

A breath,
a duck's wake

tears the images
on the river,

and weak houses
disintegrate

and the colors
of the flags

of laundry

continue
to wave.

Of The Manifold Routes

Of the manifold routes
to death, what matter
if I select your path
or choose my own;

It is no less than bending
to the same wind
that kisses us all
with diverse scents.

Between Roads

What is it we grow toward
then, this vacancy of mind
clatters like an empty spoon.

It is to take up the tools
of cultivation, the stern voice of years
commands, to take the heavy book
of preparation
and nourish your death
with your life.

It is to see your moment,
the laughing song of sons goes,
it is to relish in the flesh
throughout your youth, to turn
to the energy of your mind in age
to prepare the way
to the next door.

Death Will Not Deliver

Death will not deliver
more than death,

one door more or less
to open and close,

as easy as that.

What sense in fighting

unless the chance to win
makes the courage of man

seem a greater thing
than an uncertain knowledge

of the various gods.

Hunters

You look so hard for your victim
when you smile and mention love;
your eyes, they speak and I offer myself
to share your sacrifice;
and the thunder of your answering god
splits the boiling clouds of your soul.

So you find in me a stranger
you can tangle in your arms;
you grow to know me with your hands,
you sculpt me with your lust,
and our tongues are stricken dumb to speech,
we hear weeping behind the wall.

You look to me for your leader
and you dream of fire and steel;
you've lost the flags you believed in once
and you wage your love like war.
And you clasp the blade that bears my blood
to win another empty night.

And now I am your prophet
who numbers God all through your nerves.

You call me your christ and you nail me down
before the morning comes.

But the dawn makes you weep and reach for me
from the altar of your fear.

But you found for a time your redeemer,
you found for a time your own peace,
and we both found a way through another night
so I guess we can't complain.

But now I must leave in the raining dawn
and search the grey streets once again.

Martyr For The Cause

I left no home behind me,
I never loved a place,
I do not carry flags.
Speeches do not move me
and causes remain games
that children need to play.

The time has passed when I believed
the promises and noble words,
some things remain the same.

I've been along the highway
we all must travel on,
I've known us all together,
I've known us all alone.

The age demands salvation,
your voices ring with faith,
you build your monuments;
but do not ask me to tell lies
and do not make me one of you
to help your legend grow.

And do not talk of love to me

and do not give me words of peace,
your beast is still alive.

I'll offer what I have to give,
I'll take the things I need,
I'll watch you play the part you choose,
Your secret's safe with me.

The Cure

It seems such a long way
from my books and my papers,
my laughter and glory,
the nights with my women.
The world seemed to call me
with some special music;
pride glittered about me
like sunlight on water.

And I sang
the songs they all wanted to hear,
I held their opinions so high
and thought they were all so near.

I came such a long way
through visions, down highways,
the cities and countries
of saints and sinners;
the world seemed to hold me
close as a lover
who kissed me and cursed me
and drew back the cover.

And you saw

the faces I gave to them all,
my room at the end of the hall,
your door led me through the wall.

I came such a long way
through faces and places,
the days fell like coins
both hoarded and squandered;
time was my family
who fed me and bled me,
the woman who keeps me
just gave me the needle

and now I
stand with the night in my hand,
a stranger to all my old lands,
bitter and tired of demands.

Lines To Old Lovers

Lines to old lovers

I write in the evening,
like letters I won't send
but can't leave unwritten.

These hands that once held you
now rest on the paper;
my life has grown heavy
with names and with places.

And bitter or sad
the end never counted
as much as the feeling
that hung there before us.

The woman I have now
knows in her quiet wisdom
she's all of my lovers
and all those to come,

she's journeyed there with me
the silent night highway
we all ride together,
we all ride alone

she's sitting there with you
and you tell her how
you knew me or loved me,
you won or you lost.

She draws me down to her,
surrounds me and spends me;
as total our giving
as I gave you all.

Winter Solstice

In the fullness of autumn
all things shed their bounty,
all things lay up their stores
or strip themselves for death.

Comes then the northern winds
and all things turn into themselves;
the earth draws together
for sleep and siege.

In the coldest season I too draw
within myself, taking my portion
I weigh the sustenance of the year
and nourish the growth of my light.

For once the shortest day comes
a subtle shift of the stars begins,
a clear still day, a western breeze,
a seed splits its shell and moves the earth.

Caligula

For a jest, then, you made yourself god,
a casual whim.

Tomorrow you may grow bored
with this game, tomorrow
you may seek new diversions
to sate the long and empty hours.

That they will their own despair
you are sure; the senators
crush their anger and kiss your feet,
the nobles do combat in the public ring,
and all, yes all give you their thanks
for the privilege of serving your divinity.

And thus you make the grand illusion work;
you chase futility into dark corners.
Their adoration sucks hungrily
and nourishes in their hate,
what meaning there is
you have made with your excess.

The sound of feasting hangs for hours
in the empty halls.

It is good that your glance terrifies them,
it keeps them at bay, like wolves
fighting among themselves.
And how they laugh at your table
and stare at each other's throats.

And later, a talent for the guard
who waits outside the door;
his hard hand closes on the coin,
he steps silently out the door.
And after the woman or the boy,
the night's last entertainment,
comes the dream of coins lying
in a boatman's leather hand.

The November Beaches

Today the sea is running quiet
and swift, as if intent
on the impatient urges of winter;

today the wind with lover's hands
tangles my hair in her fingers
and sculpts the sand for my eyes.

A language I know beyond words
is chanted here, a sorcery
the stars and tides know well.

And I interrupt no process here,
I join what came before
and that which will remain.

The sea leaves a timeless breath;
the wind, a pure tone that the words of man
could only cheapen and ruin.

I've had enough of the cities
drunk with money and pain, enough of men
filled with empty words and cheap games,

and the long sound of this winter sea
stirs a deeper source, a ravaged love
whose truth I cannot kill.

Autumn Sunset

Sun flooded, the clouds stretch and spill,
a resplendent spangle of gold
like a box of coins thrown
across the cold blue sky.
I weave like a dervish through the waiting cars,
slice life thin as seconds
where the streets cross each other.

I have no time, the cold wind
whips quick tears from my eyes,
I have no time, motorcycle
loud and angry with haste, I have
no time for the gnawing wait
for the lights to change,
for the orderly insane progression.

The gold fades to a livid orange
and the wind curls colder fingers
close around my arms,
the clouds pulsate and flash in the wind
like a furnace churning far away,
alive and throbbing with heat and light.

No time, no time, I twist the throttle.

and explode like napalm down the road,
hoarding an image I have seen.
I speed fast and violent in a lather of thought,
in and out past the knotted and angry faces
I rush home to get the poem down.

But it goes as it came before my eyes,
an intuition of the waning year,
the aura of coming winter,
the laying aside of provision,
the oldest preparations, the leaves
that will not magically rise
back to their places up in the trees.

The real season hangs like a tapestry.
Words I had thought to twist for new meanings
raise the weary ghosts of long-dead images.
My bike is a far cry from Pegasus,
and ridiculous, this marriage of autumn and harvest,
this Chaucerian vision of the seasons;

ridiculous, the desperate clichés that rise
tangled like wire and tense as a spring
straining for release, ah ridiculous

but for the darkening city of pain
and the unbelieving victims there,
trapped and begging for lies.

The Lights Of Paris Bridges

The years streak by with toil and speed
through alleys and highways of desperate search.

In Paris I saw once the lamps on the bridges
all shut off an hour before dawn.

Of life by then I had learned some things;
I had found some things that I sought.

If there is but one flame, let it burn hot and bright,
let it blaze before you through the corners of night.

And if you should find love do not disgrace it
by giving half and expecting full measure.

And do not fear to think alone,
few teachers can teach you what has to be learned.

We are trapped like birds by our limit of height;
somehow the worm on the ground is no different.

But we have the vision and the choice to act,
we can sanctify or damn with our own obedient hand.

Behind a fine mist the grey sky hung
and a red dawn drew the shape of a city.

I Have Lived Another Year

The man blind in one eye
has a newly broken nose;
there was a fight going on
behind his dark side
and he blundered into it.

The pain was sharper for surprise.
He wears his smashed face
like a medal, he has another story
to tell when he cages drinks
from the lame, the guilty, the weary and diseased

in the hard neon bar where the days revolve
inevitable and slow, stripped of event.

Natural Selection

The man blind in one eye
watches corners now.

Innumerable hassles
attend his movements;

he stays close to the wall,
he makes known what is unknown,

he adapts the world
to his limitation.

Meditation Before Sleep

I seem to intrude myself
into everything I see,
upon everything I think.

Still I separate
that which I seem to be
from the unknown quality
I really am.

Something magnanimous
would be beyond my ken,
something done or thought
for someone else
would shatter the delicate houses
I have taken all these years
to discover.

At one in the morning
I lie beside my woman
and feed myself sounds
from the distant traffic;
I only escape myself
and become real when I sleep
long, dreamless sleep.

Foreigner, bring your words
to me, break this deaf head open
and pour substance into the vacuum;
give me the nectar of concern.

Just once to give again;
I live like a withered miser,
silent and dying alone.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The authors and works listed in this bibliography are those which have exerted a profound influence either upon the formation of my art in the short history of its development, or upon the formation of my thought and attitudes, opinions and beliefs toward not only art, but existence. This list, while in no way attempting to be a comprehensive tabulation of my literary interests and investigations, nevertheless encompasses those books and authors to which I find myself returning time and again for enlightenment, information, and inspiration.

POETRY

Alighieri, Dante. The Divine Comedy. Trans. H.R. Huse. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967.

Writings of the spiritual experience, religious writing and religious philosophy are of vital importance to me, for I view the first priority of life to be the investigation of one's spiritual place in the cosmos. Although Dante's vision is ordered into a Catholic-oriented system of thinking, the elements are, I believe, universal to the religious experience.

Baudelaire, Charles. Les Fleurs du Mal. Trans. George Dillon and Edna St. Vincent Millay. New York: Washington Square Press, 1962.

Poetry, both of the religious experience and of

worldly experience must, if it is to be honest, reflect both the bright and dark sides of experience. Baudelaire has instructed me by his facility to portray evil. His graphic concreteness has manifested itself by enabling me to portray poetically that which I may hitherto have considered unsuitable for poetic rendition, such as the last stanza in my "War Song."

Blake, William and Donne, John. The Complete Poetry of John Donne and William Blake. New York: The Modern Library, 1941.

The incomparable energy of Blake's expression, the profound "rightness" of much of his perception, the psychological truth of his beliefs, and the excellent sources of his articulation of the Cabalistic tradition, from Vitruvius through Boehme, Thomas Taylor and Swedenborg, have reconciled many of the earlier polarities in my own thinking, and have gone a long way toward helping me understand some of my own intuitions. Blake is one of my most esteemed teachers.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. Chaucer's Major Poetry. Ed. Albert C. Baugh. New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, Inc., 1963.

Perhaps the most significant thing I have learned from The Canterbury Tales is the scope of the author's perspective, the breadth of his perception. He continues to possess a more penetrating insight into character and motivation than most modern authors I have read.

Cohen, Leonard. Selected Poems, 1956-1968. New York: Bantam Books, 1971.

Cohen and I met, via his poetry, at a very propitious time. I have learned much about the nature and degrees of alienation from his poetry, which often penetrates to a profoundly religious level as it treats commonplace themes. Through reading him, I have also learned more about the ways meter can be used in the creation of mood in poetry.

Cummings, E.E. Poems, 1923-1954. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1954.

While I believe Cummings made important innovations in the graphic presentation of poetry, thereby initiating a greater freedom of expression in the medium, I think he too often tends to be innovative at the expense of communication. A remarkable poet nevertheless, his "all in green went my love riding" is a beautiful example of mood and compression.

Dickinson, Emily. Final Harvest: Emily Dickinson's Poems. Ed. Thomas H. Johnson. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1961.

Emily Dickinson's life is as interesting to me as her work has been influential. In some ways her reclusiveness represents a personal ideal of my own. It is in her genius for compactness that I have most profited in my own work from reading her. Her love-hate relationship with death also has its appeal to me, anticipating, as it does, my own later discovery of the force known to Hermann Hesse as Abraxas.

Eich, Günther. Botschaften des Regens. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1961.

Eich writes poetry with an incredible economy of language. Less concerned with rhythm than with mood, Eich has been helpful in my poetry that treats the interior experience, such as my "Untitled Sequence," and "Sunday Morning Coming Down."

Eliot, Thomas Stearns. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962.

Of all Eliot's poems, it is to "Prufrock" I find myself returning when I need help in developing interior monologue. Another very large influence from Eliot is the use of sequences of poems, which allows me to develop several ideas more fully than I can in single poems, yet which allows a unity between ideas to exist without being hindered by separate titles. "On A Wall Overlooking The Neckar" is but one example from my work that bears the influence of this poet.

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. A Coney Island of the Mind. New York: New Directions, 1958.

Ferlinghetti is the first poet to use "hip" language in such a way that the intellectual content does not overly suffer from the usually demeaning effect of such language. His poetry is very visual and his influence is felt in my poem, "On Viewing Botticelli's Venus."

Ginsberg, Allen. Howl and Other Poems. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1967.

_____. Wichita Vortex Sutra. San Francisco: Coyote Books, 1967

Ginsberg, like Ferlinghetti, has been helpful to me in my attempt to free my rhetoric. More than that, however, his Wichita Vortex Sutra has proved itself to be a superb example of form in a longer poem.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. Faust. Trans. Bayard Taylor. New York: Modern Library, 1930.

The theme of Faust is so closely related with my own life and experience that I wonder if it would not be presumptuous to say that Goethe and I share the same basic concerns. The liberation and the burden of knowledge is one of my major themes.

Hesse, Hermann. Poems. Trans. James Wright. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970.

The rhetoric of Hesse's poems is understated, which imparts a sense of tranquility and complete control to his work. My poem, "Mohlstrasse," bears some influence from Hesse, particularly in the voice of the poem, a voice that is not loud and assertive, but nonetheless in control of the poem.

Kerouac, Jack. Mexico City Blues. New York: Grove Press, 1959.

Kerouac's emphasis on spontaneous writing makes his a poetry of extremes: either quite good or ineffective. What is important though, is his incorporation of the spiritual in nearly every poem, no matter how banal its originating impulse may be. Like the poetry of James Tate, Kerouac's poetry has instructed my powers of observation of detail in the search for the poetic in everyday existence.

Lawrence, David Herbert. Selected Poems. New York: Viking Press, 1959.

Lawrence's sensual imagery and his loose, prose-like rhythms are primarily important to me for the confirmation of individuality in one's poetry they represent. Reading Lawrence gave me insight into the conviction that made innovation in my own work easier to undertake.

Lovell, Linda. "Passage Through Montrose." Hippocrene. 2 (Spring, 1971), 14-15.

Miss Lovell's poetry often exhibits an anguish that would be embarrassingly personal, were it not for the quality of language in her writing that broadens the identification to include the reader, indeed, to involve him.

Lowell, Robert. Life Studies and For The Union Dead. New York: Noonday Press, 1972.

A poet of recent acquaintance, Lowell's confessional poetry has, by example, liberated my own inhibitions about being specifically autobiographical when it serves my purposes, as in "Retort To Myself."

Masters, Edgar Lee. Spoon River Anthology. New York: Collier Books, 1971.

Masters' facility at character development has aided me in the few attempts I have made at writing poetry centering its truth about a character. "I Have Lived Another Year" is an example of his influence.

Murphy, Michael. The Imperfect Kiss. Unpublished Manuscript. 1972.

Murphy's poetry, though different from mine in many ways, from style to theme, is possessed of a remarkable intellectual subtlety that, in addition to our many discussions and our correspondence, has helped me considerably in the presentation of difficult and complex ideas in my poetry.

Pasternak, Boris. In the Interlude, Poems 1945-1960. Trans. Henry Koman. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.

_____. The Poetry of Boris Pasternak. New York: Capricorn Books, 1960.

Pasternak is a poet of fine sensitivity, especially as regards his nature poetry. His influence appears in several of my poems, particularly in "Pastoral," and "Before The Storm."

Plath, Sylvia. Ariel. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

Sylvia Plath takes often overworked words and puts them into combination with words that do not often appear in poetry, and the result is often an unexpected violence of impact. I am presently studying her closely to see how I might enliven my own work.

Roethke, Theodore. Collected Poems. Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1961.

Roethke, like Lowell, is a recent discovery. Reading his poems has renewed my interest in working in long sequences of poems, rather than concentrating solely on individual works. Roethke's mysticism is also of interest to me, not so much in substance, however, as in his poetic rendition of experience.

Sandburg, Carl. Harvest Poems. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1960.

The sprawling, free-swinging rhythms of Sandburg's poetry strike me as being particularly American in their rolling motion. Occasionally the study of his rhythms bears fruit, as in the slowing effect of the meter in the last two lines of "I Have Lived Another Year."

Tagore, Rabindranath. Fireflies. New York: MacMillan Co., 1945.

_____. Fruit Gathering. New York: MacMillan Co., 1916.

The gentle delicacy of Tagore's language, along with his ability to capture the universal with the greatest of simplicity is a model upon which I would like to base more of my own work. "Winter Solstice" is an exercise along Tagore's lines.

Thomas, Dylan. Collected Poems. New York: New Directions, 1957.

Dylan Thomas was the first poet I ever read and his music, his magic with language, continues to impress and inspire me. The greatest influence he has had on my writing is that, through reading him, my poetic vocabulary has continued to grow, particularly in the area of unusual combinations of words.

Voznesensky, Andrei. Antiworlds and 'The Fifth Ace.' Trans. W.H. Auden, Jean Garrigue, Max Hayward, Stanley Kunitz, Stanley Moss, William Jay Smith, and Richard Wilbur. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1967.

This translation by multiple authors has been helpful in that it has taught me the method of 'social-confessional' poetry, which seems to be popular in the Soviet Union currently. The element of social concern, while absent from most of my later poems, is nevertheless an important concern for the poet.

Whitman, Walt. Leaves of Grass. New York: Signet Books, 1958.

Whitman remains perhaps the best example of a confessional poet. As with D.H. Lawrence, who was himself influenced by Whitman, I too have both broadened my themes and liberated my rhetoric from the dictums of what I earlier conceived to be 'poetic' through my reading of Whitman.

Williams, Robert. Quiet Tones. Austin: Summit Press, 1967.

Williams shares with Tagore a delicacy of expression in his poetry, an awareness of the potential of words to rise above their literal meanings by their sound alone, to incorporate the universal. My personal acquaintance with Williams enriched my knowledge of the craft of writing expressive yet concrete poetry.

Wright, James. The Branch Will Not Break. Mimeographed Handout, n.d.

James Wright's poetry seems to be that of a man seeking his identity. It has been helpful to me in the articulation of my own search. "An Urn For Diogenes' Ash" reflects my reading of Wright.

Yeats, William Butler. The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats. New York: MacMillan Co., 1968.

I am ambivalent in my respect for Yeats. Although he is a master of form, his form sometimes seems to get in the way of his poems, particularly his use of the end-stop meters in so much of his poetry. In spite of that reservation, Yeats' writing possesses an incredible power in poems such as "The Second Coming," "Sailing to Byzantium," and his great "Leda and the Swan." His virtuosity extends even to miniature pieces, such as "A Coat." Yeats has served me primarily as an intellectual stimulus, as in "On A Wall Overlooking The Neckar." I consider "The Second Coming" one of the great poems in English.

Yevtushenko, Yevgeny. Bratsk Station and Other New Poems. Trans. Tina Tupikina-Glaessner and Geoffrey Dutton. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1967.

Yevtushenko differs from other poets who treat social themes primarily in his optimism. He seems, in his yea-saying, socialist way, to be a Soviet Walt Whitman. He is, in spite of my reservations about his credibility, interesting to me because I feel that it is far more difficult for the poet to express joy and confidence than doubt and fear. Unrealistic or not, Yevtushenko is refreshing to read.

PROSE

Burroughs, William. Naked Lunch. New York: Grove Press, 1959.

Burroughs taught me more about power relationships between both individuals and governments in his book than a year of studies in Political Science. His extended metaphor of need and addiction and the surrealistic anarchy of his description not only confirms my own view of society, but also, oddly enough, creates a more credible picture of the actual order of the world, as opposed to that order so euphemistically depicted by constitutions and politicians.

Casteneda, Carlos. The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge. New York: Ballantine Books, 1968.

The "conversion" of Castaneda, a trained anthropologist, a scientist, to the acceptance of an all-pervasive spirituality serves as a confirmation of the reality of such realms beyond the level of the artistic imagination. Perhaps my skepticism toward the honesty of depiction of spiritual experiences of others, from Augustine to Timothy Leary, indicates a limited perspective, but Castaneda's experience served to confirm the actual existence of such a spiritual realm in a scientific enough way to allow me finally to accept my own experiences as realities.

Donleavy, J.P. The Ginger Man. New York: Berkeley Medallion Books, 1970.

Donleavy writes with brilliant wit. His character Sebastian Dangerfield is the personification of the consciousness of the rebel. Donleavy, with humor and with sympathy, paints a character whose values helped me identify many of my own.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. The Idiot. Trans. Constance Garrett. New York: Bantam Books, 1965.

I consider Dostoevsky to be an essentially spiritual writer, one who confronts the problem, in The Idiot, of the disintegration of one's attempt to bear moral perfection in an imperfect world. This, in turn, points up the necessity to work through the evil to redemption. My poem "Autumn Sunset" suggests this idea briefly in its last lines.

Durrell, Lawrence. The Alexandria Quartet. 4 vols. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1961.

Durrell's masterpiece taught me a great deal about the ramifications of human emotion and motivation. He offers very much to the student of language through his rich fluency and massive vocabulary.

. The Black Book. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1960.

In this, his first book, Durrell demonstrates perhaps the best, most articulate invective I have ever read. This book is an object of study for me in style.

Fraser, James. The New Golden Bough. Ed. Theodore H. Gaster. New York: Mentor Books, 1959.

Fraser is entertaining as well as informative. An element of the religious experience is the identification with archetypes, and Fraser is very helpful in explaining the appraisals of archetypes by other cultures.

Hesse, Hermann. Demian. Trans. Michael Roloff. New York: Bantam Books, 1969.

_____. Siddhartha. Trans. Hilda Rosner. New York: New Directions, 1957.

_____. Steppenwolf. Trans. Basil Creighton. New York: Bantam Books, 1969.

Of all the writers I have read, Hermann Hesse has made the most profound and lasting impact upon my thought and my way of looking at the world and time. The simplicity of his diction, the distance of his perception, and the significance of his themes all combine to make not only a master of literature, but also a man of spiritual wisdom. His continuing concern with the relationship of the individual with a decadent society and with the presence of greater spiritual forces that play about this brief life, brought much-needed light to my own concern just at the time I had reached a dead-end in my own investigations.

Huxley, Aldous. Island. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962.

The utopian society described in this book is based upon potentials all men possess and a consciousness that seemed, during the last decade, to be developing. Island is not as influential in my poetry as in my thinking about society and man's relationship with other men.

Kerouac, Jack. Desolation Angels. New York: Bantam Books, 1965.

_____. The Subterraneans. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

Kerouac's spontaneous style, epitomized in The Subterraneans, is valuable for its accessibility to

psychological association, a quality that has served me not so much in the composition as in the conceptualization of my poetry. His other works, particularly Desolation Angels, have proved to be of more influence philosophically.

Kosinski, Jerzy. Steps. New York: Bantam Books, 1968.

The influence of Kosinski, though not apparent in the poetry, will no doubt make itself felt. His is the ability to be general in such a specific way, by using precise language, that he economically creates a very complete picture of whatever he is describing. I am studying this precision.

Laing, Ronald David. The Politics of Experience. New York: Pantheon Books, 1967.

Laing's investigations into the split-personality have greatly clarified my thinking about the natures of reality and the validity of terms such as "mental illness." Also, the concepts of schizophrenia described in this little work have enabled me to understand the physio-psychological processes inherent in the religious experience to the degree that I can profitably interpret experiences of my own, which, in turn, are reflected in my themes.

Mann, Thomas. Doctor Faustus. Trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter. New York: Vintage Books, 1971.

If any writer is destined to replace Hermann Hesse in influence on my thought, it will be Thomas Mann. Though I have not completed Doctor Faustus, my reading of it is already having an influence on the way I think and write. Both the narrator and the composer Leverkühn represent poles of consciousness within the creative intellectual to an exquisite degree of completeness. I have encountered Mann's suspicion of the artist as "con man" in my own thinking about the role of the artist; but, of greater importance, I think, is the high cost of art to the artist, as demonstrated in the character of Adrian Leverkühn.

Miller, Henry. Nexus. New York: Grove Press, 1965.

_____. Plexus. New York: Grove Press, 1965.

_____. Sexus. New York: Grove Press, 1965.

_____. Tropic of Cancer. New York: Grove Press, 1961.

_____. Tropic of Capricorn. New York: Grove Press, 1961.

Miller has been a constant companion since my adolescence. It was through his fictionalized autobiography, partially included in these works, that I grew to writing. Miller made me aware of not only the elements of a writer's life, the frustrations, hard work, and the joys, but also made me realize the necessity of keeping an open mind that remains free, active, and curious.

Serrano, Miguel. C.G. Jung and Hermann Hesse, A Record of Two Friendships. Trans. Frank McShane. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Serrano's book provides, in addition to fascinating biographical information on Jung and Hesse, much information on Hesse's sources and the literature that attracted his attention. Some of Hesse's last work included in this book are paintings, his last poem, and excerpts from Pictor's Metamorphosis.

Slater, Philip E. The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.

Slater's book seems to have diagnosed not only the illness of the modern American consciousness, but also to have provided a suggestion for its cure. Reich's Greening of America seems amateurish beside it. Many of my social and political values underwent a change after reading Slater. A poem of mine that reflects this influence is "Offensive On Dowling Street."

Wolfe, Thomas. Look Homeward Angel. New York: Modern Library, 1929.

Among many other things, I have learned not only to observe small details more keenly from Wolfe, but also to reflect this observation in my writing. Another strong influence from Wolfe is an increased sense of historical time, a sense of continuity. Wolfe is probably most valuable to the student of style as an example of a superb descriptive writer.