

FOR FRIENDS AND THEN SOME

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A Thesis  
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## PREFACE

One who is interested in writing cannot escape viewing the world and his experiences in it through the filter of his own personality. What is most meaningful to a writer, then, is not always apparent to him until he has been able to look somewhat objectively on a representative sampling of his work. I found in this collection that my areas of concentration of the past several years have been three, which I arbitrarily named "Literary Muses," "For Friends and Then Some," and "On My Own."

The first section is wholly character-oriented: it is made up of impressions gleaned from the reality of characters formed from the whole cloth fabric of fiction. The reality of fiction carries a confrontation for the reader that is perhaps more immediate than that of the world about him because there is a sense of focus in fiction that is felt often in the subconscious of both reader and writer.

"For Friends and Then Some" was written to and for the characters I have met in the nine-to-five white collar world in which I work. Many of the poems use direct address, and say what I would like to say, if I dared, to these prismatic personalities.

Finally, "On My Own" attempts to comment on a purely subjective imprinting of people, places, and ideas. The poems are guideposts in my search for myself. Whether they show any sense of progress is left to the reader to decide.

Stylistically, I have made no innovations. I seldom try consciously to fit a poem into any certain kind of rhyme scheme or verse

form. The subjects of the poems dictate their forms, and their kinds of rhyme, which are often half-rhyme and internal rhyme. The imagery is that I find in the world I work in, gem colors, city park views of nature, and Galveston beaches, all urban, all reachable by car. These poems are more "peopled" than anything else, but then so is my world.

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**LITERARY MUSES**

### St. Joan

Still canticles are sung  
for you. Why have all the  
signals not yet been given?  
Must bells be rung  
though all the orchard  
hearts before a marriage  
of legend and incident is  
annulled?

Cannons do not often  
provide for fact. Miracles  
imagined are more easily  
jewelled, and so the weddings  
of image to Time become elaborate.

I know your vision was not  
gold-plated, halo-ridden, glare-  
lit, that the gold was in  
your hair and that, at dawn,  
all the East is glaring. But if  
I told them, all the books  
would have to be thrown away -  
Man seldom scraps his  
bindings for mere Truth.

### For Clea

Our sun set in terra cotta sky today  
slashed with stained pink marble;  
and alone I watched it sink to stone  
coaxing the veined marble clouds  
to mist, and musk to dust and dusk.

In me, the emerald blood of evening  
would run scarlet for your touch  
and all the sacred shrouds of night  
would wind mauve cocoons of magic  
for your sight.

I wanted to hold you then - not close  
but as a woodman holds a faun  
letting beauty softly defined  
confine itself.



## Dorian

Could it have been mine,  
that face - alien, cold-  
that an unexpected mirror,  
crossed in a quick look,  
flashed me back?

It was a moment's chance,  
since, at second glance,  
the face had turned familiar-  
my mouth again, my eyes  
wide in surprise.

Now, though I verify  
oddness of bone and eye,  
we are no longer one,  
myself and mirror-man.  
Trust has gone.

I had thought them sure,  
that face and self I wore.  
Yet, with no glass about,  
what selves, what unsuspected  
faces stare out?

To Nicole from Nick

In the blowing seashell of your mind  
I hope you hear no voices calling--  
no echoes of a different time when  
2 plus 2 made 4, when "but," "and," "or,"  
were just conjunctions school-defined;  
"Je suis faible" made sense in French--  
and you were mine.

Do not remember the dervish of those days  
when mad-twinged, you singed my heart:  
my art was better then; I masked each glass  
in laughter too loud to hear you calling,  
drowning piecemeal all the same. We drank  
goldfish from a dish, shimmied until lame--  
and you forgot my name.

How do I reach you now, my love? The  
silence of Switzerland is yours, and all  
the gold you seek is sunset-old, too  
weak to warm the rainbow that I hold.  
My guilty flowers glare across your  
sheet: I long for traffic in the street.  
Within there are my words--  
earfuls of hysterical birds that weep  
afraid to scream you from your sleep.

Surrealism After The Eater of Darkness

And can you tell me professorily,  
 what good it is-- I mean what service  
 the life style of a prism?  
 Yellows may view it complementary  
 like violets lilaced in spring breezes  
 not recognized prismatically.

You see I ask perfunctorily for practicality:  
 I mean, can one diagram speech,  
 patternish structures in the prism;  
 or when eachly can I atom  
 facets to prove their use apart  
 to duplicate eachly exactly for humanity?

View the whole! How how simply realistically  
 can one do when prisms turn  
 involvingly separate each color at one  
 time the spectrum patterned  
 as it is from dark to dawn? What use  
 I say, when change's the same all day?

And Prism's voice like one hand  
 clapping. . .  
 "Revolve. Involve. Evolve."

**FOR FRIENDS AND THEN SOME**

### Cheerleader

After the game today,  
 tunneled in shouting  
 you burrowed locker  
 room-ward, leaving  
 me scream-shocked,  
 felt-soaked, heavy  
 with my specialty,  
 a glory no other--  
 not even you--  
 can share.

I stare my field  
 desolate, having  
 known your collective  
 absence, and so silenced  
 all the myriad voices  
 that were mine.

I reign that  
 emptiness  
 knowing well  
 that I,  
 not you, am  
 Brutus  
 of this mass.  
 I gesture, and  
 you are shouted  
 ten strengths.  
 At my leap, they  
 make your ego  
 possible.

In a sweating  
 locker shower  
 you need all  
 those mirrors  
 of your face.  
 My place  
 will be to  
 wait, to fawn,  
 to press me  
 deep  
 into your  
 chest.  
 Be careful,  
 my beast:  
 for I shall  
 know how clear  
 my power  
 how  
 simple  
 a stratagem  
 is your  
 defeat.

### The Debutante

Gathered about you were children and song,  
clean polished glasses, rosewood floors,  
banisters to run your hands along,  
deepest carpets, and paneled doors  
to shut out thickly the world and me.

The wools you wore were bias-stitched,  
your pinnacled heels were sculpted fine,  
your car of gleaming burgundy was rich  
in leather, chrome-void, with lines  
implying opulence the elite could see.

Each trapping of your life was most select;  
the cords that bound you were woven gold,  
no mirror before you dared reflect  
more than outward face, prettily cold  
yet envied by much of the world and me.

How startled we were one gay December  
when nights are full with glory's dark  
and traditions rich are fondly remembered  
to find you'd bulletted your heart.

Dream - Envy

I sing you soft to sleep, my child  
and caress your shining hair  
leaving shelves of elves and Pooch-bears  
smiling their vigil there.

Though I have never heard them speak  
you insist they do,  
so I sing you soft to sleep, my child,  
convinced they listen, too.

I sing you soft to sleep, my child  
longing to believe  
that Teddy bears and mother's songs  
were all the wealth you'd need,

to keep intact those fantasies,  
that render young lives charmed.  
I sing you soft to sleep, my child  
and know even in my arms

no mother's songs can reach you  
where you must go alone;  
I sing you soft to sleep, my child  
to dreams I, too, have known.

To Lis

Her wardrobe would  
have conquered  
any queen.  
Her money  
painted other  
women green.  
She'd worn  
two wedding rings  
both cast aside.  
Her life had been  
too fancy for a bride.  
She bore the quality  
of being chic.  
Her tastes were  
Ultra-modern and unique.  
The world grew angry  
at her cheap display,  
and gave her twenty  
years of slow decay.



## Divorce

If I thought that in a year  
or two, or six, or ten  
I could bind you heart and limb  
to me, I'd laugh, and then  
I'd sing you all the songs I knew  
and dance the dark to day.  
I'd make a place to tender you  
and charm the past away--  
But you're too wise for childish songs  
So mine remain unsung:  
How must I learn to bind a heart  
Still vaster than my own!

### To A Patient

How will you look to me then, all healed?

Your ego sealed again within its casket  
ready to conquer then the task it has set--

Having been once deep into your brain,  
having channeled again those piecemeal

fears and watched you track once,  
then back, along the agony of your

years until death's image, no longer  
kind, left the Future in your mind...

Having seen you leave behind anguish  
torn values of a life outworn by lies,  
by love that money buys, by ridicule  
and scorn...

How am I then to feel? The closeness  
of those who've never touched is often  
more than those who love too much.

### Impressing The Salesclerk

At the ears she sported

Chatham emeralds poorly matched

At the neck hung loose

stranded seed pearls --

all wax.

Her brooch, boson-bound and low

held murky sapphires set in rows.

Unstarred, un-cut, cabochon kind

scratched and lined --

display designed.

She beckons to the zircons

flashing, "Another diamond, please.

Not better, of course, but bigger

than these."

"Naturally, Madame," I'd like to say,

"Here's a prism for your fake array.

The price of one isn't very dear;

You would need the whole chandelier!"

Mocked and clerkish, I say something nice:

"Tiffany can't match yours at any price."

### Explanation of Opals

#### I.

Milk opals, my child, are fairy stones---  
polished, opaque, marbled in magic.

"Hold the stone against the sun  
to see a rainbow without rain.  
Count its colors one by one,  
then turn, and look, and count again."

A foolish rhyme for the foolish young,  
who among common games and sing-song phrases  
find beauty in almost all its phases:  
until our angry adult faces shatter  
opal-like their magic, shatter it  
piecemeal in wizened streets, and  
splatter the spectrum at their feet.

## II. Black Opals

Black opals, my child, are made of every  
piecemeal sunset that you've missed:  
embers flaring, trapped in angry twilights,  
they dance the endless dance of daring  
periwinkled night to flood their flames  
dusky blue, to lull the yellows into greens  
and soothe each scarlet flare to dare purple  
death.

### Wedding Gift

If I give you song, it is that I have  
known deafness caught hollow in speaking  
things to death, and seen your heart  
caulking my words with singing, already

yours, already your answer to our  
madness. When I say you must sing, know  
that the marriage of words to time is  
one ceremony that out-stays confusion

and silences. Children of your fine  
canticles will rise from song, all  
softness, to chasten the heart's  
sweet anarchy, and contrive that

certain grace we find in blowing  
seashells, in heathbells ringing.  
Beyond the chaos of your heart,  
you hear the song. Keep singing.

### Village Idiot

To walk in your precious garden  
requires a heartful of still trees,  
baskets of beech leaves, bronzed  
by autumn's death, piled in pyres  
shunned by green desires.

If my heart were a plus I'd hang  
your passion in my limbs and make  
my own your need to weave in wiser  
space. I'd face myself to keep you  
in that wild place.

I'd like to bind you, man and  
mountain, to make you mine; but I  
am young. Earth's acid yet has time  
to teach my lips to burn. I'll learn  
your madness when you're gone, and  
in the cool of dying days I'll dream  
of a white-faced fawn.

To My Father's Wife

Every sunshine of your days  
bled along the frightened street  
and no cloud came to hide you.

When every cherished golden coin of mind  
unspent and dear began to melt  
within, to sear old thoughts he left behind  
there weren't imaginings to bind that wound.

New lies quick-minted  
into memory  
cannot still salve within  
where truth's own cancer  
spreads at last its final death...

Cauterizing such a wound is not  
a human matter, but those who  
must, must read this tune and  
make believe its song:

"I, like Mary, was no mother.  
My son has never belonged to me."



### To A Poet Turned Pedant

All the bright young men have gone,  
you say, and none are left  
to sing tradition's song; you wept  
to see them go. And yet you went once  
as they have gone, said tradition  
was all wrong, left precedent  
for hacks. Not looking back  
you made a mythology your own.

And all the bright young men  
followed then; their thoughts,  
laminating the pearl,  
deepened the luster of you.

Yet unold,  
you scold imagination now: your  
classes reek with scorn for thought  
"untried," "too wild" -- perhaps  
unborn of you? I'd keep shriveled roses  
in a rancid pot  
if they had tenure,  
and you had not.

## Absence

Moth-waved in sunlight,  
paisley patterned webs  
of you snare me wide  
awake all the orange  
day long. All laughter,  
echoed in surprise,  
I surmised to be your  
laughter, and after  
I wait to stare,  
ensnared in staring  
all the orange day.  
Long time trickles now  
in sunlit hours: slow  
shining traces of you  
track me. All the orange  
day long memory-grown  
patterns of you stalk  
my silence; then leave  
me shouting,  
alone.

## Your Emerald Age

You came to buy having lived  
through diamonds, through the slashed  
facets of their aeons, through their icy glare  
their flawless, colorless fathomless despair,  
the boredom of their limited shapes  
whatever size, only four -- no more.

Cooled in mounds of diamonds, you  
lost touch, grew old, choked  
then sought rubies for your throat.

That quest for warmth at ruby stage  
made you an oddity at middle age:

"MILLIONAIRESS DRAWS BLOOD FROM LIVE PIGEONS  
TO TEST THE COLORS OF HER RUBIES"

And with blood and rubies all around you

were you warm at last, or did past  
diamonds curdle the colors, pale  
perfection to uncertainty, and  
drive you to a middle ground --

a passage to eternity emerald-paved  
and smooth, deep green, serene.

Not many choose to wear them. Yet you,  
Madame, buy to die in emeralds--

brittle-boned, strong-hued, they include  
the warmth man seeks in flawed perfection.

ON MY OWN

**TOO MANY OF US DIED TODAY**

Too many of us died today  
without thinking ourselves  
to death.

Too many of us died today  
without leaving behind  
that depth  
of image we would mirror back  
to those we love behind  
whose breath  
was once our gift to give;  
once double-imaged in our minds,  
now kept  
unique and separate, each  
child apart. My heart  
has wept  
to see how many of us died  
today not knowing this  
of death:  
Eternity is One entity-  
less.

## Interim Orchard

Once the anguished orchard of my brain  
Dared seep and rot full-foliaged. Angry rain  
Fell deep to gnarl writhing branches turned again  
Upon themselves in terror damply stagnant.  
Malignant forest voices stalked my pain.

To stand in burning orchards of my mind,  
To bless their fires quick-stolen out of time  
And curse all stagnant, dependable mankind,  
Was what I'd done to drench the branches of my brain,  
To split each tissue'd fissure that was mine.

And once again a fallow orchard left to fill,  
Not burning now or neither drowning, still  
It stands wizened yet amid my brain  
Awaiting poet's sight - by rain or flame.

### The Oneness of All

"At daybreak the horizon became silvered  
with premature sunbeams."

No. Dawn's beaches are vaguer  
than that. Their silver is not  
silver, but pewter. Gray sands  
stretch sullen, indifferent to  
any beam, if any be premature.

In that stillness no sand  
dares sift, nor does ocean  
raise its voice above whisper.  
Two nuns, Grand Silence bound,  
could not be so mute coupled  
as they are in separate peace.

At daybreak on a beach I  
walked once with you like that;  
untouching thoughts, hands  
gangling. Belonging undared,  
hearts share dimness that  
chastens the certainty  
of landscape.

## Apology

What gift have I to soothe  
the wound of tears--  
a bruise no one but I  
can trace, and that  
from face to heart straight  
through all those days  
of loving, joy-splintered  
and forever careless.  
Love itself  
cannot cure the wounds  
of love-- if it could,  
I'd bind you to me  
with all the passion  
errors know, with all  
knowing passion brings.

But if poor love cannot  
find cure, it can  
relieve that faith  
that makes us whole:  
strong enough to keep  
again the pain,  
the madness that we shared  
that leaves us  
timid, scared.



### Funeral in Mink

At my death the well-dressed will come  
Vermilion claws straining in white kid  
Gloves, and sober black swishing in fashion  
Over sanguine petticoats. Old faces, reprieved,  
Appear relieved: but annoyance of my peers,  
Enared haphazard between beauty shop and Brownies,  
Is disconcerting. Men who will return to offices,  
Cemetery dust cuff-deep, must put in longer  
Hours tomorrow, arriving late again at home  
To start a supper squabble. But children,  
If allowed to come at all, stand tall  
At funerals, and guess the kinds of flowers,  
And poke at funny hats. Even brats hush  
When The Family arrives - all pageants  
Have a pinnacle. Now music pervades  
The incantation to sad oration, until,  
Every face stained, the strains die  
Lilting. Only wilting crimson poppies,  
Ashamed, remain.

### Death Unescorted

Fifty years from now,  
engraved somewhere, calmly  
embalmed by suitable syringes  
more sterile than necessary,  
sunk six inches deeper than  
requirements state, I will  
appreciate the care we take  
of those no longer caring.

The living, I believe,  
lie about the dying and  
perceive that extra room  
in caskets relieves  
the bereaved.

I'd like wood, please,  
knotted, airtight; shallow  
enough for one slight  
rectangle in the grass.

Then let me pass! Is  
not death the one place  
single ladies go  
unquestioned?

### Misunderstanding

Your secrets were never mine  
to keep, nor are your sadnesses  
more than yours. Today, though,  
I left you as one would leave  
a mountain -  
swayed a little by indifference  
yet bewitched in shadows  
where even deepest miracles  
become explicable.

### Autumn's Insanity

Throughout night now there is  
scurrying, frantic, hurrying.

Autumn in russet breaths of eagles  
cantilevers death among even  
the most scarlet pumpkins.  
And winds, spiced fresh now,  
splice September's flowers, shred  
them before the bier of Winter.

Flames vault higher now  
to dare crisp blackened evenings;  
bird-songs are louder  
because they're parting songs.

You'd think earth would learn,  
after all these seasons, to be  
more trusting-  
to feed on her harvest, gulp wind,  
let autumn's music play-  
then curl, bearlike, sensible and smooth  
to snooze old winter through.