

Thom Gunn Quotes

*Thinking, Way, Book, Teacher, Writing, Reading, Feelings, Two, Men, Self,
Gay, Sex, Years, Home, Bars, Saws, Stills, Ginsberg, People, Cutting*

I was much influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre.

~Thom Gunn

A literary influence is never just a literary influence. It's also an influence in the way you see everything - in the way you feel your life.

~Thom Gunn

I was at a benefit for some imprisoned students in the '60s at San Francisco State, and there were lots of poets reading for the benefit: one was Elizabeth Bishop.

~Thom Gunn

I was reading the poems of Rochester. Rochester made himself out to be bisexual, but I think that was only to shock. Most of his poetry is sexual, even pornographic.

~Thom Gunn

I don't know how to sit outside myself and test against a hypothetical self who stayed home.

~Thom Gunn

Deep feeling doesn't make for good poetry. A way with language would be a bit of help.

~Thom Gunn

As humans we look at things and think about what we've looked at. We treasure it in a kind of private art gallery.

~Thom Gunn

I try not to observe myself in the process of composing a poem because I don't want to come up with a formula, which I would then be unscrupulous in using.

~Thom Gunn

I deliberately decided to write a kind of guide to leather bars for straight people, for people not into leather, so that people could see what it was all about.

~Thom Gunn

My thoughts are crowded with death and it draws so oddly on the sexual that I am confused to be attracted by, in effect, my own annihilation.

~Thom Gunn

When I first started teaching at Berkeley in 1958, I could not announce that I was gay to anybody, though probably quite a few of my fellow teachers knew.

~Thom Gunn

I admired what my students were writing, but I think their improvement doesn't directly result from me but from being in a class, being with each other.

~Thom Gunn

I notice that students, particularly for gay students, it's too easy to write about my last trick or something. It's not very interesting to the reader.

~Thom Gunn

There have been two popular subjects for poetry in the last few decades: the Vietnam War and AIDS, about both of which almost all of us have felt deeply.

~Thom Gunn

Much that is natural, to the will must yield. Men manufacture both machine and soul, And use what they imperfectly control To dare a future from the taken routes.

~Thom Gunn

I had assumed that I would age with all my friends growing old around me, dying off very gradually one by one. And here was a plague that cut them off so early.

~Thom Gunn

We tend to put poems into factions. And it restricts our reading.

~Thom Gunn

As if hands were enough To hold an avalanche off.

~Thom Gunn

We learned in the university to consider Wordsworth and Keats as Romantics. They were only a generation apart, but Wordsworth didn't even read Keats's book when he gave him a copy.

~Thom Gunn

I work best in rhyme and meter. I was most confident of myself in that way.

~Thom Gunn

How sociable the garden was. We ate and talked in given light. The children put their toys to grass All the warm wakeful August night.

~Thom Gunn

The painter saw what was, an alternate Candor and secrecy inside the skin.

~Thom Gunn

Ginsberg's Collected Poems contains a wonderful poem about making it with Neal Cassady.

~Thom Gunn

One joins the movement in a valueless world, Choosing it, till both hurler and the hurled, One moves as well, always toward, toward.

~Thom Gunn

I don't think of sex as a self-destructive impulse.

~Thom Gunn

I haven't written anything in four years. I'm sort of dried up.

~Thom Gunn

I think most men, heterosexual and homosexual, enjoy being considered sexual objects.

~Thom Gunn

My old teacher's definition of poetry is an attempt to understand.

~Thom Gunn

One is always nearer by not keeping still.

~Thom Gunn

I deliberately wrote a poem in my last book where I was suggesting that there are other passions as great as or more important than the passion of sex.

~Thom Gunn

We control the content of our dreams.

~Thom Gunn

Thus for each blunt-faced ignorant one
The great grey rigid uniform
combined Safety with virtue of the sun.
Thus concepts linked like
chainmail in the mind.

~Thom Gunn

Many of my poems are not sexual.

~Thom Gunn

Direct me gods, whose changes are all holy, To where it flickers deep
in grass, the moly.

~Thom Gunn

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