

His second floor office in the Blocker Building overlooks University street. The traffic inches by and students dart between cars to get to McDonald's for lunch. This view seems unfit for the mind of the accomplished poet and critic, Paul Christensen — I always thought poets needed their own Walden to be able to express themselves.

Although I suffer from somewhat of a poet misconception, Christensen said that some poets and writers must do certain things to get in the mood to create. He mentioned one writer who had to wash his hands in special soap several times before he could write.

Christensen said he writes best in a room filled with his mind energy. What he means by this is that he seasons a room for about six months by working in it and becoming comfortable with it. The room is then his creative cocoon where he can lose himself in his work. He said he can sink into an almost trance-like state where he is not bothered by phone calls or other interruptions.

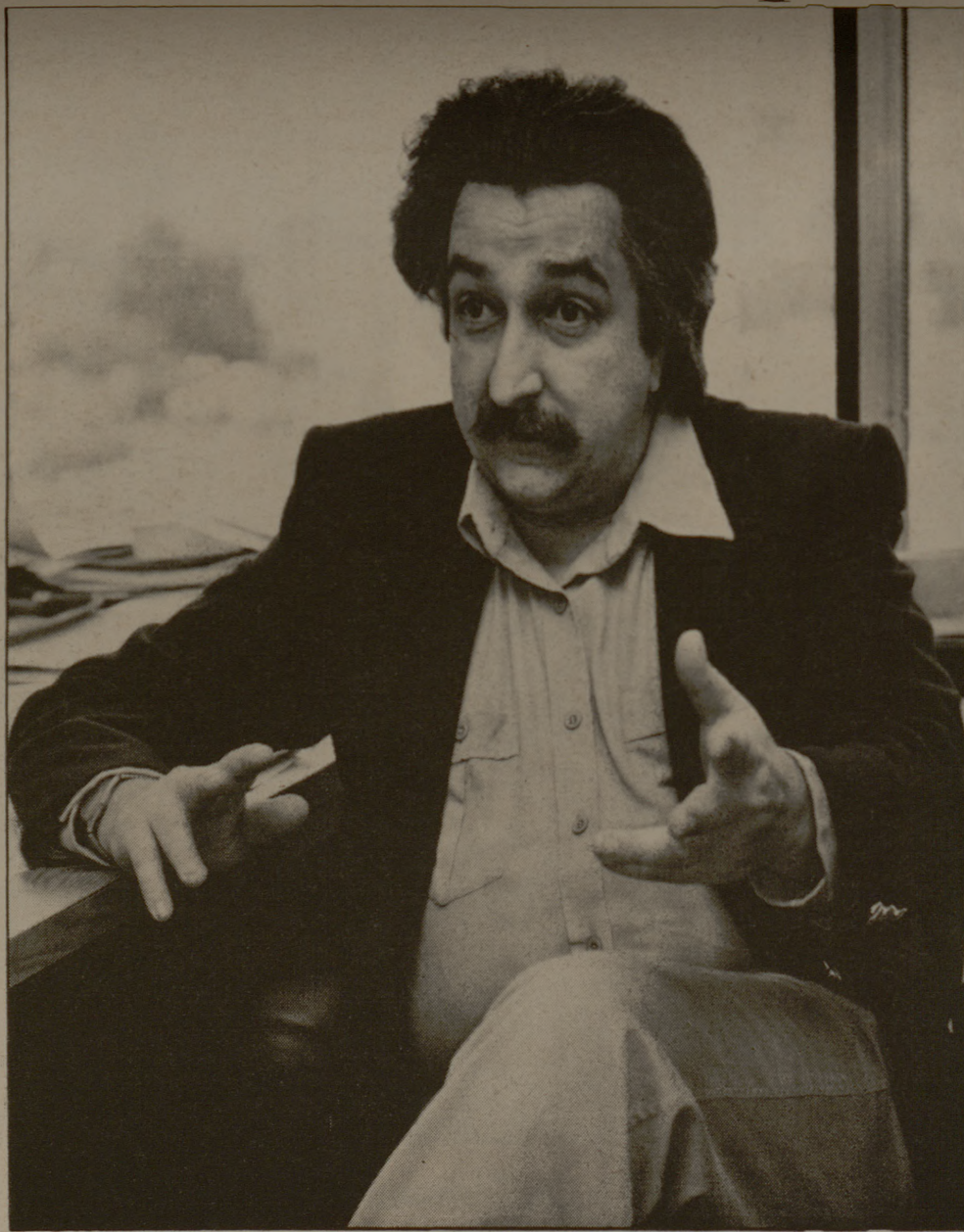
Christensen said writers usually have themes in their writing that relate to the life they're living at the time.

"For example, I think when I was in my late thirties I began to think about changes of life and midlife crisis sorts of subjects," he said. "People come to grips that they're getting older now and there's changes within the family, within attitudes about sex, death, and all those basic things.

"You see in the mirror — it's not going to go away. It's not a bad day — it's a turn in your life that you can't reverse."

Christensen said that he wants to appeal to the reader who can relate to these changes.

"I do imagine I write for sort of an ideal listener who can catch every bit of humor and word play, instantly seeing my



**Paul Christensen says his poems are about self-confrontation and rites of passage.**

meaning so that he can enjoy the language experience I'm offering him besides any sort of serious concerns I may be raising in a poem," he said.

Christensen's eyes sparkle and his deep laugh lines accentuate his happiness when he talks about his craft. He challenges anyone to go into the

bedroom and read Faulkner out loud because of the beauty of the poetry. He said it sounds like God talking and is made to be played on an instrument.

Christensen is not only concerned with the art of poetry. He also has his own printing press. He said he enjoys production and wants to learn off-

set printing one day. He proudly states that he has published several books, including one of his own.

Christensen realizes that poetry does not appeal to a large audience. He said the biggest audience poetry will ever hope to enjoy will be 1 in 30 people. The decline in poetry can be

traced to the success of America, he said.

"The whole problem is when you have a very fat and contented populace, they don't dream," he said. "The stuff of dreams is what you can't have and if poetry is the language of dreams and longings — there's no sense in going to it." ♪

**A GAME WITH ROCK**  
by Paul Christensen

I threw the rock  
and watched it in the air  
whispering,  
*don't come back!*

I saw it shudder  
and hang, as long as it  
could, against blue air,  
and forget for a moment  
it was all rock and start  
to fly, those dull wings  
rounded on its sides,  
the hopefulness and twinkle  
behind shut eyes, and  
a mind, slow glitter,  
*think* for a moment of escape.  
The upward heave  
of lungless breath, the grasp  
of no arms for a branch of  
sun, anything to hoist  
itself up to, out of this  
desolate ocean of identity,  
only to be stung with the  
dread of what it was —  
a *rock*, instead. It fell!  
thudding miserably through  
the air in which my  
whisper hung,  
*don't come back!*

**BAR BRAWL**  
by Paul Christensen

As if pain were flowers  
opening in the blood; the lazy  
velvet petals of a bloom  
of hurt - the blue punched arm,  
swollen whorl of thigh,  
the aureole of black eye.

When the two men were hanging  
in the amber air, in the  
gelled motion of their labors  
to hurt each other, the fume  
of liquory breath so thick  
with enchantment, as black  
cold atmosphere rushed from  
the tavern doors, flung wide.  
His fist flashing like a wand  
dove deep to bone, rattling  
the opponent's inmost skeleton.  
Shattered jaw, the dazed eyes  
surprised to be rushed up to  
a higher plane — pain.

## British poet's ideals are subject of symposium

Matthew Arnold was an English poet and critic who lived from 1822 to 1888. His work exemplified romantic pessimism, spiritual isolation in a time that was torn between science and religion.

The Department of English is sponsoring a symposium Feb. 28 and March 1 to study this poet in depth. The lectures will be a look at his time during the 19th century and how this affects present time and works of

literature.

Registration is Thursday at 8 a.m. in the scheduling office on the second floor of Rudder Tower. The cost is \$12.50 per individual and payments are to be made out to Matthew Arnold Symposium. The fee entitles the participant to attend all symposium session and the banquet Friday evening.

Throughout the symposium papers will be presented such as: "Arnold and Culture: the History and

Prehistory," "Arnold and Natural Supernaturalism," and "A Modernist Before the Time: A Reappraisal of Matthew Arnold's Religious Prose Writings."

He was the apostle of a new culture, one that would pursue perfection by knowledge and understanding of the best thoughts in the world. He attacked the tastes and manners of the 19th-century English society, particularly those displayed by the provincial

middle class.

Arnold strongly believed the welfare of a nation is contingent upon its intellectual life, he proclaimed that this life is best served by unrestricted, objective criticism — free from personal, political and practical considerations.

Some of the other papers to be presented are: "Matthew Arnold and the Modernist Image," "Literature and the Pleasure Principle: An Arnoldian Antidote for

Critical Confusion" and "Democracy vs. Culture: Matthew Arnold, James, Lord Bryce and the Idea of America."

There will be an exhibit of The Roger L. Brooks Collection of Matthew Arnold's Unpublished, Unrecorded Letters and First and Successive Rare Editions of His Works in 210 Sterling C. Evans Library.

For more information call the Department of English at 845-3451. ♪