

Preface

Poetry, real poetry, is an extraordinary art form.

Being a poet is much like being a composer of symphonies. Just as a composer writes each note on a musical staff, and composes harmonies for the different instruments, and knows when to enhance the percussion or the woodwinds, a great poet has an array of tools and techniques at hand, and puts each sound on the page, one sound at a time, in a deliberately chosen rhythm, for a reason. A poet might spend a year carefully perfecting a fourteen-line sonnet.

This book, though it explores many powerful and technical things that poets can do with the sounds of words, is only a hint. It just cracks open the door, giving you a peek inside the huge world of creative life that poets live in.

Though this is but an introduction, it is nevertheless an introduction to the real thing. The purpose of this book is to find ways to reveal the reality of poem power, to give students an eyeball-to-the-letter closeup of what goes on in a poet's thought. The architect Mies van der Rohe said that God is in the details; I hope that by putting a microscope on the beautiful details of poetry, I can show how wonderful they are.