Driven Under the Influence
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for
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had chosen, impulsively as usual, a title for this collection: “Choices.” Almost immediately, a different title presented itself for my inspection. It was: “Driving under the Influence.” I approved of it, except that it sounded too active; “Driven under the Influence” would be better, especially since this collection of essays shows what I find myself to have been driven by these thirty-plus years, and how.

Still, whatever the collection’s title, it will give readers an intimation of every tipsy driver’s experience, a feeling also conveyed by the cover image for the book, which captures the uncanny simultaneity of looking forward and backward, and the co-presence of the familiar and the mysterious. Such disorientation, combined with desire and occasional frustration in the course of one’s attempts at reaching a dimly known destination in a city, returns us back surprisingly to spots that are vaguely reminiscent of places once traveled before. In any case, in the end I recalled that what to the busy writer may look like responsible, even knowledgeable choices, will strike the older author as having been favorable winds of invention—one seems to have been guided by them, but one does not quite know Whence they came or Whither they went. Is “having been guided” the same as “being offered the choice of accepting past moves?” That is, is it really a matter of “having been Chosen under the Influence?”

Yes, I suppose. But now I am finding myself too close to too bold a claim. Yet in any case, God knows just how I have been driven and to what identifiable purpose, and I have enjoyed the adventure. And what’s even more, I remain curious, for “without a future there is no thought,” as Hans-Georg Gadamer told me when he was ninety-nine years old. So let readers choose for themselves and take such bearings as they find their own.
A special word of thanks is due to my good friend, Anthony J. Cernera, president of Sacred Heart University, and all those from Sacred Heart who worked so patiently with me in accomplishing this labor of love, especially David L. Coppola, executive assistant to the president; Sidney Gottlieb, director of editorial and production work for the Sacred Heart University Press; Roberta Reynolds, manager of Creative Services; and John DeGraffenried, assistant professor of Art and Design.