

Howard Nemerov

Quotes

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Nothing in the universe can travel at the speed of light, they say, forgetful of the shadow's speed.

~Howard Nemerov

For a Jewish Puritan of the middle class, the novel is serious, the novel is work, the novel is conscientious application why, the novel is practically the retail business all over again.

~Howard Nemerov

A teacher is a person who never says anything once.

~Howard Nemerov

I like all my children, even the squat and ugly ones.

~Howard Nemerov

I would talk in iambic pentameter if it were easier.

~Howard Nemerov

Write what you know. That should leave you with a lot of free time.

~Howard Nemerov

Absolute power corrupts absolutely; and if you surrender your personal responsibility to a government which promises to take care of you, they will only take care of themselves.

~Howard Nemerov

When Robert Frost was alive, I was known as the other new England poet, which is to be barely known at all.

~Howard Nemerov

Robert Frost had always said you mustn't think of the last line first, or it's only a fake poem, not a real one. I'm inclined to agree.

~Howard Nemerov

When I was starting to write, the great influence was T.S. Eliot and after that William Butler Yeats.

~Howard Nemerov

Once in awhile you have a thought, and you rhyme it.

~Howard Nemerov

I sometimes talk about the making of a poem within the poem.

~Howard Nemerov

I never abandoned either forms or freedom. I imagine that most of what could be called free verse is in my first book. I got through that fairly early.

~Howard Nemerov

Writing is like the relationship with your bowels. First you can, then you can't. Finally, you must. Only then should you reach for the paper.

~Howard Nemerov

[T]eaching has been for me an education (Lord knows what it has been for my students).

~Howard Nemerov

The secrets of success are a good wife and a steady job. My wife told me.

~Howard Nemerov

Language is remarkable, except under the extreme constraints of mathematics and logic, it never can talk only about what it's supposed to talk about but is always spreading around.

~Howard Nemerov

When in still air and still in summertime
A leaf has had enough of this,
it seems To make up its mind to go; fine as a sage
Its drifting in

detachment down the road.

~Howard Nemerov

I do insist on making what I hope is sense so there's always a coherent narrative or argument that the reader can follow.

~Howard Nemerov

I am not at all clear what free verse is anymore. That's one of the things you learn not to know.

~Howard Nemerov

Obvious enough that generalities work to protect the mind from the great outdoors; is it possible that this was in fact their first purpose?

~Howard Nemerov

It may be said that poems are in one way like icebergs: only about a third of their bulk appears above the surface of the page.

~Howard Nemerov

I liked the kid who wrote me that he had to do a term paper on a modern poet and he was doing me because, though they say you have to read poems twice, he found he could handle mine in one try.

~Howard Nemerov

A lot happens by accident in poetry.

~Howard Nemerov

I think there's one thing which distinguishes our art - we don't consider. We don't think. We write a little verse because it comes to us.

~Howard Nemerov

When you write it doesn't occur to you that somebody could think different from what you do.

~Howard Nemerov

I've never read a political poem that's accomplished anything. Poetry makes things happen, but rarely what the poet wants.

~Howard Nemerov

A chronicle is very different from history proper.

~Howard Nemerov

We think about sex obsessively except during the act, when our minds tend to wander.

~Howard Nemerov

Why are stamps adorned with kings and presidents? That we may lick their hinder parts and thump their heads.

~Howard Nemerov

Shakespeare tells the same stories over and over in so many guises that it takes a long time before you notice.

~Howard Nemerov

Religion and science both profess peace (and the sincerity of the professors is not being doubted), but each always turns out to have a dominant part in any war that is going or contemplated.

~Howard Nemerov

The spirit world doesn't admit to communicating with me, so it's fairly even.

~Howard Nemerov

I've thought of the last line of some poems for years and tried them out, It wouldn't work because the last line was much too beautiful for the poem.

~Howard Nemerov

When modern writers gave up telling stories, they gave up the greatest

thing we had.

~Howard Nemerov

History is where tensions were.

~Howard Nemerov

Mostly the thought and the verse come inseparably. In my poem Poetics, it's as close as I come to telling how I do it.

~Howard Nemerov

Short stories amount for the most part to parlour tricks, party favours with built-in snappers, gadgets for including recognition and reversals

~Howard Nemerov

I have a plot, but not much happens.

~Howard Nemerov

The historian is terribly responsible to what he can discern are the facts of the case, but he's nothing if he doesn't make out a case.

~Howard Nemerov

Occasionally a student writer comes up with something really beautiful and moving, and you won't know for years if it was an accident or the first burst of something wonderful.

~Howard Nemerov

History is one of those marvelous and necessary illusions we have to deal with. It's one of the ways of dealing with our world with impossible generalities which we couldn't live without.

~Howard Nemerov

Children, to be illustrious is sad.

~Howard Nemerov

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