

**THE URBANE**

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**A Thesis**

**Presented to**

**the Faculty of the Caudill College of Humanities**

**Morehead State University**

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**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Arts in English**

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**by**

**Kenneth H. Casper**

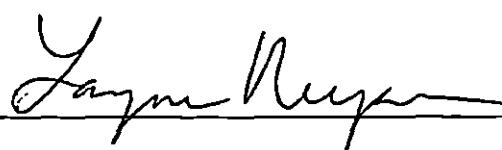
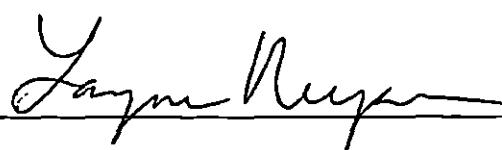
**May 8, 1997**

Accepted by the faculty of the Caudill College of Humanities,  
Morehead State University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master  
of Arts in English degree.

  
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Director of Thesis

Master's Committee: , Chair

  
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## THE URBANE

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Morehead State University, 1997

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The purpose of the thirteen poems contained in this thesis, THE URBANE, is to show the evolution of the existential male from his early childhood of perhaps seven years old into his mid-sixties. The poems offer the first person voice of the isolated male. Each poem contains several pages written in phrases and clauses that are simply painterly associations in the spirit of the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters. The philosophy of each poem is that a man is a self-contained universe that is in a state of flux, yet always remaining in the same isolated state. He is always pressing the glass shield that exists between society, other human beings, and himself; but he never has the power to break that shield. Each poem is a narrative piece of a life demonstrating the elastic nature of memories. Each poem is youth remembered in old age.

The poems are based upon readings of various French and German philosophers such as Sartre, Queneau, Nietzsche, and also Thorstein Bunde Veblen's

The Theory of the Leisure Class. At another level, the subject matter deals with what it means to live well, and discusses whether living well is the best revenge upon a society that rejects the outsider. It concludes that there are only two choices for the isolated man--living well or dying. Several of the poems were written in response to several Vietnamese songs that were recorded before the fall of South Vietnam. The writer does not understand the Vietnamese language; however, the music translated into a strong picture of isolation and waiting. Of particular interest to the writer was the music of a song titled Sao Anh Dành Quèn by a female singer named Thanh Tuyèn. Its sense of longing and resignation inspired much of the poetry contained in this collection. Also, the sensuality of the poetry comes from this longing and resignation of the characters portrayed. The conclusion of the poetry is that even though escape from one's isolation may be impossible, sensuality and allowing the past to break out in one's heart (Rilke) offer ways to live the good life.

Accepted by: George Eklund, Chair

Blanche Rogers

Layne Kupper

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English 699

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*Ars Poetica*

When creating joy,

Don't care about careful strokes

Because not every image or line

Needs to be a masterpiece--

Just a spot here

Underlined with belief

That may be true

Or may be testing

Mommy's and Daddy's patience

With your persistence

In wanting to be noticed,

Thoroughly enjoyed,  
As you enjoy being and seeing,  
Doing what delights our creators,  
The main thing to stress.  
Relaxing upon our spiritual couch,  
Softly flowing down from the sky,  
You watch the colors and the clowns  
An improvement is the circus.  
Sleep and search the philosophical  
For reasons and laughter are all the same.  
Just as failure comes before success,  
A dearly beloved is an accidental smear  
That becomes a disappointment  
Only when it is erased from our lives.  
Every accident creates a new shape  
To study and to amuse our short time  
With copulative stares that really care  
Whether someone is here or not.  
Ever an empty word  
Within the multitude of tongues and colors,

Within and without one person, one world,

The universe starts.

The North Star never moves

Except the individual eyes

Think what is just behind

Is possibly different or even the same

Seen from second to second.

Care not for what you shall eat or drink,

Run naked into the street

Once or twice a week

Clap wildly to a heathen song,

Watch the bees and the birds

Overtake some ancient stones

Discover who we are and why

Salamanders lick our toes

Skipjacks will never jump upon our hands,

Slimy worms are wherever flowers grow.

We dig through our lives to find

Nearby old Prince Albert cans with moldy coins.

Childish notes and maps tell of hidden treasures

Found with jaded jewels  
From Woolworths downtown  
Where I treated Rosalie my heart's desire  
Carried a special Bunn bar  
The edges nibbled all around  
By her grin  
Her mellow lips shared a soda once a week  
After art class after school.  
She stood by me on a crowded bus  
I knew the fire at five-thirty  
Burns in every boy  
Unveils many embarrassing dreams  
Never to come true.  
Not every image and line  
Needs to be a masterpiece--  
Just a spot here  
Underlined with belief  
May be true or testing  
Me and you.

**Mama Died the Other Day**

Mama died the other day

Papa went the other way

No more hoping

Dreaming of someday.

Hard times were the best.

They had the hope

We had less

No doubt

Life continues on

There's no relief

We all stand stout

Work our days

Towards magnificance

High magnitude

No fancy car

Clothes or food

Things can't be worse

The best is a possible

Snow in the air  
Get the vanilla  
A lump of coal  
Someone on the next pillow  
Warmth and laughter  
Fry two chickens  
Daddy gets half  
A thirty-eight Plymouth  
Business coupé  
Friday night drive-in  
A carload for one  
I take my gun and marbles  
Sissy takes her dog  
Her Revlon doll with formal dress  
Her big date.  
The speakers don't work.  
“What did they say?”  
“There's the swings  
Let's go play.”  
A Plymouth hand-painted blue

The black wore off with time.

The rumble seat was comfortable on clear nights

Three on the post

Two more in the back

Sissy needs the bathroom

In the middle of Silvery Moon.

Someone's kissin'!

A catchy tune

“Play with fire

You'll reap a fire.”

These are dangerous places

You got to watch yourselves

Dirty-old men, fire-lit boys.

“Those girls in front ain't got no poise.”

“Whatever are they doing?”

“Whatever it is

Is a bad idea

You get the future that you now live.

All the shaft shakes out in the end.”

“I want a hot dog.”

“No you don’t.”

“Look what I found!

An old toy frog.”

“Hey, that’s mine!”

Loudly said.

It’s eleven o’clock.

“Mommy, I want to go to bed.”

“After this movie ends.”

“Maybe we should leave early.”

Those people moving at once

Start the engines

A hundred cars play tag.

Sissy naps on Mom’s lap,

I sit in the back inside.

The moon has been stolen

By angels dressed as clouds

The road is empty

After the initial flow.

Sleepy families, worldly kids

Imagine all is grand

We pull into the drive  
A grassless area in the front  
No lights burning  
Nobody's home  
The dog barks at every sound  
Ghosts don't appear  
I know they're near  
Me and Sissy run towards the door  
Wait nervously for Mama  
To find a key hidden in the bottom of her purse.  
The chill is a grave surprise.  
Inside the lights reveal a welcome sight  
Of worn furniture and happy dog.  
Papa falls into his favorite chair  
Tells me to turn the TV to Channel Eleven  
Where a man holds a sandwich.  
“Remember, it’s the big one,” says he.  
“Take it from Dick Hageman here.  
This is the genuine thing.”  
He takes a bite and tells us,

“Stop in real soon for the genuine

Double decker hamburger delight.”

Sissy goes up the stairs with Mama

Daddy tells me to get to bed.

I try to con Mama for more up time

I never ask Daddy

I don’t know why.

He’s just so big--so big.

“Fall asleep.”

I fall asleep

Feel so all alone.

Today Mama’s gone--

Air in time is thin.

**The *Apache* Dancer**

I have a dancing doll

Name of Dancing Doll

Stands upon my shoe tops

We tango in empty rooms

Her hair is blond

Finely groomed

Atop a face smiling

Always says the perfect things

While drinking cola, tea

Ginger ale never fails

Conversation in perfect silence

Grape juice swills in my glass

A slow walk

A fine French lass

Spins around into the air

By the owner of this joint,

I'm Pierre

Who wears one white, one red sock.

This is one sentimental jock

Wearing his sister's nylon underpants

The music starts the advance

That soldier charms them all

Crude, raw courage

Swings that doll every way

During the night, never in the day.

Come to me dear and kiss

This man, your master, blissful thing

Swing into a dip

Fly to the wall

I dearly love my dancing doll.

Short gray beige childish dress

Black tight pants and pullover

Beats continental musical

Words smooth

She flies away to the wall

One smile Dancing Doll.

Dance is simply art

Depart from my arms

I grip her back to my front

Paint my notes ritually

Always bang before the king

Dancing Doll will have two.

Doing things seen on TV,

Done in alleys in Paris and Argentine.

Dancing Doll come to me--

Show passion anger--speak French

Say anything.

Dancing Doll

Please always smile

At seven-year old boys coming of age

With dreams of being on the stage

Tomorrow stretches time

The dreams remain.

Just fling and swing

Sip tea and chips

Gluttonous talk of true love

Knows this bedding genet has been

An empty young boy's room

Where my own dancing doll

Casper 14

Read from Golden Books,  
Dancing Doll poises upon a stool,  
A straw drools as Pierre inhales  
Warm cold grape tea sweetened  
Poor pretty words to Dancing Doll--  
Time is circumcised when I'm thirteen.

**My Marie Ellen**

My Marie Ellen

I long for you.

For times

When we upon the grass

Watched the horses and the elephants

Parade across the sky

Blue background and cotton faces.

The anger of my mother and father--

Without their knowledge one fall evening

You shouted to me from the window of a city bus

During its initial run through the suburbia

Of my pre-school youth

In forty-nine

I should come aboard

Ride with you

A free treat in my heart.

There were other kids

Just you and me

That were there.

Casper 16

Share a dime Bluebird Pie

Sip a nickel Royal Crown

Play with ladybugs

As evening sets

Your older brother I would watch

With puzzlement

Why he ignored beauty such as yours.

"I'm going to be a movie star

A doctor after hours."

"I'm going to drive a truck

They give me free candy

When I ride with my dad."

We ran after robins in your yard,

Wrote times, times, times, true love

Upon the new blacktop road.

Oh!

Why do we have to get old?

Pull the blankets over my head

At thirteen all goes serious--

I fear my manhood

You your virtue  
They disappear with time,  
Unplanned naked feelings--  
A dead crayfish bled our hearts  
A time when all was new  
Adventure and joy was known  
The sun shined while it snowed  
We only feared red cars,  
We were very sure,  
Without one doubt and less evidence,  
Search the country low and high  
For youthful blood  
To keep witches and ghouls alive.  
I sure wished we had a pony to ride.  
Did you know my goldfish did die?  
We shared an apple and some grapes  
Your mom served with cookies and milk  
Sneaked to Timber Lake  
With packing string and poplar twig  
On private property to fish

A sunfish for a dinner wish

A pet to add to the others--

A dog, a cat, and a stuffed bear.

"You be the daddy and I the mom

Who will work to care for our son, Tom."

"I'm a knight and Tom is eaten

By a dragon."

The poverty of growing up

A breech in solitude

Not known when things were clear.

A rabbit is me and a squirrel is you.

You hop around, and I climb a tree--

Are you there still

My Ellen Marie?

**Double My Time to Waste**

I walk this street

Sun above me

Moon on my head

A cloud rains

Clear beauty there

I wave the guys

Kiss the girls

Simple life

Life it is.

Kiss my lips my pretty face

Smile timeless taste

Slow down

Half speed

Double my time to waste.

I follow some chick

Nose stalks the wind

With my Kodak

I whistle and click

Do it some more

Casper 20

From now on

Never be poor

More little pucker

One more kiss.

Kiss my lips my pretty face

Smile timeless taste

Slow down

Half speed

Double my time to waste.

**Lust-Teen 1959**

Have I told you  
Or perhaps it is not appropriate  
To tell anyone my dreams  
When I am alone with you.  
Things you would never think  
I would do with you alone--  
Talk those boy-drawn words,  
Sit in bus station booths,  
Wait till the next morning with my shameful blush  
While I pass you quickly glance  
Cunning lingo smelling musk,  
Laughing at jokes that friend Jack  
Coughs while I view the scene  
Hoping that no person knows  
What the eye sees when asleep  
I ride that horse's frozen reign  
In heated jungle wishes  
Conspiring senses swell  
Organ music breathes short accents in long violence

Glass passages of labyrinthodonts

Ingenues dancing on every side

Know not me from a pass

Only one to know is me

With certain looks

I know you say no

Except at that moment

Testing drones on and on

Over and over I ride the roe

Coming never going.

Things I've heard of Bonnie

Down the street

I pass, stand, and leer

Blush across my face

God help me fight it all

At night through the glass

Her heat calls tender secrets

I don't want to know but long

Legs get down all fours

Into the heat I ride more

That story of her deeds  
Stand in the second story window  
For boys with Christmas cameras  
Search for Easter's shine  
Brownie Hawkeye always with me  
Blush, hope, and never see  
Upon this running horse  
At night when asleep, she waves  
Twists and turns in every way  
A horse dream with no face  
Fifteen, Bonnie thirteen  
Laugh, the stories last  
Watching other girls behind leering masks  
After school trips down and around  
Apparel department through soft sounds  
Scents on cosmetic ladies  
Foundation for long quick looks  
At dancers in dressing rooms  
That catch me occasionally  
The rear leer of a fat woman,

A quick slap of the curtain  
I adjust dreams to her size  
Bonnie is standing there.  
Into confections for sweet scents  
Bon-bons and éclairs busting out  
I shout and grab this horse.  
She stands in a tunnel  
Every night we run two  
Swim pretty closer  
Please the passion fire  
Oh dear God forgive weaknesses  
I never drink liquor, never cuss  
Turn what I long to do  
Pick fresh pears and melons in silk fields  
Not to touch, you understand,  
Just look and watch and stare  
Secrets of every mother and sister  
Through keyholes I look some more  
Ride down slow  
Strange things control

Heart flies with discovery thoughts

Passion's aftermath caught

Fingers point and all laugh

Two-piece suits at Coney Island's pool

Fat women romp and play

With tiny children who wear more

Things young boys ignore

Run insane my horse

Burn in Hell like every fool

My mother asks if I'm well

I lock my door

Dream sin's sensations

Revel in my secret

Popular Photography collection

A face that I know

At school, church, in secret glances

Sunday in the church balcony

To view a cusp from above

I look as I ascend every staircase

Discover secrets I know there

Disappoint every glance

Well in advance I know

All is covered and nothing shows

Not even bare toes

She raises high at night

Waves me come

Come bye bye

The first time I find

The pupil does not need the eye

Closed every night

Can see more

To keep my soul's blazing guilt

Abhorrent scenes behind closed doors

No face, no names, just some more

"Come here, come here

I'll take some more."

The horse froths in the trough,

Contralto voice cries in my dream--

"I know my diary's beneath your bed.

You read it, you're one dead fool."

Casper 27

The sound--a familiar secret continuous lure.

My sister knocks and shouts outside my door.

### **The Fall of Sixty-Two**

The fall of sixty-two

November second and cool

as any weather feels before death,

as any body nourished with sun

depressed with reminders

that I don't have a meaning

without a job, without a goal

like that city living on dreams--

the wheels spin, the dice roll,

Club Silver Slipper has pretty girls,

the shouts are heard by me

shut them down today

get on with something better--

what is better is what no one knows

try to obey the rules

don't have what they want

they tell me where to go

they tell me I've no sense,

Club Embassy has taxi dancers,

three bucks a song--  
they shout to shut it down.  
  
The fall of sixty-two  
times of prosperous action  
appear in the signs of the clubs  
blinking telling all that this is gay--  
  
others tell of jobs some  
where salaries are high  
skill is gained  
signup and earn  
big commission checks--  
sell those books  
every door asks with authority--  
why don't you get a job  
not bugging people  
enjoying late night life--  
see what you're saying  
anger speaks  
it's your supper  
you have three minutes

Casper 30

to get out of here  
or I'll get my rifle--out the door  
you damned fool.  
  
The fall of sixty-two  
politics in life  
Christian ways godly lives  
we stand four square  
wipe out the trash  
let them sweep the floors  
future's fear blinking wildly--  
the nation's in danger  
you waste our time  
go get a job, make it  
the world has no place  
for losers and commies  
with no experience, no knowledge  
right things, noble truth  
go to the army, learn a trade  
your duty and our favor  
something will turn up

Casper 31

simple truth  
makes us great  
hard work, dry vermouth.  
The fall of sixty-two  
bearded men hurt us  
the sheer nerve  
to seize the clubs where we play--  
God bless this venture  
clean our city, kill Castro  
prosperity hooked to bodies  
killed out joy we can't have here  
play the wheels, pull the corks  
save young things we all pork--  
expect to receive a living  
working if you're not the best?  
Shut him down, the sins of our city  
clean it up and provide  
clean, godly environment for our children--  
return Havana a few years ago  
where vacations and freedom flowed--

tales told of my last trip  
see stars, ten year old girls  
for a few bucks worked their all--  
we came home  
none the worse  
a clean city ours, yours, God's  
forgive their sins  
did I tell you where I've been?  
It's rock and roll, feel the pig  
in Havana god can't see  
in our home, nowhere else.  
In sixty-two the sores raw,  
weather cooled November--  
turn on the heater in this car  
there's frost on the window at two a. m.  
Gears grind and jam  
some power is there  
the steering has none--  
scrape the windshield  
steer the Ford

Casper 33

a pole in the road.

I'm in the school yard seeing nothing--

Eighty-five cents per hour to train

washing dishes, scrubbing floors

fifty-two Ford, nineteen clear, ten won at poker

the check was a royal flush.

In sixty-two the girls

work as carhops, after hours

a hundred or fifty slipped her hand

in a numbered napkin

after work tonight going

Flamingo Club, see a rock band.

Would you care to go?

After hours journey agreed

places all wanted shutdown,

God-fearing clean town

dark rooms glow of pink

loud music, lax ways

work by nights, sleep by days.

In sixty-two they go to school

dream miracles and booga-lou  
fifteen winners, eighty-five lose  
sent to find a job  
girls in restaurants as carhops  
guys in the army with rakes and mops  
got the money go to school  
if you had none then you had none  
whispers came through the air  
watch out for the Russian bear  
will grind life into the ground  
lucky to live here  
freedom just work hard become rich  
sticky words in a ditch  
Psalms of praise the promise is  
repeat the answers forget the questions  
love God, country, fun--  
no girlfriend? I have no job.  
Strange I know the problem  
if you looked harder  
you know what to do

Casper 35

**laziness makes you a fool.**

**Save Havana from that man.**

**Walking Eve to Dawn**

I walk through the streets at night

Seeking that one face that is right

Tripping upon the sidewalk cracks

While listening to the sounds

Pleading for lonely hearts

to come on in

Meet the dream of the soul.

I keep on walking along

Watching for just the right one

The lights blink off

On through the hours

Stopping in coffee shops for a rest

I think of the one that I'll meet

Inspired by the lovers in the booths

They make my heart sad

Blinking lips whisper silent

Feeling that I'll never hear

Moments of pain and joy

Hours of hungry prayers

Screaming to the sky  
Saxophones keep groaning  
Tunes familiar to lovesick ears  
Men waiting for hands of care  
Acting like unknown stars  
Cool poise, straightened backs  
Hide what each man lacks.  
I'll just keep walking the streets  
Listening to the alley drains  
Pour out my last bit of blood  
That longs for bondage  
Without reckless vigor  
Cars pass me screaming their tires  
My heart ticks off the hours  
Early eve Hopes  
Sink with Sunday dawn  
I sit by my window at home  
Wonder at my lover  
Constantly an unknown  
Days, weeks, months

Turn into another fruitless year.

I grip the spoon and pull

Sweet tastes to my quivering lips.

Next week will be the one

Nights will not be so alone

Saxophones will play,

Walk, wait for that day

In eve's unseen stars

Screams of tires

From eve to the coming dawn

Seeking one right face

The same old thing repeats silence.

### **The Figure Model**

What makes you different

From any other ornament that I want to sketch,

Aside the fact that you move freely from shadow to sunlight

Speaking silly words and phrases like a woman

Acting innocent of any knowledge of the passions

That cause men and women to break each other,

Steal any spiritual substance to be

Thought in living being is still quietly rare

Blood runs quickly through our cheeks

Dries when it meets the air

Seeps into the face--

Two revealing faces

Unsure what is right must be done

Given circumstances and company

Of items desirable for charcoal and pencil

Even though you have a model's same name

You do not come close to the magazine perfection of her

When uncovered is covered with magic--

Magic is what makes her desirable.

I suppose we all wish for magic at fifty  
To cover the face and smooth  
Marks that tell past deeds of birth, torment, worry.  
Hesitate to be her for two or three hours  
Once a week you say it is the last time to be ashamed  
Of your stretch marks from two births  
Given you by a former husband with a side of silver.  
Black long hair used to bewitch  
Now gives a dull glitter in the shine  
Moves with you between the screen  
To the sofa covered with several white sheets--  
A shy look from you gains a grin from me  
A quick wave from your two arms  
Engulfs the blue terry cloth robe  
Into the air into the chair.  
I had a large mirror before you came  
To see the light procreate its own rays  
Procreating reminders to you  
Of your function as every person has and knows  
It seems unique to each person alone

Act as is dictated by the Sun  
Within the mirror we all shall do.  
The first time you tripped your steps,  
This time is uneasily sure of what must be  
The flaws that every woman has  
Lumps and indentation on the rump  
The breasts that once fed children  
Are far too large  
Signal that a mother you're meant to be  
Reubens found those like you  
Classic and wondermeat.  
I find your flaws less romantic.  
My words are neither cruel nor kind  
For every female is worth two glasses of wine--  
Chablis for pity, dry burgundy for lust.  
I give to you while standing here  
An inspecting eye, a heated sigh.  
Charcoal that beautifies beyond truth  
Beseech eyes to grip you calmly firm,  
Reenforce the wonder of nature, divinity to question

Casper 42

Why we fear to show wonders given to us all.

**Courbet's Grotto**

In just one day

We sped along

An uncertain destination

A well-travelled road

Thinking of nothing

That is and will

Be an opportunity

Avails in time

Through the cloud cover

Lawless beauty

Soon as I grip it

Reason stops for excuses

We lie upon the ground

High in thoughts

Pry for hints

Allowing us to proceede

Beneath the cover

Into foliage

Covers rare caves

Hides unrealized life

Unasked questions

Vague answers

Quiet, still,

Continue digging

Find a cover opening

Uncertain finger trip

Towards beginning

With Gustave Courbet.

Courbet gives

Worldly surprises

Thrills Turks

Commissioned us

To travel with our eyes

Well-known secrets

Live in the oils

Probe the world

Beneath the cover

Open canyon

Oxyacetylene lit

Hammer beating  
Moving down to move up  
A smile motivates mood  
Hide in the clouds  
Scents of oxyacid  
Covered with Song Number Five  
Around two mountains  
To the top  
Easy climb  
Soft rest  
Exacting breath song  
Each bellow breathes  
Sing the passage  
Forever lasts the minute  
Rolling fields  
Dips into a crater  
Served its purpose  
In times past  
severed, deserted now  
The clear plain

Brown grasslands  
Lit fires  
Found words  
High Sun heats  
The day in its midst  
Forever rattles my tools  
Hammer, claw, tongue  
Through brown grasslands  
Into a clay canyon  
Slightly covered  
Seminarian foliage  
Red sea parted by the tongue  
Soft claws pulled forth  
Darkness  
Paid for treasure  
Longed for immortality  
Comprehends no reason  
Pain, struggle  
Bring them  
Control probe

Continues the negative

Until it becomes positive

Rain within

Moves explorers

Without hesitation

Semimystical vesicle

A voice calls for retreat

Up the face of the canyon

Over the grasss

Between living mountains

A bite here, a whisper there

Soft claw

Hammer steady force

A semimetal probe

Mines the spirit

Within grotto lobes

Apartment and gynophore

Common adventure of human lore

Rare caves

With question asked,

Answers vague,  
Uncertain minds,  
Groping hands,  
Painful treasure,  
Continue to dig  
Into the natural world  
Different conquests day to day  
Flesh and blood  
Leaking ducts  
Primeval past  
total control  
Reaching the back wall  
The grotto ends  
Breathing winds give forth sounds  
Deposit holy sacrifice  
Upon the steep cave's altar  
Narrow sacrifices climb to heaven  
In passionate smoke  
Releases the pain of wonder,  
The quest of the world's origin

Prudential voices call no more

For a while

Astra calls for more

Sacrifice in longing warmth

Sirens make sailors forget

Lost wit

Enters the grotto

To worship mother star

Swells the world

Because

Because

No one knows

Who drives the world

Who is the fuel

Burning for a short time

To produce another fire

To burn for a short time

Celebrate with expensive drink

Dwell on that grotto

Because

Because

Here I am and such is right

Reason has never ruled human sight

Close my eyes, plug my ears,

See the grotto.

Mountains rise at every turn

Words come out

Higher lips

Lower dreams move actions

Courbet paint my dream.

**Come Dance**

Two-seater red car

Eight lanes two ways

Come dance with me

Come play with my eyes

Two people, four eyes

Eight-speed truck, four-speed car

Show him more

Give him more

Wife thinks he's a bum

Look down, look down

The gifts show.

"Come dance with me."

Dreams shine

Eyes wink

Into the night

Baby feeds

Hunger raging

Brew burns

Off exit

Casper 52

Play the chest

Smile and kiss

Dance apart

Quick step

Eyes stare down

Lips pucker

A little more

Array joy

Haul big rig.

“Come dance with me.”

Before the fall

Exit forty-nine on one twenty one

Heads roar

Chrome dances

Red lips smile

Know we feel

Slipped the shoulder

Off one side

Pass left

Chrome shines

Car dances red

Fingers tap the wheel

Right, left, both

Just a look

Look down, pull up.

See something?

Teenage boys bus watch

Come second dance

Eight lanes, two ways

Right turn, wrong notions

Play me

Feel good

Comes what

Unseen motion

Beat the horn

Blow the drum

Friends sing,

Smile and hum.

Meat sale

Burnt and cold

Hot dance coals  
Broken mounds  
Tabloids of childhood taboos  
Behind closed doors  
Doctor to nurse,  
“Do we thirst?  
Lock doors and dance.  
Here’s the apple  
Peel the pear  
Modest falsehood--  
Dream, anticipate  
Pretty dresses of birthday parties.  
Older but never grown.  
“Who, how, when?”  
Much better!  
Somewhere, somehow.  
Come mind dance  
Promises and a “Yes”  
Kindnesses below  
Things show

Never known  
Always heard  
Fast light  
Mother calls  
One second  
Oh nothing  
Cherries dance  
Kenworth trucks.  
The king rains  
Unsaid on his bed  
Broken laws  
Double care  
Secret airs  
Show yours  
Hope mine  
Climb the fire  
Come tender dance.  
Why the fuss?  
Shout apples and pears  
With sweet scents

Casper 56

From this stage

To the Gaiety Theater

Dancer lure

Secret passions--

“Where and what?”

Dance please come--

Come see the dance.

We are meant to dance

To see and dance

To put the moon on a stick

Come dance come smile come dance come dance come dance come come come  
come.

**A Man at Three**

Crisp *pommes* in informal circumstance  
With a view from the windows  
That brings me from Paris to Rome  
While traveling with the Estée Lauder girl  
Drinking coffee served in anticipation  
Of strangers walking past  
Smiling ask, "Where to today?"  
Some person sits with me  
To give me rehashed beefs of the day,  
"Yes sir, I told him just that,"  
While floating eyes seek someone else  
To speak of politics and theoretic  
Human affairs and statement  
Confined only to supple smiles  
Reacting to familiar similes  
Beginning one way and ending another  
With a pregnant woman  
Who becomes a mother,  
We always ask if thirty years

Becomes all the time and effort,  
If graying hair suggests wisdom  
Really deserves ten percent off,  
Even if it is wanted by us  
Who are seeking something new  
To lift our egos and untie a tongue  
That has tasted stale with biscuits  
Covered with cold clichés  
Been salted with words  
As a child confined to acceptable states  
That state history as it should have been  
While some tattered drunk wants to borrow a ten  
For medicine that his uncle won't pay for,  
"In truth, I've been persecuted  
Because in the past I've driven with the wind,  
This bad streak of divine testing  
Has left me without less than dreams."  
Passing by a troop of high school girls,  
I'll be frank, to whom I'm attracted--  
The short, short dresses of gray and plaid

One sees me and gives a wink  
Another drops her books  
Some child in the next booth spills her milk  
The mother stands up in a rage  
Saying, "You should be careful at your age."  
While this may be true, I still smile  
At teenage girls in short dresses  
Frisky manners give life to me  
While old women give security,  
A youthful maid inhales the brain with senses  
Makes a man full of charity, liberty, sensuality.  
This is why I long for Rome--  
To witness youthful breasts  
Spilling milk into a primordial youth  
Who gives blushes and promises to young girls  
Of fourteen, so it goes, carved in statues  
Painted by men like me  
Socio- and psychopaths  
Of whom fathers and mothers have nightmares  
Worshipping at their feet

Proclaim genius and marvellous thing  
Never understanding they were just like me.  
They wanted everything I see and hear--  
White dining rooms with tuned pianos  
Background girls in pink formals, fluffy hair,  
Singing their passions for me.  
Oh, if someone had shown tomorrow to me  
When I was fifteen and interested,  
I'm sure Paris would have been more  
Than history, soldiering, architecture.  
I would never have traveled west  
I would have stayed fifteen forever  
Sought out breasts with blue arteries  
Visible as they pushed from low-cut formals  
With molded nipples  
Seething semiotic mole  
Singing Julie London voices  
With Maria Callas passions  
Like Isadora Duncan  
Spindle legs thrusting forever and the giddiest giggles--

Casper 61

I'd be sucking peaches and honeydew

Crushing cherries and coring pears

Picking grapes for Sauternes and Chablis

Oh yes, I'd tell you more.

I bake bread at twelve tonight.

I must go get some sleep

That I can pay the bills and come back tomorrow.

**The Urbane**

In the lobby window  
Of the simple ornate  
Lafayette Hotel's facade  
Sit men like me,  
Medicare enthusiasts  
For the past  
Passing the  
Of whatever  
Makes for the art,  
Common enough  
For near-do-wells,  
Who work hard  
Doing nothing  
Listen to Herbert Armstrong at five a. m.  
Consume H. L. Hunt at noon  
Hearing Bach  
In Moorish confines  
Evening vespers  
Half past eight at St. Louis Church

Except certain nights,  
When a flute recital is given within the dark  
Green marble interior shine of gray  
Italianate St. Xavier Church exterior  
Where also ravioli dinners  
Are served every Sunday afternoon in the undercroft  
By affectionate hands of warm fat women  
Who listen with deep sympathy  
When I shout my dreams  
A drop of hope  
Watch the papers  
Create a great brain  
Cascade through the streets  
Recognized at long last  
Dreams admired  
Day after night--  
I lost blue-eyed Sara  
In nineteen-nineteen to the Spanish flu--  
Forgot any resurrection hopes  
Taught myself

Latin, Greek, Hebrew

Oiled local school typewriters

Spit letters to the editors

Dim-witted tobacco lumps

Fall on the floor

My angry fires burn

I carry them passionately

Across the street

Daily planning and studying

The papers in the public library--

I hobble on my one leg

The other is on a railroad track

Left New Years of seventeen,

My crutches hop the lights

Eyes and ears perceive

Opinions stewed within bed

Sink and tub in a room

Five per night

Cheaper by the week

I can see everything

Pass Eighth and Vine  
Speak of Chaplin and Garbo  
Remember another time  
When I met Mussolini  
Over a bottle of muscatel.  
Just like me,  
He taught school briefly.  
While a postmaster,  
Some small town,  
One letter in my winter coat  
Sent me to prison for two to five.  
I learned French from a Canuck.  
Oh! Around the corner  
Tempest Storm this week  
The ornate Gaiety dancing,  
One time church,  
Not Garbo  
She pleases me--  
I nibble popcorn  
Across the seats runs a roach

Lights go on

Look up

Read Heinrich Heine

Engraved on a tin ceiling

Tolstoy in German

Spoken at the Wheel Cafe

Where sometimes my friends

Spend the day eating breakfast

Before lunch around dinner

Max has a winner in the seventh.

“Old Cal there runs faster still,”

Laughs Max, points to me.

“Oh, it’s true,” I say.

“I played that horse last week.”

All smile at the three year old

In a ballet suite

She dances freely around the floor.

“The bread pudding here is excellent,”

I tell the mother, “The child has style.”

I eat my steak diane

Green bean almondiné

New red potatoes, cornbread.

Occasionally, I take the bus

Dine at noon in my pin striped

Club Diplomat on the hill

A buck and a quarter

Fills with white fish, liver, tongue

All the trimmings

Coffee, tea

One slow whiskey sour

Dorothy mixes personally

Red velour chairs

White tablecloths

A semi-round stage.

Kitty Kallen performs tonight

The Jewel-Box revue next week,

Art imbricates real things,

*Mondo Cane* last week

Strange people, Madame Nhu.

Many tasks I wish to do

Casper 68

I watch you walk life

Turn here Clark Gable

Play my recorder during the midnight lull

While pigeons coo on window sills.