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RELATIONSHIP AND SEPARATION

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thirty-five poems in an Imagist context

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by
Stephen Edgar Morrissey

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate
Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

McGill University
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ABSTRACT

The thesis presents thirty-five poems which discuss the problem of relationship and separation. The introductory essay presents a theoretical basis for the poems which situates them in an Imagist context. Similarities between Imagism and Chinese poetry as they influenced the poems is also discussed. The essay then proceeds to an analysis of the structure and theme of the poems. The development of the two-line stanza from the haiku form as well as composition by "musical phrase" is discussed. In the poems I have attempted to deal with the most fundamental quality of human experience: relationship. The dissolution of relationship as it reflects the disorder in society presents the problem of relationship and separation as an unavoidable and basic fact of all human experience. The poems in this collection are an exploration of the question of relationship.

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RESUME

Cette thèse présente trente-cinq poèmes sur la problème des relations et des séparations dans la vie des individus. L'essai d'introduction présente une base théorique qui situe les poèmes dans un contexte Imagiste. Il discute aussi des similitudes entre l'Imagisme et la poésie chinoise et de leurs influence réciproque sur les poèmes de l'auteur. Il suit une analyse de la structure et du thème des poèmes. Le développement de la stance eu deux lignes à partir de la mode haiku et la composition eu "phrases musicales" sont aussi discutés dans l'essai introductif. Dans les poèmes j'ai abordé l'élément fondamental de toute expérience humaine: les relations entre individus. La dissolution d'une relation en tout que reflet du désordre social présent la problème de la relation et la séparation comme un fait inévitable de toute expérience humaine. Les poèmes dans cette collection constituent une exploration de cette question.

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Professor Richard Sommer of Concordia University helped me to understand poetry and writing in a non-dualistic and open-ended way.

I would like to dedicate the thesis to my mother who has always supported me, and for this I thank her.

I call to my friends, picking lotus,
Wonderfully afloat on the clear river,
And forget, in my delight, how late it grows,
Till gusts of evening wind whirl by.
Waves scoop up the mandarin ducks;
Ripples rock the broad-tailed mallards;
At this moment, sitting in my boat,
Thoughts pour out in endless streams.

--- Han-shan (T'ang Dynasty)
translated by Burton Watson

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Chapter I : INTRODUCTION

Theory and Terminology

In the introduction to Guide to Kulchur Ezra Pound writes,

Tseu-Lou asked: If the Prince of Mei appointed you head of the government, to what wd. you first set your mind?

Kung: To call people and things by their names, that is by the correct denominations, to see that the terminology was exact. ¹

Fundamental to the Imagist movement was the impulse to correct terminology, not only to find the exact word to create an image but also in the effort to define the essentials or principles necessary for the writing of good poetry. Wallace Stevens writes, "Progress in any aspect is a movement through changes of terminology."² For the contemporary poet the Imagists represent the beginning of a period in which terminology has moved through a variety of changes; the theoretical base for contemporary poetry lies with the Imagist theory formulated by F.S. Flint, Ezra Pound, T.E. Hulme and other early Imagist poets.³ It is true, as William Pratt writes in The Imagist Poem, that ". . . Imagism might have failed as a movement, but as a theory it succeeded . . ."⁴

Imagist theory has been briefly stated in an essay by Ezra Pound; the three principles of Imagism are,

1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.

3. As regarding rhythm: To compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome. 5

Of this theory Richard Aldington in the Preface to the anthology Some Imagist Poets writes, "these principles are not new, they have fallen into desuetude. They are the essentials of all great poetry, indeed of all great literature . . ."6
He then proceeds to expand and develop the original three principles:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.
2. To recreate new rhythms --- as the expression of new moods --- and not to employ old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon "free verse" as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea.
3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly about aeroplanes and not automobiles; nor is it necessarily bad art to write about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911.
4. To present an image (hence the name: "Imagist"). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art.
5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.
6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry. 7

Thus, the technique of modern poetry reflected the emergence of a new post Victorian sensibility. Poetry, according

to T.E. Hulme, "has become definitely and finally introspective and deals with the expression and communication of momentary phases in the poet's mind."⁸ It is axiomatic for the expression of the "momentary phases" that free verse finally eclipse the reliance upon preconceived and limiting poetic forms. However, the idea of free verse is qualified by Pound's "absolute rhythm"; Pound writes that "absolute rhythm" is a rhythm "in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed."⁹ An extension of Pound's "absolute rhythm" may be found in Charles Olson's theory of Projective Verse.

Finally, Aldington's statement that "concentration is of the very essence of poetry" was later further substantiated by Pound in an interesting observation; he writes,

I begin with poetry because it is the most concentrated form of verbal expression. Basil Bunting, fumbling about with a German-Italian dictionary, found that this idea of poetry as concentration is as old almost as the German language. 'Dichtung' meaning poetry, and the lexicographer has rendered it by the Italian verb meaning 'to condense.' 10

I have attempted here to briefly define the Imagist theory of poetry. Perhaps what the Imagists attempted is described when A.N. Whitehead writes,

The art of free society consists first in the maintenance of the symbolic code; and secondly in fearlessness of revision, to secure that the code serves those purposes which satisfy an enlightened reason. Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision must ultimately decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows. 11

It is for the liberation of language from "useless shadows"

that Imagism and indeed all poetry must stand. It is in this sense that correct terminology is of great importance, for to articulate and define one's relationship with reality, to be sensitive to reality, to free oneself from the obscure and the old has a liberatory quality in which free expression and creation may exist. It is, as Wallace Stevens writes, that "Poetry constantly requires a new relation."¹² This "new relation" for the Imagists lay in both the exploration and development of the image as the central point of the poem as well as the rediscovering of old forms, for instance, early Greek and Chinese poetry and the more recent French Symbolist poets, and the application of these forms to the modern English poem. The essential of this movement towards the image and the representation of the idea as image is apparent in the attempt to discard the cumbersome language and technique of the High Victorian period and its replacement with concise concrete language.

The Chinese poetry of the T'ang Dynasty (618 - 906) influenced Pound's poetry to a great extent. Forms exist in the T'ang poetry that correspond in conciseness to the Japanese haiku and tanka forms. Burton Watson in Chinese Lyricism writes,

The seven character shih form, for example, which has been employed sporadically from the end of the second century, was popularized and brought to maturity (during the T'ang era). In addition, the T'ang saw the development and refinement of a whole group of forms known collectively as chin-t'-i-shih or "modern style poetry."¹³

What we have been calling "Imagism" is for the Chinese

and some other early civilizations an assumed and integral part of their poetry. The Fenollosa manuscripts and Pound's translation of The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry suggest that Imagist theory is not the private property of a poetry elite but is fundamental to a concise and direct use of language.

Jacques Maritain's comments on modern poetry are of interest here,

Such poems are condensed, the expression is purely restricted to essentials, any discursive or oratorical development and liaison has been replaced by allusive streaks. But they are clear poems: the intelligible sense is explicit, either expressed by conceptual utterances clearly circumscribing it --- or carried by images, without the intermediary of any expressed concepts (though a great many virtual concepts are involved), in which case the intelligible sense, although still explicit, is, as it were, not circumscribed, I would say, open. 14

In Lin Hsieh's (6th century) The Literary Mind and its Carving of Dragons we find this solution for the eternal source of the art of composition,

The mountains and rivers are gleaming silks
Whereby are displayed the forms which make order in
the earth. 15

Form may therefore be seen as an organic and natural phenomenon;¹⁶ the direction is towards an open poetry, that is, a poetry that is created without the preconceptions of a closed form, and for the Chinese this was an extension of the psychological condition of the poet, his poetry reflecting back on the quality of his own mind and its ability to perceive clearly the phenomenal world. In this there is the emergence of what Maritain has termed the "poetic sense",

A poem must only be, yes, but it cannot be except through the poetic sense; and some intelligible meaning, subordinate or evanescent as it may be, at least some atmosphere of clarity, is part of the poetic sense. 17

So far I have been attempting to define the intellectual and theoretical foundation informing this collection of poems. It should be remembered, however, that while the structural and thematic considerations investigated here follow the theoretical ones their origin was not in this sequence nor was it in any way a linear development; it was, more correctly, a process evolving simultaneously in the investigation of the craft of making a poem. In this the intuitive and discursive, the subjective and objective are aspects of the same development and movement. This movement is a perceptual one, one of observation and awareness, it is the ability of being sensitive to reality and the understanding of relationship at all levels of complexity and sophistication. I am interested in poetry as the ability to perceive clearly, as evidence of the quality of the mind. Perhaps the Chinese have come closest to the experience of poetry as an ontological perception. Chang in Creativity and Taoism writes,

. . . Tao, in its ontological sense, is an inner experience through which man and the universe interface as one. The ontological experience is often described as nondifferentiated, nonconceptual, and inexpressible primordial innocence. Chinese poetry in its highest form serves as a means of reflecting this primordial innocence. 18

In the expression of the ontological sense and undifferentiated perception of the phenomenal world, a "spiritual rhythm" exists: an examination of the "spiritual rhythm" can allow us

a deeper understanding of Pound's "absolute rhythm"; Chang writes, "Everyone of us has an inner structure of his own. With each one of us it is unique", and this "inner structure" is evidenced in poetry as the "spiritual rhythm". "As Archibald MacLeish would say, 'A poem should not mean, but be!' The best works of Chinese poetry do not 'mean'; they 'are'. The spiritual rhythm emerges from the objective reality, which appears no more a mere visual description."¹⁹

Structure

In these poems what I have attempted to create is an articulate and simple poetry, a poetry that exhibits a meditative calm. Chang writes,

Purity and joy are the fruits of meditation.
For the Chinese poets they are fundamental to
poetic creativity. The higher their levels of
self-cultivation, the better their poetry. ²⁰

and Louis L. Martz in his essay "Wallace Stevens: The World as Meditation" writes,

. . . meditation is a process, not a subject . . .
Stevensian meditation becomes attentive thinking
about concrete things and the aim of developing
an affectionate understanding of how good it is
to be alive. ²¹

In many of these poems it is this meditative quality I have attempted to create. Fundamental to this is the perception of form and content as complementary aspects of the same process and not as separate or exclusive categories of poetic expression. With the development of a simple poetry a similar structure

or form evolves. In this collection many of the poems use a basic two-line stanza. The two-line stanza has a number of advantageous qualities: it is an open enough form so as not to interfere with the "absolute rhythm" of the poem, and yet it is not a formlessness in which the structure of the poem is chaotic or too preoccupied with experimentation. The open quality of the two-line stanza allows the structure of the poem to be an integral part of the poem as a whole; therefore, the length of the lines vary from a necessarily short length in "Crows" and "Japanese Screens" to the long lines of "A Separate Existence" and "there are seashells and cats". One attempts in both line scans to "compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in the sequence of the metronome" to quote Pound.

An extension of Pound's composition by "musical phrase" leads to an "organic form" and it is this organic form and unity I have tried to create in these poems. While an "organic form" "has its own inherent laws, originating with its very invention and fusing in one vital unity both structure and content,"²² an organic quality may also exist in the integrity of form and content in the writing of the poem. One doesn't begin necessarily knowing in advance that a certain structure will be used; however, with application one finds a suitable form to communicate certain ideas and images, and the use of that structure recurs until a suitable alternative presents itself.

In this collection I have included a number of haiku, a form experimented with by the Imagists. The haiku is a Japanese

verse form made up of three lines containing seventeen syllables: five syllables in the first and third lines and seven syllables in the second. Generally, in the haiku, the season of the year is alluded to or expressed directly; the external world is used to represent the interior state of the poet.

The value of the haiku for the contemporary poet lies in its conciseness of form and in the directness required in the expression of an image. Any excessive verbalization is impossible in the economy of seventeen syllables. One must express oneself directly and in this one is able to clearly perceive the immediate world, the self's place in that world and the expression of this fact concretely and imagistically.

Certainly this is the objective of all Imagistic poetry. The structure must be such that the content of the poem is not obscure. And to this end the three principles of Imagist theory are readily applicable: a structure which is simple and accessible allows for the "direct treatment of the 'thing'", indeed the requisite simplicity requires that no extra words be used in the presentation of the poem; and finally the two-line stanza is flexible enough to permit composition by the musical phrase. I think in this collection this is best represented in the poem "there are seashells and cats".

The two-line stanza has been used by many poets, notably Wallace Stevens (for instance in "Description Without Place", "The House was Quiet and the World was Calm" and "The Man with the Blue Guitar"). The collection is introduced by a series of haikus; the two-line form used in this collection was developed as an

extension of writing in the haiku form and from reading and studying the poetry of Stevens.²³

Several images recur throughout these poems: the sea, waves, clouds, seashells and others which are organic and naturalistic. I have attempted throughout to create a unity of form and content, to create poems in which form and content are both inter-related and inter-dependent. I believe that writing haikus, learning how to create an image and present an idea in the haiku form has helped what-ever "poetic sense" that exists here. The haiku appears to be a simple form, however, the fact is that it is an extremely difficult one. Maritain might have been writing of Basho or Buson or any of the other great haiku poets when he writes,

It was by dint of intelligence and self-restraint, and by avoiding anything which might "debauch" the eye or the mind, that he made the poetic sense prevalent and sovereign in the work, so as to captivate us forever. ²⁴

Theme

The ten haiku which introduce this collection move through a progression of ideas which also serves to introduce the collection as a whole. In the first haiku the value of fall is seen to lie in the "aloneness" we are forced into during that season and, in this solitude there is the opportunity for introspection and the clarity that is possible in looking back on things past. This solitude is continued in the second haiku which considers silence and emptiness as having a positive value when we consider the self as an impediment to the perception of

what is. In the eighth haiku, the end of the year sees little change; by allusion it is winter and there is no appearance of the fecund, or the promise of a renewal of life. One is still alone with the consciousness of separation, one is still divided as we have divided time into definite durations of months and years; however, one is a chronological and the other a psychological division. Finally, in the tenth haiku there is a perception of the moon behind the trees which moves to a memory of fish nets in the sea. The sea and sky act as images for the vastness of life, the trees and nets represent those things in life on which we are "caught", that is, those situations in which the self is attached to the illusion of its own permanence, and therefore to the detriment of seeing things clearly, being sensitive to reality. When this happens one is again isolated, caught in "our lonely nets".

Fundamentally, the poems are concerned with the problem of relationship and separation. For the divided self relationship is almost impossible;²⁵ indeed, the source of the division between people is created by the self, "the self is a blind watchdog" which seeks to protect itself. The area of consciousness which sees itself as an isolated and separate phenomenon creates a world of division and alienation; this is caused by the incorrect reading of one's perceptions, "a lonely person on the prairies/ makes it a lonely place".

Clearly, the problem of the divided self and the dissimulation of relationship is an ancient one. The solution

lies not in moving away from the problem but in facing it directly. In the poem "are we not the explorers of consciousness" there is the attempt to understand this dilemma of separation. To attempt to be whole, to end the divisions in relationship and the psychological divisions which separate all people, one must become an "explorer of consciousness".

The new, creation, does not lie in the movement away from the old or in what should be, but in the clear perception of what is. In this perception the old naturally falls away by itself. It is not a conscious act of the self but an elusive and sudden experience, an experience which cannot happen by a conscious will of effort, it happens "like a dead star/ falling into the ocean".

An image for the liberation from the problem of separation is the cloud image in "Clouds from Calgary to Toronto". Clouds are an image for the innocent mind, they represent the mind which is free to travel, to investigate without preconceptions and prejudices. In flying over the clouds one is offered an opportunity to see the clouds from above. In the poem we return home flying into the darkness. In the darkness, the reality of our lives as they are presently constituted, is the real adventure, to be sensitive to reality, to abnegate the darkness, and thereby to enter the light. "Light" exists only in the mind which is able to perceive things clearly, it is not for the mind fettered with preconceptions, for the person bound by an overly developed self. The seasons continue their cyclic process, and in the movement away from the self we are able to have innocent minds; the "process of change" continues but we don't disturb it, we go with

the change rather than against it.

The solution to this problem of a separate existence lies in "a moment of peace which will/ stretch itself into a lifetime" ("A Separate Existence"). The separate existence is the negation of relationship in all aspects of human experience.

What we owe the world is our ability to respond to the conditions presented to us. To be able to respond it is essential that the old, the known, the images we have cultivated be placed aside. When we can perceive clearly without the preconceptions the self has created we may see things as a "new being", a being which recognizes the limitations of existence and the context in which one lives, without this fundamental understanding no relationship is possible. The alternative is to continue the separation and conflict.

The perception of order and harmony which exists within nature is a perception which is for life and the total awakening of the mind out of sleep. This perception, however, is essential. For we have been literally hypnotized by words. into believing a variety of myths; the myth that money is the most important thing in life and, the most destructive myth which is that we have a permanent and separate self that must at all costs be protected. The myth of the self has placed the "I" in opposition to other members of society in the mad pursuit of objects which, in turn, motivate the self to its extremes of isolation and separation, and by extension the denial of relationship in any form.

With the sense of the impermanence of relationship and the desire of the self for security in an ideational permanence, is the acknowledgement of change and our ability to move with and to understand the processes of change, and this requires the ending of the imposition of old concepts onto an ever-changing reality. The experience of freedom from preconceptions as well as the elusive nature of this experience is also suggested in the poems.

As long as our language is distorted, as long as it fails to correspond to the demands of reality we will be unable to perceive clearly the problem of relationship. As long as language is distorted our perceptions will be similarly distorted, for with imprecise terminology and confusion in any area of human experience there is the denial of relationship and the isolation of the individual self.

In the poem "This is What I Want for You" the motivation behind writing poetry may be seen as not only in the desire for communication but also in the articulation of a ground of sympathy the poet must feel for all living things. It is a sympathy in which there is relationship between two living human beings as well as the ending of the separation between the writer and the audience.

The final two poems in the collection indicate another level at which images can exist and this is a psychological image which prevents a clear perception of what is. This clarity of perception lies in the understanding which is a choiceless

awareness of relationship as a living moving process, an understanding which exists beyond the analytical conceptual mind. As soon as relationship is fixed, as soon as we create images in a relationship, the relationship begins to die under the dead weight of ideas and concepts which are blind to the inevitability of change. Relationship exists in the immediate present, and to meet relationship with anything but understanding, to meet it with ideas and concepts is to fail in the challenge that life and relationship presents. The adventure of art, indeed the adventure of all human existence is the movement towards the free, towards an area of the mind which has not been touched by concepts and the accumulation of experience.

Concerning the problem of relationship and separation Louis Dudek writes,

It comes to this, then, the personal dilemma, or isolation of the individual self in a world of meaninglessness, can be resolved only in the opposite idea, in the total universality of myth and religious belief. The gods who spoke at the beginning before the individual artist had a voice of his own, before he had "learned to say 'I'", are still the logical alternative to individual isolation and subjectivity. But the liberation from the gods, and the liberation of the individual self, to face alone the great issue of existence --- working always for this time and this place, this self, to find the hidden meaning of all things --- that is the great adventure. It's not a dark prospect, but an infinite horizon of possibilities, for those who are strong enough to bear it. And for the great majority of modern artists it is still the only road. 26

Conclusion

This paper serves as an introduction to the several

levels of the following poems. First, I have attempted to define an Imagist context in which to present the poems. The Imagist influence is immediately evident and the theoretical foundation that they created in the first part of this century has served as a basis for all English poetry that has followed. Pratt writes,

. . . it seems safe to say that, should any new metamorphoses of the modern poetic tradition occur, new Imagist poems will be written. For whenever precision and clarity of language combine with natural musical forms, new Imagist poems are being created, whatever names may be given them. 27

The terminology used by the Imagists is also evident in the theoretical analysis of poetry made by the Chinese poets of the T'ang and other dynasties. Lu Chi's observations in his "Essay on Literature" come closest to Imagist theory,

The maxim: Let Truth in terms most felicitous be spoken,
While of verbiage beware. 28

Therefore, there is an inter-dependence and inter-relatedness existing between Imagist and Chinese poetry at the most fundamental levels, both in the practical expression of the idea as image and at the more academic level where considerations for correct terminology and theoretical consistency are expected.

The primary theme of these poems is that of relationship and separation and I have dealt with this in explicating several poems. However, I have avoided direct and lengthy explication in favour of the readers' own understanding and enjoyment of the work. What I have tried to do, however, is point out what I consider to be the thematic concern of these poems as

a whole, and that is the problem of relationship and separation.

It has not been my decision to write about relationship; however, the problem awaits the understanding of all people. I believe that any problem concerning human beings must be dealt with directly and immediately, not with the burden of preconceived ideas but with a mind that is fresh and capable of a choiceless observation. Relationship exists at all levels of existence and as such can never be ignored. I believe that in the awareness of relationship we may arrive at a better and more clear understanding of ourselves, and this requires a quality of observation which is sensitive to reality, which is capable of looking without the burden of preconceptions. This, I believe, is the purpose and significance of art today.

Footnotes: Chapter I : INTRODUCTION

1. Ezra Pound, Guide to Kulchur (New York, 1970), p. 16.
2. Wallace Stevens, "Adagia", Opus Posthumous (New York, 1957), p. 157.
3. Imagist theory is evident particularly in the poetry of Charles Olson and the Black Mountain school of poetry; however, one may also find evidence of Imagist theory in the poetry of Gary Synder and the San Francisco poets of the 1950's, as well as in the New York school of poetry of that same period, for instance, in the poetry of Frank O'Hara and John Ashberry.
Concrete poetry, which has always been concerned with theory, is certainly indebted to the Imagists: the Noigandres group of Brazil trace their development from Pound and Cummings, and most concrete poets would agree that the Imagists formulated a theoretical base which allowed for the creation of concrete poetry.
4. William Pratt, ed., The Imagist Poem (New York, 1963), p. 37.
5. Ezra Pound, Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, ed. T.S. Eliot (New York, 1954), p. 3.
6. Richard Aldington and others, Some Imagist Poets (New York, 1969), p. vi.
7. Aldington, Some Imagist Poets, p.p. vi - vii.
8. T.E. Hulme, Further Speculations, ed. Sam Hynes (Minneapolis, 1955), p. 72.
9. Pound, Literary Essays, p. 9.
10. Ezra Pound, A B C of Reading (New York, 1966), p. 36.
11. A.N. Whitehead, Symbolism (New York, 1959), p. 88.
12. Stevens, Opus Posthumous, p. 178.
13. Burton Watson, Chinese Lyricism (New York, 1971), p. 110.
14. Jacques Maritain, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry (New York, 1955), p. 196.
15. E.R. Hughes, The Art of Letters: Lu Chi's "Wen Fu," A.D. 302 (New York, 1951), p. 236.

16. Another tradition leading to poetry as an "organic and natural phenomenon" may be found in the Romantic movement; for instance, the writings of Goethe, Wordsworth, and Keats.

17. Maritain, Creative Intuition, p. 193. Preceding this passage Maritain quotes MacLeish's "Ars Poetica".

18. Chang Chung-yuan, Creativity and Taoism (New York, 1963), p. 169.

19. Chang, Creativity and Taoism, p. 176.

20. Chang, Creativity and Taoism, p. 186.

21. Louis L. Martz, The Poem of the Mind (New York, 1966), p. 218.

22. Herbert Read, as quoted in Babette Deutsch, Poetry Handbook (New York, 1962), p.p. 52 - 53.

23. The two-line stanza is also derived from the couplet; Pope's use of this form is perhaps the most immediate example. The use of the two-line stanza in this collection is more indebted to the Japanese haiku and the poetry of Stevens than to any other tradition. The element of composition by "musical phrase" allows a freedom which is difficult to develop in the closed or rhyming couplet.

24. Maritain, Creative Intuition, p. 201. Maritain is referring here to "the best paintings of Poussin."

25. Although the phrase "the divided self" may be identified with the writings of Dr. R.D. Laing, I am using it here in its broadest sense.

26. Louis Dudek, The First Person in Literature (Toronto, 1967), p.p. 67 - 68.

27. Pratt, The Imagist Poem, p. 39.

28. Lu Chi, "Essay on Literature," translated by Shih-hsiang Chen, in Anthology of Chinese Literature, ed. Cyril Birch (New York, 1965), p. 209.

Chapter II : THIRTY-FIVE POEMS

haiku

fall seems an old friend
the birds are gone the trees bare
alone in our rooms

an empty bird's nest
they have flown south and left us
with their silence

no peace in old age
no peace when young and clever
old dog being teased

for twenty-five cents
hot coffee this winter night
shelter on my walk

the wind in the trees
and on the branches sparrows
this cold autumn night

haiku

bare branches, blue sky
every leaf has fallen
complete emptiness

snowing all day long
even the cats run away
when it snows this much

solitary life
another year is ending,
and yet, still alone

even this morning
the fog covers the house
first thought: emptiness

full moon behind trees
and in the sea, fish caught in
nets, our lonely nets

'the prairies are a lonely place

the prairies are a lonely place
or a lonely person on the prairies

makes it a lonely place
the sky is vast & to the person

who is separate it is a symbol
of separation & consider the distance

between people as we consider
the space between stars or compare

that distance to a desert
which is an impossible distance

to travel the separation
is the same as the consciousness

which perceives separation &
to stand on the prairies

is perhaps like looking at the stars
or like standing on the edge

of a desert it is a lonely place
for the lonely person

'it is oceans we have between us'
it is oceans we have between us
we send out our merchant marines
& you send a volley of fire
across our bow my god
you ask for the titan missiles
that wipe out your 600 dying cities
you ask for the shattered windows
& cars racing thru the streets at 3AM
relationship is often this
declared state of war
& often it is a neutral zone
of political activity maintaining an
artificial status quo of backscratching
relationship is this lost world
in which only a few communicate
or leave bombs beneath seats in theatres
the message is always the same
everything is relationship in a war torn
lebanese sense of things relationship
is everything for a world in which
there is great sorrow & sometimes great joy

'the self is a blind watchdog'

the self is a blind watchdog
barking in the night

as though a blind old man
who leans against a wooden stick

there is nobody there
what you are hearing

is the house settling
or the sound of the branches

or a few clouds
crossing & recrossing the sky

the wind is strong tonight
there are drafts from the window

& everything we have become
seems lost

the old watchdog barks at nothing
he whimpers when he is afraid & cold

his white eyes stare & see nothing
he cannot run or go out alone

what you are hearing
is your own breathing

there is nothing there
the night is empty of strangers

'I am aiming for the hermetic statement'

I am aiming for the hermetic statement
for the totally inaccessible wotnot

for stardust & gibberish
& a wind that blows up suddenly

& rubs its back against the side of the house
creating new music and new seasons

spring is a butterfly that passes
before our eyes & then is gone

a sound that is shaped like a mouth
& then two sounds which hold lengthy conversations

& finally a blizzard in which there is only one sound
which is a finger rubbing against a pane of glass

and outside of the window
we notice that the stars

have assumed new places in the cosmos
thereby creating in the morning newspapers

a thirteenth astrologic sign

we live at 4350 montclair avenue & it is
the 10 millionth house on this street

which stretches around the world
and then passes by the front door

& from the picture window we are watching all humanity
pass by in search of a job or a piece of meat

or a bit of bread to gnash between gums
either cadillacs or a silver arrow

or a horserace or a bullock cart & all of china
comes wearing a blue suit made of cotton

the buddha boethius a bronze replica of igor stravinsky
the pope & the entire olympic team representing

several outlying planets & beyond
pass & the 4 horsemen pass

until all humanity passes
with their collective bundles of worry & anxiety

a barking dog dostoyevsky's desk executions
in bangladesh & the north prairie

of snow & wind & a season in heaven & a season in hell

'there must have been nights like this'

there must have been nights like this
in ancient china

we stood by the window & lookt out
how the snow seemed to cover the

whole city & then how it seemed
to be like time or sand on a beach

a beach washt by waves until
new beaches are created created

by the sinking & loss of whole
continents beaches which

define our geography & which
are almost a part of us like

hands with fingers entwined
the movement of seaweed the

destruction of civilizations & the
visitation of travellers in space

the teachings of sage beaches

to let go when letting go
is called for

the changing of currents
the gulf stream across the atlantic & japan
in the pacific

the migratory pattern of birds
flying north along the mexican coast to canada

the seasons & the stars
in a moment everything changes

WAVES

between waves
there is a moment of silence

a wave that stretches a hundred feet
along the shore & which suddenly collapses

the lip of the wave turning over

until the whole wave is a white cap
& then noise & finally

a bit of white foam at your feet

on the pier in ventura
were dehydrated starfish

their legs hanging lifeless
where they were placed

china is not far away
& behind us is the east & to the right

the north stretches along the coast
a two thousand mile long series of waves

being alive is to ride the waves
and not get washt up on a deserted beach

or sacrifice one's life to the meaningless
efforts of swimming against the current

we dont want tidal waves crashing against our backs

being alive is to ride the waves
with one ear between crest & trough

& the other to the imperceptible
discussion of fish & shells & rock

IN THIS THEATRE OF LIFE

we have fooled no one
by becoming indian tibetan

and finally that greatest hoax chinese
we have only wanted a few lanterns

strung over our heads dreaming of being somewhere
where there was a fiction of order

an idea of things as they could be
and never as they are we are born to live

in a room with no windows
a room painted white where the walls

seem nonexistent they recede into the
distance as we approach hungry and tired

walking for years into great clouds of dust
and the ceiling is a white sky or an eye

pressed against a keyhole
a blind eye that sees only darkness & more isolation

oh to be chinese again or to have at least been once
atlantean or to have sailed around the planet

to have died and been reborn
for a moment blazing and on fire a new person

once to end thinking and darkness

the darkness of clouds and isolation
somewhere the correct words exist

to describe the fears that
drive us to manic lengths of impersonation

it is easy to run on the energy of hate

& man may run
but he too must at last be silent

'are we not the explorers of consciousness'

1)

are we not the explorers of consciousness
standing on the edge of a desert

or a shoreline facing out to the ocean
the poems we have written in the sand

have been washt away by the waves
& other poems have been divined from the shapes of clouds

& read to the wind standing on the edge of sleep
we hear the sound of the wind

it is possible to drift at sea
for several lifetimes & not see land

or human settlement it is also possible
not to miss people at all

on this voyage we sometimes sail over
lost civilizations they are hidden beneath

coral & seaweed their silence is not
as great as the empty sky

an empty sky in which
we place a flock of red winged blackbirds

flying suddenly up from a marsh
& another empty sky which is innocent of clouds

& holds nothing but the illumination of stars

2)

we stand at the end of the world & watch the sea
watch the waves & the big dipper

our new life is here contained within the old
which falls away like a shell or blossoms

from a tree or like a dead star
falling into the ocean

CLOUDS FROM CALGARY TO TORONTO

1)

flying over the clouds
each cloud reminds me of you
& with each cloud
there is the thought of you

2)

these are the waves of the sky
clouds you could have drawn
for each foot from here to the earth
there is a thought of you
I have 33,000 thoughts of you
& each foot delivers up 12 more thoughts of you
to my right the sun disappears
we enter the darkness in returning home
in this plane there are only angels
who are prepared to enter the darkness
where are the new people for whom
there is light even in darkness
the clouds are simply the white hair
of old age & the child disappears
into a blue sky which is a robin's egg
& from which he eventually escapes
& the sky is a dark angel
or 4 horsemen coming at us with swords

3)

& now the clouds are an angry white blanket
& now the clouds laugh in the face of the sun
let all the seasons begin their journey
dont disturb the process of change

A SEPARATE EXISTENCE

somewhere a ship slips quietly into port
its passengers disembark & go their separate ways

there was only silence I lay flat on my stomach
photographing the waves

the water almost touching the lens
things fall away I walkt along the beach collecting stones

on each wave was a dead leaf
and the stones on the beach were also once leaves

& some contain the image of a butterfly
or a cloud caught suddenly in a piece of stone

once the stone fell away & a stone man stept out
& walkt away from the pile of debris that was his life

a spreading oak was over our heads & a cloud
passed over blocking the sun you will run along the beach

and you will be running away from something
that has become your life you may one day be lost in

the mountains or in a city or in the 200 rooms which make up
only one of your many homes think again

first there was failings and death
& books all I want to do is lie on the couch

& smell nothing but lilacs
all I want is a moment of peace which will

stretch itself into a lifetime
a cat lying on the same couch

who stretches out like this moment of forgetfulness
this moment of spring which is only a few days in length &

the separate existence we have cultivated
it is a source of pain & separation

lets not make the same mistake & think life is
nothing but sorrow & decline until death

it is easy to think that way
it is 2AM & the citizens of this lost world are tired

you will run thru the forest & until you stop
running there will be nothing but running

sometimes one almost weeps over beauty

the light caught by the leaves at 5PM

a bird singing outside your window before
the sun comes up

our separation ends in elusive moments

& other times our separation ends in
not being able any longer to restrain ourselves from speaking

'I owe the world nothing'

I owe the world nothing

but to enter the soil
with both hands held over my head

already the ground sucks me down

to its glacial center
in the middle of the earth

it is a perfect purgatory
where everywhere there is broken glass

& the remnants of a far superior civilization
a race of people with cold stares

I have been too sympathetic with everyone
& now let me announce

the beginning of a greater selfishness
& now let the tougher being exist

allow me this opportunity to announce
the 27th letter of the new roman alphabet

soon it will be floating in yr soup
soon it will be on billboards

advertising newer & more mysterious cold remedies
the 27th letter defies definition

in traditional terms & the words
we can use it in are still

a bit of silence on the landscape

this is the beginning of an anti-alphabet

they are the sound of words we have yet to hear

perhaps they will form like a drop of water
or like an apple falling from a tree

the earth is of different colours
& yr hair on the grass is sometimes

like straw & sometimes the colour
of the sun today was not the last day

of the old regime
we are trying for a better order

where death is not our only religion
& sleep the greater part of this cosmology

'you who are not particularly'
you who are not particularly
interested in roy rogers
or art or anything bordering
on aesthetic sensibility
a coke bottle in one hand
& a mouth full of rotten teeth in the other
or perhaps a clock firmly wedged
in one nostril and from the other
shouldn't we expect
to hear the stars & stripes forever
the bliss of enlightened life nirvana
& bodidharma crossing into china
the lost continent of mu
is where our ancestors originated
they crossed the waters of styx
and headed north
across a bed of hot coals they
stuffed their pockets with rubies
and other jewels knowing a good
thing when they saw it they also took out
an option on certain words and the roman
alphabet why not leave a few markings
runes to preserve one's personality in
or hieroglyphs inscribed in stone
with a monopoly on the language
and the trunk railroads of the
north east states it was easy to branch
out in real estate and lateral
investments a good capitalist can
always duplicate mao's long march
or moses' 40 years in the desert
what is a little suppression
or a few deaths to stand in the
way of a corporate empire

THIS IS WHAT I WANT FOR YOU

the adventure begins
it is good to do things for yourself

there is a stigma to these things
today may be friday the thirteenth

but what of it? there was an
eclipse of the sun this morning

but what of that? the adventure
begins and everything

is of interest everything
is seen clearly in a new light

it is good to do things for yourself
but what of it? it doesnt have to be sd

last night I was out for a walk
& looking at the trees

the trees are like the mind
that doesnt know I mean

these trees that have no leaves
terribly austere & at night

very silent darkness against
the night sky

to be free from the known
yes the adventure is this

to leave behind the things
we have known to leave

them behind completely

CROWS

two large crows
sit in the branches

they are not hawks
although they are ridiculously

large birds they are
ominously large they inhabit

the neighbourhood with
their cawing & their black

wings open over the morning
are held for a moment

in the open window uninvited
they are held in the window

& uninvited they leave

must we awake
only to thoughts of

justifying who we are

this anxiety returns me
to an old dream that

one day the grass will be long
& the garden wild

as though no one has lived here
for many months & summers

so that the vegetables
will be overgrown with weeds & vines

so that they are inedible

every springtime I lie on the orange couch

beside the window

open to the lilac tree

anonymously the lilacs
enter the room & anonymously

they leave like a cool
breeze like the wind touching

a dandelion & releasing
tiny white seeds

soon there will be
that smell of lilacs

(soon there will only be that smell

(already the buds
(seem large & ready

it is not enough
that we live but that we

make a name for ourselves
the lilacs & the crows

are never enough the crows
are nearly as large as.

the five eagles we saw last month
chained to wooden posts

& yet the crows are free
& the eagles like us are chained

& think only of freedom
our chains leading

to our ideas of what we should be

the emptiness of what is
filled with noise

"read Jade Mtn"

"read Jade Mtn"

isnt this true culture
not the accumulation of knowledge

or experience but being sensitive
to reality having a regard

for all living things

silently I watcht
the muskrat looking out of

his hole there were
red wing blackbirds I had

seen so few they
were special & played

in the branches & hanging
from one branch what appeared

to be sea weed
was a small bird's nest

intricately woven
onto a branch it still contained

berries & needles from a fir tree

I cut off a part of the branch

& brought it home as a present

isnt a bird's nest
great art or the hardened berries in the nest

in it
there is joy as well as sorrow

having a good heart
isnt that also

a great art

the ducks
from the park

wld fly over the stream

& landing they skidded
across the surface of the water
it is curious how they live in pairs

& by the side
of the road I found

the remains of a dead cat
spine exposed & its teeth

perfectly formed
the cat untoucht & unmoved

it must have been hit by a car

& died where it lay

it is springtime

the birds will build new nests

their songs will be sung
& heard

as though
for the first time

'long into the night'

long into the night
they were still celebrating

the fireworks
had ended but the music
cld still be heard as though from across

a great distance
from the opposite shore

of a lake the shore
where the different coloured lights

were reflected quavering
on the water the air holding the notes

& distorting them
there cld be a revolution

tonight somewhere
there must be revolutions

someone must be putting bombs
beneath the seats

of the populus

they wld write
for a moment we were awake

for a moment we were alive

the moon
was heavy with mist the mind was calm

and for a moment the threat
of violence was gone

noting the sensation
of calmness how each thought

dissolved into a last thought of calmness

the music receded into the night

there must have been people dancing
and forgetting who they were

the mind was calm
and moved closer to calmness
than it had been for a long time

there must be revolutions tonight
everything must be changing

'again it is night time'
again it is night time
by the time
we were home
it was raining heavily
after visiting the gallery
we sailed along the rideau
canal it reminded me
of returning to saanen from italy
I stood alone
on the back of the train
one old touch
the trees they were thick
& grew close to the tracks
one looks for the simplest
form of expression something
not different
from the content
it was a clear day
but when we were ready
to leave
it began to rain
we sat in the back
of the car
the countryside was green
& it was good to be together
in switzerland.
people would wave to the boats & trains
people waved to us
as we sailed on the canal
all art
does not come from the heart
it wld be innocent to think
this or that only good people

can create great art

& yet I cant help
but believe this to be true we had

seen judd's exhibit
there was a

nice piece by pollock
van gogh's irises & a quilt

by joyce wieland

will we create
a simple art an intelligent

art not separate
from life

an art that gives back

life for life

heavy with leaves the branches

hung over the water

a bird flew beside the boat

for a second the quiet seemed

to be a part

of everything

FIRST SNOW STORM: Han-shan

as though the world had become this
had become the wind

and the wind contained nothing
but snow

the snow that sticks
to the windows

is as good as any poem Han-shan ever wrote
it is a cold day

and the cold pierces to the heart

in china the songs of Han-shan are sung
by the children

the first snow
is like the sound of children singing

if it keeps snowing like this
maybe we'll stay home

and study Han-shan's poems

maybe we'll study the patterns
the snow leaves on the windows

or do some painting
it is good for the heart

to paint
or to read the poems of Han-shan

better than reading
buddhist sutras

contained in an amphora/ with smooth stones/
& clouds/ is the sound/ of your name

bits of glass
hanging from a tree
is the sound
of your name
when the wind
passes thru it

a seagull glides
with the wind
as it passes over
our heads
it is seen wearing
a string of beads
& calling your name

when your name
becomes an echo
it is most like
glass touching against
glass or a red
cloud that seems
illuminated from within

when I dream
of red black & blue birds
flying around my shoulders
they are all
singing your name

JAPANESE SCREENS

1)

the window
is a japanese screen
snow
clinging to the glass

2)

standing on one leg
black tree
in the snow storm

3)

sparrow caught
in the snow storm
cotton screen
against the window

4)

poplars creaking in the wind
bare branches
hitting against each other
sound of wood striking wood

5)

cleansing his ears
of worldly advice
the snow storm blows over

6)

one black tree
the world is a white
snow storm
the insects' voices
have been silenced

7)

the clacking loom
bones clacking
poplar creaking in the wind

8)

bent over
one long branch
touching the snow
old man
walking against the wind

9)

beating against the face
like grains of sand
we head into the storm

10)

walking across
the snowy field
sound of the mind:
footsteps across the snow

11)

the tree is a hunting bow
it bends in the wind
a sparrow falls out of the sky

12)

there is no noise
in the trees
the wind blows
but inside the
wind
there is only silence

13)

lie down in the snow
two bodies
becoming the same thing

'when I am too full of memories'

when I am too full of memories
as these rooms are too full of books
often when I go walking
I can leave all this behind

how much like an old friend
autumn has become
with the colours and the shortened days

the streets are covered with dead leaves
and the coat I wear
is black and old

I have come to love the feel of the rain
against my skin and my clothes wet
when home, there is hot tea and something to eat

how short the days have become
like my shortened walks
as we grow older, and have less to say
to people who never listen to an old man
or the sound of birds

there is no ending to words but silence
in one day, the trees have lost every leaf

on the death of Max Ernst

Max Ernst has sprouted wings

they were tiny green things at first
& it was spring when he ended

his earthly voyage we never
went into this life thinking we wld

live forever we always knew
that it is a momentary thing

& that what we create outside of ourselves
is the action

which allows us to be alive
& is the significance of this life

with a thought of Max Ernst
let us continue as artists of life

& as artists of light the essential
clarity of vision

& to those among us
who are purveyors of death
what we always direct at them finally

is the cold back of walking away

()
'because reality is too much'

because reality is too much
to handle

we have thought up
ingenious ways of avoiding it)

new languages
the colour of

coca cola the taste of
ground glass even the

letters of the alphabet
have been redesigned

for an A we now
draw a mayan pyramid

with at least a thousand
blood sacrifices dont

draw a heart you dont
know what you're getting into

O

'there are seashells and cats'

there are seashells and cats
and on the beach which is a line

of grey sand there are people standing
where the sky meets the earth

if there was a photograph
it wld show 30% earth and 70% sky

if there was a photograph
I wld place you in it

standing in front of a white house
just behind where the photograph was taken

and inside the white house
there are empty rooms and quilts

and you are saying "reason over passion"
in 40 foot high letters as I take your picture

when it is developed all we see is the white house
and think how silent it is with only

the sound of the sea
and a seagull circling over the white house

and then flying back out to sea
where it circles a fishing boat

in one room is a lobster trap
and a mantel and on the mantel

are shells that you have pickt up on your daily walks
there is one room which is filled with rocks

that you have collected with smoothness and
roundness in mind

later you took these rocks to montreal in a truck
& had a show which was documented with photographs

and these photographs now lie in a drawer
in that white house

in one window which has caught your reflection
and seems to hold onto it like a negative

there is a cat sitting and watching you walk along
the beach and I am taking your photograph

in your hand is a shell that you pickt up
and I have arranged rocks on the beach so that

they read "leave off fine book larning"
and I am taking all of these photographs

which I tack onto trees and we watch the rain and wind
wear them away and wonder abt the passing years

and some photographs I drop into the lobster trap
and you take it down to the sea and when you return

they have dissolved in the salt water
there is a quilt lying on the bed and in the quilt

there is a sleeping cat
and as I turn to photograph the house

she rises and yawns
and you have your children whom you teach to draw

and they are walking with you along the beach
and I do not take any photographs of myself

but once I caught a likeness
reflected in a pool of water

it is an image I sometimes catch
among all of the images I have had of you

NEW YEAR'S DAY 4AM

to have one image
of you

is still too many
& yet with each word

the image is there
the image that lies

behind the image
the image forming

already in our minds

as though
life lived this way

has always been
a memory

a remembered existence
made up of nothing

more substantial
than syllables and vowels

when will thinking
end & all the

trees blossom into
white flowers

& perfumed breezes
or the snow

be nothing but snow
the first fall

remembered clearly

under your arm
were the chinese

paintings of bamboo
the christmas lanterns

in st henri park
were still in the quiet

night
some people

paint only the bamboo
& use only black paint

the snow is falling
on our lives

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