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THE PRINCIPLES OF PHARMACY

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ABSTRACT

THE PRINCIPLES OF PHARMACY

By

Stephen John Bodnar

These poems are, in part, an effort to recapture for ourselves the spontaneity, intuitiveness, and wonder inherent in the child – the neglected child living deep down inside of us. It is an attempt to lift this child out of his long hibernation and bring him to the foreground of our consciousness so we can once again keenly and playfully see the world through the child's imaginative eyes, and to use the child's words, images, and dreams to reveal this vision. These poems simply seek to reintroduce the child to the man, in the hope of uniting them – us – into one complete self-fulfilling human being.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POTTED GERANIUMS

the geraniums sit next to
the living room window where
they get plenty of light from
a western exposure

I'm reminded of this fact, again,
dozing here on the couch
my eyes closed, contented in this warm
private moment of being half awake or
half asleep
I can hear footsteps, and then the sound
of water being poured, girgling slowly,
seeping into the soil particles,
crackling softly
for the hidden roots
the geraniums instinctively wake-up
after being watered, and
in their first dazed moments of consciousness,
in the silence of the room,
I can smell their unsure redgreen babblings
the wood-sharp tangy dialect
they talk to each other, but they
speak to me
of the wet black dirt. the thick

crooked stems, and even of
the few water drops slipping down
the sides of the sun-faded orange clay pots

but too soon, it has all become too familiar
to me
the geraniums are muffled by and mixed with
the brick walls and the wooden chairs
I become restless in the quiet of the living room,
where the first movements are the
curling of my finger tips
and the first sounds are the
whisperings between my ears and my eyes

THE SUN IS A BELIEVER IN THE IMAGINATION

At dusk, the sun – that beautiful star –
Puts on fiery rouge; and tonight she has on a
Powder blue dress that trails as far as the eye can see,
And a purple veil that hangs over part of her face.
The moon has now appeared over her shoulder;
He takes her hand. They have been invited to a Grand Ball
Somewhere among the millions of galaxies in the sky.
I want to take a picture of her with my camera from this
Balcony: capture this blushing beauty with a single frame
Before she leaves. But when I return from my room with my
Gadget, she isn't there; I only see the tail end of her
Blue gown after she has quietly slipped out the back door.

FOR BLUE JEANS

What a silly name for a kitten, but I think you are a
funny little kitten
And yet sometimes, I don't think you are a kitten at all
With your all white furry body, you look like you've
just been snowed on and when you melt you will really
be a turtle or a raccoon underneath
Sometimes I think you are a Brontosaur because you
stretch your neck into all my potted plants and give
them a good chewing over
When you jump for the hanging ferns you remind me of a
porpoise leaping out of Seaworld
I have delicate scratches all over my hands and arms
from our play together
Last week I found you asleep in the clothes hamper
I think you are a snake when you slither under the couch
and ambush my feet when I walk by
When you attack my waving hands in open spaces you are a
bull tipping the charge off by lifting, then curling
your right front paw
You are an eagle when I inspect your claws
And I think you are a parakeet when you say meow
You don't eat canned kitten food, you don't even play with
toy mice filled with catnip
Three days ago I found you asleep in the bathroom sink

The way you climb furniture and balance on chair backs
and window sill ledges, I think you are a mountain
goat
When I clean your ears you meow like a lion
I believe you feel like a mosquito when you tip-toe on
my arm
Cats are supposed to have nine lives
But my God! how are they distributed in you?
What animals do you share your lives with?
I have only one life and you are a part of it
I believe that you think that you look like me
You didn't cry when you got your first shot, which makes
me think you have skin like a rhinoceros
You're alert to every new sound, but can't you see by now
that my wiggling fingers are attached to my arm and
my arm is attached to me?
They are not independent curiosities that sneak up on you
like flies or mice, but extensions of my hand, the
playthings to my heart
I believe you are a piranha the way you like to bite
my wrist
My friends tell me kittens are nice but they lose their
charm when they become cats
But how can this be true when you are made up of so many
animals?
Yesterday afternoon you curled all four paws under yourself

and tucked your neck into your body before falling asleep on my stomach

I will always love you because I can sense the feline in me, and because I think you have given at least two of your lives to the turtle within you

THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF MR. BROCCOLI

Mr. B had a three-piece suit with a brown briefcase in hand
And every day his dividends would grow and his stocks would
reflower again.
But early one morning decisions were made that would bring
this state to an end,
Out in the street he was mugged by a hoe
Out of his head he let his briefcase go
At the corner but in front of the bend.

Picked and bundled, washed and cleaned, his hurt began to
mend. He was cut in small pieces, tucked into crates, and
became like a child again.
It is in the can, where the tin is shining, that he knows
the riddle of growing,
For without the roots and the stalks
Or the green sounds when he talks
He knows by simply not knowing.

Carefully now, he is brought back home, where the process
cannot be arrested
His smile is shy and he is taken inside where he sits and
is slowly digested.
Yet dispersing in the stomach he is breathing still, so he
can't be in the past tense,

Though he had been seen

And he had been creamed

He reappears in a different sense.

ADMONITIONS TO A YOUNG COWBOY

Buffalo rumble across the plains
Indians are lightfooted
Prarie clouds are quiet and rumbling
If you look, look carefully,
    they might be falling

Desert sun-winds neither come nor go
If the West is too hot, look to the East
Northern water ducks fly Northeast to Southerly
If you listen, listen closely,
    they might be calling

        Cowboys shoot up cowgirls
        Cactus and cacti needle each other
        Hot roses show themselves off

Empty cans, bottles, old trees, and silver coins,make targets
Gunslingers practice on cowboys
He will not be stalling
If you show a badge, show it quickly,
    he might be drawing

Bad guys can slyly sneak up on you
If you cock an ear, cock it upward

When barrels click, you know they're coming
If you shoot, shoot low,
    they might be crawling

ELECTRIC BLUEBIRD AGAIN AND AGAIN

I am a bird lover
though, some birds I love more than others
The sedan ostrich and the languid pheasant do not
interest me, and birds like the butter knife eagle and
the baseball Phoenix only occationally do
I more or less go for the species that includes the
rectangle blackbird or the electric bluebird

Yet when I see this bluebird, this uneven genius,
one half of his life I have to guess at because he
flies too high for my eyes to follow
Though I am a bird lover, I am not a bird watcher:
I have no binoculars, no telescopes, no radar
But this little ball of high powered energy – she is
more than a falling star, or a shell fragment projectile,
or a thrown stone, she moves upward
with purpose and desire, blood churning with a normal
body temperature already at 125°
She is closer to pure spirit than anything else
Climbing straight up, sunward, wings extended,
eyes narrowed,
short piercing gasps leave her songbird beak as the
heat increases and the color gradually changes on
her pilot light, and then again

turning blue feathers to yellow feathers to
orange feathers to blue feathers to white,
until only a smudge of sound, aflame, somewhere
around the sun, is left

I am a bird lover
although I am not a lover of birds
There is nothing fancy or pretentious in my feelings
I know she will eventually come back down to earth,
dodging electric telephone wires and garage weather vanes
to perch on wood, because that is her nature
It is the branch that is flown back to again and again

Two related propositions:
wood attracts heat
repetition is the primary and most fundamental feature
of all form

With concrete ledges and plastic siding and other hard
surfaces surrounding you, you stand on the edge of
your feathers, bobbing your head, making quick eye movements,
and pecking at grub,
doing all the things flying birds do
so that flying is momentarily forgotten
And with the knowledge you have registered from your
various positions on twigs, garage peaks, and phone wires,

you take back up to the sky to recode

I am a bird lover
yet I only truly know two birds:
the tic-tac Canadian goose and the alarm clock oriole
One half of your life I have to guess at
I cannot see into your head to see how you have
digested what you've seen
I cannot dive under your plumage
I have no water goggles, no periscopes, no radar
Everything I am aware of, everything I know of you
is seen in your movements out on the wires and out
on the branches, until I am only conscious of my
own clumsy movement from the center of myself
outward to you
Surprising you into flying off so quickly that
I have to blink my eyes,
and then again

THE SAILBOATS

the sea was a beautiful
full blue
the brush strokes
refrained from painting white
capped waves
the sea was a flat, calm blue
the brush covered
the sky with the blueness of
the water
on the sea, the palette knife
painted the sailboats charcoal
because the blue had been
used up
shadows leaning against a field
of blue
looking as if a gust of wind
might blow them away

ODELIAS

Me and an older gentleman were relaxing by the pool, talking about a lot of little things. But I was getting tired listening to him carry on about his old girlfriends and his workshop tools. So I changed the subject.

"Do you read literature much?"
"Not as much as I should. But it's funny. You know what I remember most about what I've read?, what sticks out in my mind? It was some book either Rebecca or Withering Heights or something like that, and a lady was sick in bed, and it was Heathcoat or somebody who always brought in a bouquet of Odelia flowers into the room for her. And Odelias were thought to be poisonous or to give off a poisonous vapor, and if you breathed enough of this Odelia fragrance you would die."
"Did she die?"
"I don't know, I can't remember."

"What does an Odelia look like?"
"You see that bush over there in the corner against the brick wall?, that's an Odelia bush. The flowers come in pink, white, or red. There's a lot of them in the South. There might even be some as far North as Virginia, but not too many. There's a lot of them here in South Carolina."

"I see."

"It's funny that I can't remember what book I read that in."

"What's the name of that flower again?"

"Odelia."

"I'll have to remember that."

Odelia: a poisonous flower I don't know too much about.

RAIN SPARROWS

Daytime clouds are exhaled
by the sky,
they smell of what the
sky has eaten that day
Nighttime clouds are inhaled:
the ones that don't disappear
keep the moon and the bigger
stars company
Rain sparrows flew out of the
sky and landed in a small,
dying birth tree during a thunderstorm
Some left the tree to fly to the hood
of a clean, green car
When I see clouds, I want to hug them,
like children who limit themselves to
dreaming their words

IDEAS AND IMAGES

are not black and white
like the small apple that had
been in my little stoop refrigerator
for almost two months,
it was beginning to look
and taste
like a soft, ripe plum

last night, in the early
hours of the morning,
the sky was a peculiar gray -
like the cotton gray away uniforms
of the old baseball teams
before double-knit brights became
popular for even out-of-town games

for readers who are not baseball fans,
or simply cannot remember the old uniforms,
the sky only had a peculiar, implicit,
shade of gray

ideas and images -
there is no comparison
it's like apples and plums

IMITATIONS OF THE CHINESE

The swirling west wind scatters the luscious autumn
leaves to the four corners of the earth
The rushing north breeze bends supple spring
boughs together
The warm southern wind eases the geese toward
their new home in winter
The patient east wind curls the cool coastal summer
waves back onto itself
But all the winds of the world cannot persuade
us to do what is natural

THE DECLINE OF PERSPECTIVE

"You can feel my leg" she said flatly,
"but don't go past my knee."

Dimly lit inside, she sat with her back to a large dark
wall while looking left toward the women's restroom.
He sat next to her with his head turned slightly upward
in the opposite direction where a huge green plant in a
basket hung from the bar ceiling.

An almost empty pitcher of beer stood on the black table.
A band of thin bright gold lined the bottom.
One of his hands held the glass handle, the other
couldn't be seen.

A waitress, standing against the wall to their right,
held empty pitchers in each hand, while staring
casually under their tabletop.

LONG DISTANCE RUNNER

The spring runner follows lone suburban routes,
past piles of freshly stacked lumber for incomplete
houses, white office buildings, musty weed fields,
modern brick apartments,
emptying the mind of everything except running form

After a cool summer night's rain,
brown speckled toads sit on the wet sidewalks.
In the warm, blue twilight, runners run
on their toes

Fall breezes smell like red October sun,
cool and familiar.
In late afternoon running form is digested.
Shifting winds blow from all sides, stirring up
old images and memories in a runner's empty mind.
Just over the office skyline, the sun turns redder
with each passing minute; with each step,
the winds become younger

Snow piles up on the sidewalks and streets,
and the newly formed ice sticks to the
cement curbs. Dreamer, you will be a walking man,
in the middle of winter

NO POEM

The apple is without its core
We listen for words that are quiet
And we are not singing anymore
We do not sing anymore

Memories are the only things real
We look for red-colored crickets
While listening in strawberry fields
We listen in strawberry fields

THE INDIAN GOLFER

Out of love
the American Indian bestowed upon each other
special names, emphasizing a unique characteristic,
the meaning blanketed in old tribal dialect
        barely translatable:
Crazy Horse, Man-with-sun-shining-in-eyes, man-leaping-
like-salmon-in-water.
If I gave a name to my father, I would call him,
Man-with-shoulders-strong-as-bulls.
The rest of his body might have been below par
soft stomach, stale cake knees
but after forty years of golfing, rotating and uncoiling
on his round blades, the shoulders developed
and then they retained their definition, suppleness,
strength.

Out of love
he taught me how to play and think golf - the game he loved.
The straight left arm on the backswing, the rhythmic swoop
of the legs in the follow through,
giving of his wisdom and skill, persuading me to drive
        the wedge and split the fairway with peace and
sureness, like the legendary hearts of the great Indian
animals of prey
who were infused with magic influence over the hearts

of their brother animals,
steeping me in golf lore
the myth of the golfer and his bag of clubs, and the reality
of the Sandman and Bogeyman,
yet providing me with spoon and masher and the power
to wield them
laughing, encouraging, arms around shoulders
walking the fairways to the greens.

But golf is, afterall, only a game,
players are needed and the rules call for an inevitable
end.
Few things, however, have remained straight for me since
that day, but at least my arm is where it should be
and sometimes over the course, when I'm alone, the ducks
link their wings together and fly in a spacial flint-head
over the wood mice and my temporarily lost ball.

But when the crows would scream overhead
and the wind seemed to be blowing backward,
the distance of his woods would make you smile
his irons flew true to the pinstick
his smile spoke of golf.
Now I speak for him

and he had shoulders
strong as bulls.

ELM TREES

The percolator chokes out coffee for two
While elm trees shade me
And elm trees shade you.

Hard, stiff branches, the warm wind blows
Telltale reminders of nights before
Her slipper dangles listlessly from her toes.

Vaporous green leaves inherit nature's blight
They dip, as your right leg crosses your left
And my left leg leisurely crosses my right.

Tired roots just sit and don't seem to care
As a cat knocks over the creamer of milk
And darts past our legs and the patio chairs.

I can see him hiding up a tree
While elm trees shade you
And elm trees shade me.

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN, REVISITED

In the realm of maybe this maybe that, where visions
Are images of things as they were, or still might be,
Her hair hangs over white fruits waiting to be seen
And in this vulnerable position she returns to me.

"Come over and see me and we'll have a good time
The blossoms are running and the yeast is shaking,
Let the sweet smell lead you to my sweet doorstep
Where the roses are blooming and the bread is baking.

"The way is easy - the bridges few - if you follow my lead
Harness stallions familiar with where they are going,
Saddle up your belongings with dreams and notions
And gallop on the road where moonlight is showing."

The carriage comes to a stop just around the bend
Apple trees line the path through her swinging front gate,
There, barking hounds can scent the wheels
Here, prancing white horses nervously wait.

For reasons known only to the wind and the trees
And the high powers that made her and sent her,
These moments in time trick our sense of direction
We blink our eyes - and we do not enter.

The black and blue berries that cover the bush
Are bittersweet shadows on our minds that stain,
But we hope one day life's infinite byways
Will meet in one single harmonious lane.

Until then, we pray to the most Heavenly Mother
As we travel our road from young to old,
So that we might cherish one thought, one notion
That the road not taken, is not a road.

ANGLE LIGHT

a plane of soft air
floats
where light and pale skies
drift aimlessly

in a light that is imprinted on light
white air unconscious of anything
but its own lazi
ness
knowing no bounds across the wide winded sky
caring for nothing
having little direction
but parallels somehow begin
to converge
vastness is patiently corraled,
gradually funneled closer
together by the sharper outline
of the horizon coming into view,
And the two opposite ends finally close
enough space to eye
each other's view

breathing becomes smoother and finer with
rhythm and tempo

as one plus one equals two:
parallels meet on a chance
or a dare, or are mathematically
predestined to do?

and this is when you first
met me
and when I first
met you.

A point in time when our thoughts were rhymed
And simple smiles were treasured
A point in time when our thoughts were lined
And our simple smiles were measured

It's funny how accurate a bow can bend,
using Newton's old tables and his
wrinkled chart;
how a random arrowed line can fly through
space and pierce a neutral heart
but for us and sides and squares points lines
rods dimentions space triangles acute obtuse diameters
through and voids invisibly angled,
together for a moment,
comes a time when the bonds
will loosen
and we're all

slowly un-tangled
for every action there's a reaction
for something saved, there's
something spent
as when lines converge to form a point,
they must unverge again

the hourglass makes for what
is lost,
or to use the mathematician's jargon,
we'll meet at length, at some point
in time, when our lines again will cross

like a sky-rocket exploding up above
the haze and glare slowly
expands apart as precision willingly
falls apart
dispersing like smoke
that's fated to
fade
away in the
light, or perhaps
to search
for something
newly felt from
vectors and angles

to look back one last time
where light on light
and white on white
resumes its purgatorial
crawling absent

mindedly outwards
in the vagueness
past now worthless equations
caring for little

except to cross

even once more
or
perhaps only

to bathe in the
shadows of distant

parallels

GO-GO DANCER '66

Gogh (go, gokh; Du. KHOKH), n. Vincent van (vin'-sent van; Du. vin sent' vän), 1853-90, Dutch painter.

gog·let (gog' lit), n, (esp. in India) a long-necked container, esp. for water, usually of porous earthenware so that its contents are cooled by evaporation.

go·go (gō' gō'), n. See à gogo.

à gogo (ä' gō' gō'), as much as you like; to your heart's content; galore (used esp. in the names of cabarets, discothèques, etc.): <u>They danced all night at the Mistral à Gogo</u>.

go'-go dancer. See shindig dancer.

shin·dig n. Informal. an elaborate or large dance, party, or other celebration. ? SHIN + DIG;

shin[1] n., v., 1. the front part of the leg from the knee to the ankle. See go-go boots.

ACORNS DROPPING

The acorns fell from the tree two houses away.
In the warm months they'd lie scattered over the
front lawn in the shaded area surrounding the tree trunk.

Always dropping.
Some even spilled onto the sidewalk for bicycles to
clumsily dodge.

After a rain they'd drop to the ground, one at a time,
in staggered intervals, landing with little plunking
sounds like the thump of a child's clenched fist into
a baseball glove.

They would fall from the tree tops, busting through
the wet leaves, making slapping noises, sometimes
careening off heavy branches before plunging to the ground
to roll over once or twice.

Face up in the wet grass they had hard tan shells,
shiney and smooth as polished apples.

Dad always shined his apples on his shirt before
taking a ferocious first bite.

It sounded like the hollow cracking of a walnut with

the nutcracker, or the sound the acorns made
when they fell from the top of the tree and collided
with the big branches on the way down.

Acorns dropping straight down onto branches
do not break like walnuts.
But we didn't want to see inside them anyway.

In a child's mind, acorns do not one day grow into
trees, nor are they made up of millions of molecules
arranged in a nutty way.

It is enough that they drop from a tree two houses away,
tan acorns, always dropping,
their hard smooth shells like polished apples.

FEBRUARY

melts all over the
  sidewalks and soaks
    my shoes

then it freezes again,

  soggy grass on the sides
of driveways harden
into deep tire tracks

 station attendants pump gas
  wearing lined jackets
    and gloves
   they bend over cars covered
    with white-gray soot
   and blow smoke from
      their mouths into air
 that already smells of cold
    exhaust and swaying
      traffic lights,
 small piles of dark snow
    stand behind the gas stations
soaking up carbon fumes
        from tailpipes

sparrows build nests on the
roof corners of buildings and in
between the wet cracks of faded red
brick walls,
but the robbins and cardinals
are too bright to
fly in -

the new year is growing up

January is already
looking to next year,
and wingless February is
melting again

RIGHT-ANGLED BROTHERS

for Bob and Chuck

We are right-angled brothers
The square of one of us is equal to the sum
of the square of the other two
Our lives are of varying lengths and degrees
but we are always there for each other, if need be
This law binds us together, having raised this
knowledge out of theory and into the world of
proof for twenty-three years now.

The right angle is the element of symmetry that
divides our spacial lives
You can point the tip of our triangle South, and
turn us through right angles to West, North, and East
You can separate us, but we will always rotate back
onto ourselves for friendship and understanding
because we are built on this relation.

We are right-angled brothers
The square of our love is equal to
the sum of the square of our hearts
For this, we thank geometry,
knowing the formula will work,
aware that it will last forever.

EUGENE, WITH BIG, BLUE EYES

The prepositions went strike because they felt slighted the sentence.

Where are you going in the rain?

The catfood is on the window counter.

Eugene, look closely in my big, blue eyes.

This isn't my true voice you're hearing, she said, because I've just taken cough medicine.

African Violets should be watered from the bottom.

My mind was in a constant state of agitation, I thought words were meant to be written.

Manet once remarked to a young painter.

Is it possible to think without first putting thoughts into words?

Take initiative by the horns!

They got sick on the sunspotted chocolates.

Photography revitalized painting in the mid-nineteenth century.

She loved to slip into comfortable words.

The language of mathematics is precise, I feel $\begin{array}{r} 347 \\ \underline{\times 126} \end{array}$.

He was a man who was a man who was a chain smoker.

Circa and/or irregardless.

At this point in my life liquor tastes better out of a

paper bag.
He himself had the idea of buying the potted plants.
Don't twist my words, she said.
I'm sorry. I'm O.K. I'm forgetful with Proper Names.
Her voice sounded like peeled apple skins.
I'm not anxious, but I am afflicted with anxiety.
Because a subordinate clause is so a complete thought.
My eyes needed glasses. I could not see through her mysteriously striking features.
Impressionism lasted twelve years and two months.
Here we go again, can I sit up front this time?

The thrown football was a peach pit; the blue air surrounding it, the juicy fruit.
I said I wanted to be like a child in many ways; you said you wanted life insurance when you got married.

The Buick needs new spark plugs.
The shifting flux of appearances.
I'm sorry about the window, my arm wasn't loose. Can I have my ball back?
The airplane left those silver and red feathers on the ground.
You excite me, I said. You're strange, and I'm definite.
Will you live with me, maybe, forever?
I'm not bizarre as a person, she said,

although my mind, at times, could be in a state of bizarrity.

1965

drops

down
with a rush,
plopping flat on its side
and spins a
unique vinyl
sound around whirling
     round and around smoothly
wide circles around
until finally
click
it is
   lifted up,
     twisted
gently,
flipped over
onto its other side
  and with a
    quick rush
dropped

down

to play

1966

MONET'S WATER LILIES
(THE COLOR POEM)

purple water lilies are
turned gold because
light reflects
off the blue-brown water

rust, yellow, peach
lilies separate the
red flower smudges from the
red water

two days ago the indigo blue
had completely disappeared
from the pond
but here, now,
it floated limply to surface
top diffuses around
pale pink lilies

green water plants air
mirror clumping yellow petals
maroon paint floating updown
lemon shakey blueberry old apple
orchids melon lime rinds
orange light through

water grape watery

of

against

ripples

wet

brush

lavender

are

floats

moment

gone

THE PRINCIPLES OF PHARMACY

To understand pharmacy, you must understand the practical application of physics and chemistry to medicines and their preparations.

To understand pharmacists, you must first understand vegetable drugs.

To master kite making, one should first become acquinted with ancient Chinese history, and then the basic mechanics of putting a kite together.

To understand the rules of baseball, you must first have sufficient money for a bag of peanuts.

You should follow baseball etiquette and stand for the seventh inning stretch, and then stretch.

Familiarization with the knuckleball and spitball is vital - most important, however, is knowing where the bullpen is, and what the ballplayers are doing there.

To understand the human heart, one should completely understand the workings of the common pump; and how tornadoes form, and when salmon spawn, and why apples can be red, green, or yellow, but oranges can only be orange.

It is necessary to understand the average yearly rainfall in Brazil before planting crops there.

One must become familiar with long summer drives at night, blue ice, and deserted windblown back alleys if one

wants, really wants, to understand the music of the sixties.

Tri-level houses must be understood from the top floor on down if they're to be understood at all.

Radio static, old 45's, pencil sharpeners, milk, sawdust, large animals, and homemade noodles are all intrinsically important and should be understood for their own sake.

I partially understand that fractions must be mastered before one can attempt calculus.

It is good to have an inkling that life passes much too quickly, in order to begin to understand the illusion of time.

To appreciate Van Gogh, you must understand red ants.

One needs to know carpentry before one becomes comfortable with straight back chairs.

To even begin to understand me, you need to have a rudimentary knowledge of wide arcs.

You're easily understandable by reading the newspaper.

It might be surprising to know that tennis balls can only be appreciated from the inside out. You should understand this.

On the other hand, it probably isn't surprising that large crowds can only be understood by observing theatre exit signs.

Brown leaves are invaluable to seeing through Romantic

types, as are peacock feathers, and exhaust pipes.

Scorpios and Capricorns can be understood by picking raspberries.

(Picking blueberries, however, only gives one the false confidence of feeling secure with the stock market.)

To understand people over sixty-eight, you must identify yourself with lounge chairs and unmarked medicine bottles.

To truly understand the taste of rubber bands, is to understand where it takes you.

I am totally sure that if you drink large quantities of salt water, you will understand the bad feeling in your stomach.

But I'm only 90% sure that understanding the mating ritual of the long-necked goose will help your love life.

The only sure-fire way to remember Lincoln's birthday is to understand and memorize the Gettysburg Address.

To understand the significance of the gross national debt, you must round fractions off to the nearest percent.

Comic books, 1961 Chevrolets, green eyes, rhubarb, bus schedules, the moment before it rains, and the smell of a just painted garage. To understand these is to understand more of life than you probably realize.

To thoroughly understand a volume of 1952 encyclopedias is to completely misunderstand who is president now.

Chimney smoke can only be understood by knowing the direction thrushes fly in winter.

The direction that smoke drifts in is naturally understandable to those who are interested in such things.

To understand the thin egg shell, you must understand the budding child inside. This can make you truly happy.

To understand the child, you must recognize the pharmacist's handwriting, and the ringing of the school bell.

DETROIT

I am from Detroit
    city
Motown, the Motor
    city
Friends, come sing with me
    what you will
But let us sing it
    acappella,
    on the street corners,
    in Detroit
    city

SAXAPHONE AND FLUTE

When the saxaphone wails,
I feel like I'm being tickled
in all the right places.
I see lowlife bars, cigarettes,
wet glass rings on dark tables,
furtive glances.
Punch-drunk, cool instrument,
playing muddy, rough sounds,
they jump out brown, copper, murky yellow.

The rounded, delinquent notes stick
in my throat and vibrate there,
then blow out my ears and nostrils,
warming them.
Rapid thumping in my chest, pulsating blood,
I feel immoral;
the noise loiters in my stomach.
I am an out of control car, a fire alarm;
manipulated by strings from above,
my shoulders, waist, neck, and legs
jingle in fantastic ways.

When I hear a flute shrilling,
I know it is clear and silver thin, glasslike,

cutting quickly through my head.
Proper, well patterned bright sounds,
they are here one instant but lost
in the air the next.
I think of bird calls, white shirts,
old cathedrals, combed hair, foreign cities,
mountain peaks.

To receive these windy-sharp sounds,
my ears leave home, my mind takes a
leisurely stroll down the boulevard.

PEAS, HARD-BOILED EGGS, AND SPAGHETTI

I will not care when I become old
I will do things I never did when
I was young,
Like asking for two dollars of
regular at the gas station to save
on my social security check,
and then driving home with both
hands on the wheel
I will wear cotton shirts with the
top button, buttoned
And a hat with a small feather
on the side
I will lace my speech with
"groovy," "atta boy!," and "eager-beaver,"
because I won't be concerned with
sounding important
I no longer will eat normal meals like
steak and baked potatoes, hamburger
and fries, or cottage cheese and salad
I will put together a dinner of
peas, hard-boiled eggs, spaghetti,
jello, and coca-cola, being uninterested
in calorie intake and balanced meals

The neighborhood kids will get together
when there isn't any urgent playing
to do and say, "Hey, let's
go over and see old Mr. Bodnar"
I'll serve them chocolate chip
cookies and lemonade, and tell
them about the old-time baseball
players who only made
one-hundred thousand dollars a year

It is also an old person's perogative
to give advice that is not
readily understood at the moment
I will tell my little friends
to remember these youthful days,
and to tuck the memories neatly
away in the back of their minds
for future use,
so that when they need to look
back, they can open heart trunks
and find what they want in
good working order

And of course, as an old man,
I am entitled to reflect on
my own life of pain and joy,

happy nevertheless for the life
given me,
and for having lived it to the
best of my ability

While watching television,
I am looking forward to casually
shaking a closed handful of
Spanish peanuts,
occationally loosening my thumb
and forefinger to toss a few
into my mouth
In the warm summer months,
I am going to lean back in a
comfortable chair on the porch
with a radio and a cold beer
beside me and fall asleep
with my mouth open,
my white hair damp on my forehead,
listening to the ballgame

THE LOTUS POND

Here
Around the silent pond
Everything shows reverence for
The Great Oneness

The turquoise water sways
To its own rhythm and nestles
Around the base of the earth-yellow thickets

Water bugs leap suddenly
Back and forth between
The sky and the green rippled water

And I
Sitting next to a single floating lotus petal
Say to myself
"Everything I do today is for you"

YOUNG THOROUGHBRED

Maples and oaks sway
lazily in the wind,
highlighting neat white
barns trimmed with the
royal blue racing colors

The smell of sweet honeyed
hay and sugar oats
drifts to the handsome old
white manor house,
overlooking white-paneled
fences that criss-cross
thousands of acres of
lush, rolling green
meadows,
where the broadmares
and foals quietly graze

Clumsily tottering on
pin thin legs,
knock-kneed
in the bending grass,
he pricks up his ears
and darts his eyes

when the older
colts race by -

balancing precariously on
unsure bones and tendons,
bred to run out
from under himself