BRIDGE FORCE
poems with an introduction

by

FRANKLAND WILMOT DAVEY
B.A., The University of British Columbia, 1961

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department
of
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
April 1963
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia,
Vancouver 8, Canada.

Date April 18, 1963
ABSTRACT

In this thesis I present forty-seven thematically interwoven original poems with my own explanatory introduction. In the introduction I attempt to illuminate the poems' concerns and techniques by relating them to the concerns, resources, and theories of both traditional and contemporary English-speaking poets.

The poems represent a combination of Romantic personal and social interest with Renaissance technical and aesthetic interest. My form, free verse constructed on linguistic principles, I have chosen because of the flexibility it provides for creating decorative and natural patterns. I find its rhythms quite similar to those of many passages in Shakespeare's later plays and to those of the emotion-filled early poems of Matthew Arnold. My free verse is not undisciplined; its form is linguistically justifiable, its rhyme-schemes have been specially created to meet the demands of this form, and its syntax is based on the rhetorical theories of the beauty-conscious English Renaissance.

That rhetoric, essentially the use of repeated syntactic and sonic patterns, can aid poetic expression seems evident from the works of Shakespeare and Ezra Pound. Rhetorical figures are really types of "rime" (in the sense in which
the American poet Robert Duncan uses the word); that is, rhetoric is a kind of significant repetition similar to the cycle of the seasons. Thus the figures of rhetoric tend to give *natural* form to a poem that makes it meaningful to a reader already acquainted with the works of nature.

Robert Duncan's theory that natural rime is any recognizable similarity or dissimilarity in two parallel elements of a poem or group of poems, as well as serving to illuminate the use of rhetoric, leads to the creation of rimes of theme to achieve unity of poetic vision. Rimes of theme are the means by which Eliot unifies *The Waste Land*, by which Yeats unifies his mythological and visionary poems, and by which I attempt to unify this collection. Use of rimes of theme, in both Eliot and Yeats, results in the juxtaposing of centuries, and so, in a sense, in the elimination of time. Timelessness, of course, is an appropriate theme to me, since my aesthetic interest implies a desire to create timeless beauty.

However, I do not think that I can ever be justly accused of "pure aestheticism." As long as my wish to create beauty is paralleled by a thematic interest in the timeless qualities of human existence (as in the poetry of Wallace Stevens or Robert Duncan), the structural beauty created will be definitely functional.
Rather than leading to euphuistic decadence, my interest in technique is likely to give me new themes; especially rich in thematic possibility is the as-yet-unexplored self-conscious poem.

For, to me, the most significant aspect of a poem is the process of its writing, and it will be only through constant examination of this process that I will come nearer to creating what I wish to create—a thematically unified body of work that will represent to the reader the timeless in both human existence and poetic beauty.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTE ON ARRANGEMENT</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE POEMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the Lions Gate Bridge</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver I</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impossible Sea I</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Vancouver History</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hermit</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For F.J.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver II</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Force I</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Force II</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Force III</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impossible Sea II</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Days</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impossible Sea III</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlude</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For An April Angel</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Force IV</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Force V.</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairview</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For A Sudden Love</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Visit</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fact</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clouds</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poem-Break</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still Looking To You</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy Are The Lonesome Pines</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Force VI</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morte D'Arthur I</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morte D'Arthur II</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morte D'Arthur III</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morte D'Arthur IV</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morte D'Arthur V</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morte D'Arthur VI</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elegy</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Force VII</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterthought On Arthur</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Force VIII</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Force IX</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bridegroom</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totems</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea-Change</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As A Man Breathes I</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As A Man Breathes II</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As A Man Breathes III</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As A Man Breathes IV</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOOTNOTES</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

My poems in this collection, are, I feel, unmistakeably twentieth-century, yet they, like the century itself, could not exist without the past. The limitations of experience and the whimsy of the individual have inevitably narrowed the affinities of my poetry; however, it is probably also true that these poems have been influenced in style and subject matter by many poets without my being aware of any kinship with them.
To my mind my poems are most in harmony with the poetry of the English Romantic and Renaissance periods. Direct love poems and personally oriented lyrics are characteristic of both periods, but I feel that my concern with myself and with my relationships with the human and physical universes (the "Bridge Force" series) is perhaps predominantly derived from such ego analyses as Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale," Coleridge's "Dejection: an Ode," or Whitman's "Song of Myself." Also Romantic is my social consciousness ("A Vancouver History," "For F.J."), which derives from such poems as Blake's songs of the London poor, and Wordsworth's "Michael" and "The Solitary Reaper." As with Blake and Wordsworth, my interest in social problems is sympathetic and focussed on the individual, and is thus quite unlike the general and usually bitter social concern of the eighteenth-century satirists.

But whereas the emphasis during the Romantic period was chiefly on the "singer," or on the message of the singer, I try to balance my personal orientation with an interest in pure form, or aesthetics, which is perhaps most a quality of the English Renaissance. Although Byron's technical flaws are legendary, and although Keats' odes are nearer to free form than to the form of their Greek models, I do not claim that the Romantics were technically incompetent; merely that
they were more interested in statement than in the arbitrary creation of formal beauty. But in the early English Renaissance just after the importation of continental forms and during the controversy between Ciceronian and Ramistic rhetoric, I find an interest in form, balance, symmetry, melody, and syntax that was more often dedicated to decoration than to semantic necessity. The Renaissance poets thus placed—as I attempted to place in "The Visit"—as much emphasis on the song as on the singer, and as a result we have the richness of the verse of Shakespeare and Spenser. The Renaissance's decorative tendencies collapsed, of course, in the excesses of Euphues, but even in so late a poet as Waller ("Go Lovely Rose") the rhetorical and tonal interest remains.

My poetic techniques, then, are all selected to serve in my attempt to combine the ego-centered and particularizing social interest of the Romantics with the aestheticism of the Renaissance, in the hopes that a lingering (if not timeless) poetic beauty will result. I have chosen a species of "free verse" as my form, for I feel that only it has the flexibility required by my experiments in sound, syntax, and rhetoric. Each line of my free verse normally consists of what Charles Olson calls a "breath" group\(^1\), or what Trager and Smith call a "phonemic clause"\(^2\)—that is, each
begins and ends with a terminal juncture and contains one primary stress. It was Trager and Smith's Outline.... with its analysis of English speech and its statement that primary stresses tend to be isochronous (to be separated by intervals of equal duration) regardless of the number of intervening, more weakly stressed syllables, that led me to my present system of notation.

However, one of the main sources for my free verse style is, I believe, Shakespeare's plays. The monologues and soliloquies in the plays often involve the same processes of self expression, with the mind flitting past images and discoveries, as those in a lyric poem. And the structure of these passages, especially in the later plays, is often more determined by the emotions of the speaker than by the demands of the blank verse form. Major junctures appear as often in the middles as at the ends of the lines, and, although the line break can still serve to create ambiguity, the unit of composition seems to be the breath group rather than the iambic pentameter line. For example, this passage that I have transcribed into my free verse:
The barge she sat in,
like a burnished throne
burned on the water.
The poop was beaten gold;
purple the sails
and so perfumed
that the wind was lovesick with them,
the oars were silver
which to the tune of flutes
kept stroke
and made the water which they beat
to follow faster
as amorous
of their strokes. (Antony and Cleopatra, II, ii, ll. 195-201)

A perhaps more legitimate source of my free verse
is Matthew Arnold's early poems. I have no difficulty
in preferring "Dover Beach" and Rugby Chapel" to any of
his classically ordered later poems, perhaps because those
two poems seem more successful in conveying emotion than
most other nineteenth-century poems outside of Hopkins'
sonnets. In "Dover Beach" I can almost hear the resigned
poet breathing:

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast, the light
Gleams, and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!

My notation of this would be different, with each
punctuated pause also becoming the end of a line, but the
effect would be similar.

*Ends of Shakespeare's lines that do not correspond
with mine.
Such a system of notation as mine places a severe limitation on the value of end-rhyme. With every line end-stopped, the second of a pair of terminating rhymes invariably resounds like a cymbal-clang, for the completion of a syntactical pattern has coincided with the completion of a sonic one. Rhymes in this position can only be effective as instruments of fluid melody if the line is run-on through the rhyme, so that the rhyme unifies, rather than isolates, the syntactical units. Thus, because I seek melody and aesthetic unity in my poems, one finds an unusually large number of rhyming words where the last of the pair (occasionally both) is located within a line.

I will refrain from conjuring with the brain and claim to know no devils angels....

("Interlude")

The white skin whitening the long throat tightening in croaks of non-recognition....

("Elegy")
Frost's quip, equating "free verse" and a netless tennis match, still lingers today to slander the attempts of poets who would build each poem according to its own needs. The quip itself has even been equated by Elizabeth Drew with Eliot's declaration that "no verse is free for a man who wants to do a good job." My organizing my notation on linguistic principles, and my re-interpreting the application of tonal end-rhyme are merely two of the devices I use to enrich the free verse form and make possible for myself the satisfaction of doing "a good job."

Another means of enhancing the dignity of free verse which Ezra Pound, at least, has found useful is the rhetorical style. "Rhetoric" to the modern is pretty well a dead subject. He passes off what little he does know about it with such superficial terms as "parallelism" or "antithesis." But by 1574 in Elizabethan England a violent controversy between the old Ciceronian rhetoric, which considered style and ornamentation of minor importance, and the new Ramistic rhetoric, which took ornamentation as more than half its concern, caused what had hitherto been just another dull school subject to become the topic of everyday argument. Oxford University opposed the new doctrine, but Cambridge, the public school system, and Lyly's *Euphues* won the battle for the Ramists, with the result that great
compendiums of tropes and schemes, such as Henry Peacham's
*Garden of Eloquence*, replaced the old composition texts,
and that court ladies became ignored if they could not learn
to euphuize.

That Shakespeare was influenced by the new, unabashedly
aesthetic rhetoric is almost certain. His awareness of
euphuism is obvious in his satire of the euphuist in *Love's
Labour's Lost*. And Sister Miriam Joseph has shown how
rhetorical figures contribute much to the effectiveness of
Shakespeare's verse, having located in his works several
examples of almost all the two hundred figures distinguished
by the Renaissance rhetoricians. For example, *brachylogia*
(the omission of conjunctions between words) emphasizing loss
in *Romeo and Juliet*:

```
Paris: Beguil'd, divorced, wronged, spited, slain \\
Capulet: Despis'd, distressed, hated, martyr'd, kill'd!
```

(IV:5)

Or *homoiopteleuton* (corresponding members of parallel clauses
marked off by like endings) in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*:

```
How churlishly I chid Lucretia hence
When willingly I would have had her here \\
How angrily I taught my brow to frown.
```

(I:2)
An unbiased eye can certainly discern the poetic value of passages in Lyly's overwhelmingly rhetorical *Euphues*. Rhetoric gives both form and emotion to the following (transcribed in my free verse):

Here maist thou see,
that which I sigh to see,
dronken sottes
wallowing in every house
in every chamber,
yea,
in every channel,
here maist thou beholde
that which I cannot
without blushing beholde,
nor without blubbering utter,
whose bellies bee their gods,
who offer their goodes as sacrifice
to their guttes:
who sleepe
with meate in their mouthes,
with sin in their heartes
and with shame in their houses. 

In this century Ezra Pound seems to have recognized the usefulness of rhetoric as an approach to both order and emotion. An extreme example of this is his Canto XLV:

With *Usura*

With usura hath no man a house of good stone
each block cut smooth and well fitting
that design might cover their face,
with usura
hath no man a painted paradise on his church wall
*harpes et luthes*
or where virgin receiveth message
and halo projects from incision,
with usura
seeth no man Gonzaga his heirs and his concubines...
the third and fourth lines being a good explanation of the use of rhetoric. Even in Pound's lyrics the rhetorical style is present and results in beauty. There is part IV of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly:"

These fought, in any case and some believing pro domo, in any case . . .

Some quick to arm, some for adventure, some from fear of weakness, some from fear of censure . . . . 8

and there is "Doria:"

Be in me as the eternal moods of the bleak wind, and not As transient things are— gaiety of flowers. Have me in the strong loneliness of sunless cliffs And of grey waters. Let the gods speak softly of us In days hereafter, The shadowy flowers of Orcus Remember thee.9

To me there is no doubt that an awareness of rhetoric is of benefit to a poet, although I would scarcely hold him responsible for all two hundred Renaissance figures. Still, many of the figures are quite useful--anadiplosis (the repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of another), epiphora (the repetition of a terminal word or phrase), anaphora (the repetition of an initial word or phrase), isocolon (equally lengthed clauses), parison (the matching of equivalent parts of speech in parallel clauses), the paromoion
(similarity of sound between words or syllables in the same position in parisonic members). In all my poems I use isocolon consistently, for almost all my phonemic clauses tend to be of equal length. And I use other figures in such poems as "Elegy," "For F.J.,” "The Visit,” and "As a Man Breathes" both to beautify and to heighten the emotion. For example, I use homoioleutonic paromoion in "Elegy:"

the face whitening
the cheekbones stiffening
the forehead bruise from the fall
purpling ... 

and brachylogia in a further stanza:

the money
the hugs
the macaroni
the cakes and the pudding
the obsession for giving.

In "Bridge Force IV," I use epiphora:

In the summer
one gets sunburned on the beaches.
There are not enough bridges
to throw shadows
on the beaches ... 

and further on in the same poem anadiplosis and anaphora together:

cuts
between lovers.

Lovers
yes the summer brings
sad lovers in regret
together: ...
I use alliterative paromoion to give an effective close to "For F.J."

tho I cannot picture that first parting of the flesh for him or now how she can slave for the feel of him.

"Song" is almost entirely constructed of parisonic clauses with anaphora:

Little wife pressing her pimples little wife scalding scarlet little wife crowned with curlers...

and it too ends with alliterative paromoion (plus exact isocolon) to give it the musical close that I desired:

how can I write poems to *woo* thee now that I have *won* thee little wife little girl.

The last poem of this collection, as well as providing a thematic synthesis for the book, also represents my furthest development of the rhetorical technique. Consistent use of isocolon and parison allows the poem to move at a constant pace:

letting them gather on his feet or walks faster in the rain to feel the drops on his face.
In the most emotionally intense passages of this poem I have used isocolon, parison, and paromoion together to make the verse more exact and electric:

But as a man
shuts his doors
against the night
against the rain,
builds with stone
against the world,
cleans and kills the land
for protection
his mind
for civilization . . .

(Part II)

. . . touch the stones the seaweed
the logs the shells
the ashes from the weiner roasts
walk after walk,
wave after wave . . .

(Part IV)

I feel that in my discovery of the usefulness of rhetorical figures in poetry I have found the key to writing the kind of precise and memorable lyric poetry that I wish to produce. The possibilities for the use of rhetoric in poetry seem endless; the only challenge is to produce sufficient diversity, for any reader can see how tiresome a collection of poems of the same style as "As a Man Breathes" might get.

Serving to increase my awareness of the possibilities of rhetorical techniques has been a theory of "rime"
propounded by the American poet Robert Duncan, a theory which actually embraces traditional theories of rhyme and rhythm, Renaissance theories of rhetoric, and such uses of cumulative allusions as found in Pound's The Cantos or Eliot's The Waste Land. He begins with the usual observation of the common birth of rhyme (rime) and rhythm from the Greek ρυθμός (measured motion, time, proportion). He then interprets "rime" as a patterning device which allows measurement (examination and assessment) of the literary work by means of variously proportioned distances between points of correspondence or similarity. Rhythm consists of the recurrence of various stress patterns—rhyming stress patterns, if you will. "Rime in sound," says Duncan, "is derived from our possible awareness between total disresemblance of sounds and total resemblance." Rime to Duncan is merely the name for the use of any continuum of resemblance to set up immediately measurable distance between corresponding elements, and it can involve in literature the correspondence of any two themes, images, stress patterns, syntactic units, or phonetic units.

The similarities between this theory and Ramistic rhetoric are obvious: anadiplosis, anaphora, isocolon, and parison are rimes of syntax; paromoion and homoioateleuton combine rimes of syntax with rimes of sound. The use of the
theory can be both thematic and decorative. Sonic rimes (assonance, consonance, or the repetition of consonant or vowel kinds (e.g. plosives, fricatives; or front, mid or back, round or unround vowels) can be onomatapoeic. Syntactic rimes can be used to enforce similarities and/or contrasts of them—as in Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium":

Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long,
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.

(Stanza I)

To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

(Stanza IV)

Decoratively, it can be used to give a poem arbitrarily the beauty and individuality of a natural object, exactly as Hopkins fuses his poems into "inscaped" entities through alliterative, assonantal and syntactic techniques.

Hopkins' theory of "inscape" is extremely similar to my justification for the use of decorative sonic and syntactic rime. Rime is a basic characteristic of nature. Every man is aware of the rhythms of the seasons, of the tide, of the planets, of the stars, of the life-cycle, of the menstrual period, of the wind, of the mountain stream, and of the heart-beat. Rimes of things and events occur all around us, make the world meaningful, make language possible. "Without rime or reason," we say of something we cannot understand.
Rime is the first assumption of scientific investigation, is the means for the world communicating with us; it is what allows us to see proportions, meanings, structure in nature, to draw conclusions, to take measure of our world. In poetry only the poet's intuitive sense of the resemblance and dis-resemblance possible in language can give the poem memorable, individual, and engaging beauty and form, and allow the poem (as Charles Olson states the problem in discussing the importance of the human breath in poetic utterance) "to take its place alongside the things of nature."  

Rimes of theme work on a much larger scale than do syntactic or sonic rimes, but their purpose is the same: to cause the reader to recall similarities—-to see correspondences. They are what gives thematic unity to a poet's work, whether the organizing principle be chosen from outside the poet, as Miss Potts feels it is in Wordsworth's "The Prelude," or whether it be projected inevitably from the poet's personality, as would seem to be the case for Donne and Blake. It is rimes of theme that give unity to Whitman's poetry, and it was through rimes of theme that Hart Crane deliberately attempted to unify his vision in "The Bridge." Yeats too searched for an organizing belief, first in Celtic mythology and latterly in his wife's mysteriously inspired material in A Vision.
In my own poetry I try to limit my search for unity to a discovery of my own beliefs, for I distrust the sincerity of any expression of received doctrine. The two themes I am most anxious to explore are communication ("Bridge Force") and sexuality ("Morte d'Arthur"). Many of the minor poems reflect in varying degrees these themes, and the final "As A Man Breathes" is an attempt to bring them both together in some sort of positive resolution.

The correspondences are necessarily oblique—natural rather than didactically pronounced. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, though much richer in thematic rime than my collection of poems, is my model for this use of rime. In *The Waste Land* the rimes of theme seem, accidentally but inevitably, to amass evidence (the alluvial method) in two natural clusters: condemnation and ironic contrast. This use of rime replaces a narrative technique and thus eliminates time; the cumulative technique presents life in a cross-section that transcends time, that juxtaposes various civilizations, various legends, and various religions, and so the poet takes one step more towards the eternal. F.R. Leavis provides a good description of the achievement.

The unity the poem aims at is that of an inclusive consciousness: the organization it achieves as a work of art is of the kind that has been illustrated, an organization that may, by analogy, be called musical. It exhibits no progression.
The main references in *The Waste Land* come within the classes represented to these by Dante and Shakespeare; while of the many others most of the essential carry enough of their power with them. By means of such references and quotations Mr. Eliot attains a compression, otherwise unattainable, that is essential to his aim; a compression approaching *simultaneity* —the co-presence in the mind of a number of different orientations, fundamental attitudes, orders of experience.

My point about Eliot is that these references, wrenched by him into simultaneity, "rime* St Augustine of Hippo is made to rime with Buddha, the Smyrna merchant with the Phoenician sailor, the interpretations of the reply of Prajapati with the teachings of Buddha and Augustine, the Hanged God with Osiris and with "the third . . . always beside." The allusions to the fate of Alonso in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* both rime and contrast with the fates of the Phoenician sailor and the Smyrna merchant. The spiritual state of the kingdoms condemned by the Old Testament prophets rimes with the modern moral "wasteland." The references to Olivia of Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, to the Thames of the time of Spenser, to Sappho's comment on the working-man, to the Thames of Elizabeth and Leicester, and to Day's *Parliament of Bees* all rime with one another, and together provide a rime of contrast with the also self-riming descriptions of the typist, Sweeney and Mrs. Porter, "the heirs of city directors," the sludge-filled modern Thames, and the three seduced London Thames-maidens. Eliot brings all
these scenes, people, events, writings into one time dimension, so that they layer on top of one another rather than string out in chronological order, and, through juxtaposition, provide a timeless judgement of mankind.

Timelessness appeals to me, and I even tend to agree with those that suggest that our conception of time as an endless progression may be a false view of reality. I feel that like Eliot I want reality to be at least circular, or better, unified and multi-faceted. This seems to me to account for both my use of thematic rime and my commitment to aestheticism. Oral messages about contemporary events uninterpreted in the light of history, seem to me able to live not much longer than the minute. Thematically a poet should try to embrace history, and technically he should strive for some aesthetic excellence that will cause his work to be "beautiful" as long as there are men to read. The melodies of Langland's Piers Plowman and John Donne's lyrics, such as "Sweetest Love I do not go," strike me as having this quality. The thematic, rhetorical, and sonic qualities of Waller's "Go Lovely Rose" give it a lasting beauty that was undoubtedly recognized by Pound when writing his adaptation "Envoi."

Of course in this century there has been a movement toward (but only "toward") pure aestheticism, as perhaps
best seen in the poetry of Wallace Stevens. But even Stevens exhibits a thematic interest in the timeless qualities of human existence as well as a decorative interest in creating timeless sonic and technical beauty. His "Peter Quince at the Clavier," admittedly a musical exercise in poetry, contains thematic rime in the correspondence of Susanna to all beautiful women. In fact a major point of the poem rests on the "riming" of Susanna with Peter Quince's beloved, and this rime is successful in that it imposes an eternity of beauty on the human flesh. I can certainly sympathize with any aestheticism which is expressed thematically in poetry as well as being exemplified in rhetoric and diction. This is, in fact, precisely what I attempt in "As A Man Breathes."

The aesthetic tendency is also evident in Robert Duncan's preoccupation with sound--his poems when read aloud can be enjoyed without being understood--, and in his concept of "tone leading," where the recurrences of sound are permitted to "lead" the sense. But Duncan's concern with sound in his poetry is also thematic as well as aesthetic. His "The Structure of Rime" poems consider rime and pattern as eternal principles in both language and nature. These poems, in proving this principle, justify, in fact necessitate, the use of rime in poetry if the poems are to be anything but
unnatural, arbitrary, and (to Duncan) insignificant. Rime, as a characteristic of nature, demands the obedience of the writer who would use nature, or the natural language, in poetry.

I ask the unyielding Sentence that shows Itself forth in the language as I make it,
Speak! For I name myself your master, who come to serve.
Writing is first a search in obedience.

0 Lasting Sentence, sentence after sentence I make in your image. In the feet that measure the dance of my pages I hear cosmic intoxications of the man I will be. 15

In the "Structure of Rime II" rime becomes an eternal cosmic principle.

What is the Structure of Rime? I said.

The Messenger in guise of a Lion roard: Why does man retract his song from the impovrished air? He brings his young to the opening of the field. Does he so fear beautiful compulsion?

I in the guise of a Lion roard out great vowels and heard their amazing patterns.

A lion without disguise said: He that sang to charm the beasts was false of tongue. There is a melody within this surfeit of speech that is most man.


An absolute scale of resemblance and disresemblance establishes measures that are music in the actual world.
The Lion in the Zodiac replied:

The actual stars moving are music in the real world. This is the meaning of the music of the spheres.\textsuperscript{16}

Duncan's writing about the underlying principles of his technique causes a certain self-consciousness which, although not obvious in my poetry, is certainly latent in it. Eliot noted the rise of this tendency in his essay From Poe to Valery.

There is, first, the doctrine, elicited from Poe to Baudelaire, which I have already quoted: 'A poem should have nothing in view but itself'; second the notion that the composition of a poem should be as conscious and deliberate as possible, that the poet should observe himself in the act of composition—and this, in a mind as skeptical as Valery's leads to the conclusion, so paradoxically inconsistent with the other, that the act of composition is more interesting than the poem which results from it.\textsuperscript{17}

I think there is a tendency in contemporary poetry for the poet to be so self-conscious that he will actually criticize his poetry during the process of its writing. Charles Olson's "Projective Verse" theory of composition which advocates that "ONE PERCEPTION MUST LEAD IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION,"\textsuperscript{18} may be in part responsible for this, for it has caused poets to include in their poems all of the ideas that occur to them during composition—even those doubts about the quality of the writing itself. Robert Duncan in "The Structure of Rime I"
has a dialogue with "a woman who resembles the sentence" who effectively criticizes the ideas he puts forth. Robert Creeley ends his poem "The Whip"

Ugh
she said, beside me, she put
her hand on
my back, for which act
I think to say this wrongly.19

Michael McClure begins his long poem Dark Brown:

OH GIDDY BLANK WHITE PAGE OH DREAMY MAN OH INTERRED SPIRIT BULK
in meat and hand.20

My poems are also written in accordance with Olson's idea of "COMPOSITION BY FIELD"—composition that results in the poem being a graph of the mind's perceptions. That is, they are not written from a pre-conceived plan, but with image and idea evolving spontaneously from the initiating idea or phrase. My "As A Man Breathes" was written solely from the perception that the essay collection As A Man Thinks seemed to grant primary importance to the wrong human faculty. In this particular poem there is no self-consciousness, probably because of the ease with which it was written. For, in a "projective" poem, self-consciousness usually occurs when the poem gets into such difficulties that these difficulties overwhelm in the poet's mind the poem's original consideration.
For me such poems are usually unsuccessful, and so there is only one clear-cut example of self-consciousness in this collection—"For An April Angel." Although Olson's theory has been current since 1950, the self-conscious poem is still something of a novelty, and I hope someday to exploit its potentialities more fully.

I feel that my technical interest, like Stevens' or Duncan's, will always provide me with new themes, new concerns, rather than plunge me into pure aestheticism. Even self-consciousness can take the poem into fruitful subject matter. Many young writers that I know who take toward poetry an essentially Romantic attitude derived from such poets as Ferlinghetti or Ginsberg, consider such an interest in technique as mine wasteful, decadent, and typical of an "Ivory Tower" attitude. They seem to forget that Ginsberg's Howl and Kaddish are markedly rhetorical, or that even Ferlinghetti's "He" depends on a rather unsophisticated rhetorical style. I have no intention of ever being guilty of ignoring life, of becoming what is popularly called "an academic." However, I do feel that my concerns, Romantic though they may be, are best expressed with some care to the force and the aesthetic value of their expression.

Like Duncan, I wish my poems to be enjoyable without intellectual comprehension, but I, too, wish the thought
content to be as significant as the form. However, although rhetoric and sonic rhymes can often underline nuances in sense, I see no reason why structural beauty cannot exist for its own sake, or why sonic beauty cannot exist outside of any onomatopoeic function. In my poems I try to unite the artist and the thinker, the Renaissance and the Romantic periods, and although I wish neither to dominate completely, if either must dominate, may it be the artist.

My ultimate aim as a poet is to write a thematically unified body of work that will represent to the reader the timeless in both human existence and poetic beauty. The most permanent aspect of human life seems to me the situation of the individual, and the source of poetic beauty seems to be in skilled and unique use of rhetorical (syntactic) and sonic techniques in every poem. The poems in this collection represent to me only a start toward this goal; in fact the writing of them revealed to me much of the nature of the goal and the way to it. The process of writing subsequent poems may well take me further.
These poems are arranged so that their themes proceed from isolation to communication, from frustration and mystification to a degree of assurance. Artistically, they are arranged so that they are unified by recurring titles in the same way that a poem is unified by a rhyme-scheme. The "Vancouver" and "Impossible Sea" series serve to interlock the first eight poems, and to join them to the remainder of the collection that is itself unified by the variously spaced "Bridge Force" poems. Just as one seldom places several rhyming words consecutively, I seldom juxtapose "riming" poems. Except for "Bridge Force IV" and "Bridge Force V", and "Bridge Force VIII" and "Bridge Force IX," any consecutive poems of the same title I consider to form an inviolable whole.
TO THE LIONS GATE BRIDGE
(a problem in belonging)

Resonant old bridge
from foreshore to foreshore
(depending on me)
suspended here    it is again
as usual
and why not
    I wonder--

does it know anything of loyalty
to whom?
    To my car
pounding its rubber cleats against its decks
to the inlet    splashing at it beneath
to that shore    or this shore
or to the cable    that hangs it
brooding metallically
from concrete and rock

Now
    parked on the north
I see the mistake:
It was not always here
oh faithful to someone
link across rough waters . . .

Still
    would it look strange
strung across the Second Narrows
--a problem in belonging--
or perhaps    merely rust with the shame
of being once
somewhere else . . .
I watch the workmen
take the steel braces
from between the frail concrete
of a new building,
while next door
an old redbrick one
is battered into slag
and burnt.

Years ago there was a tent here
--you see the pictures in the Centennial Guide--
then the campfire ashes
were kicked aside
and frame and clapboard
--still scented with the breath
of first-seen timber--
hammered together.

Later
grey stone brought in from somewhere east
shining bricks from Clayburn
--short years of barter
bringing it about,
short years of human eyes
regarding one strip
of sterile dirt.

In the mountains you can see
the ghost
the ghostly towns abound:
Huntingdon a skeleton of noble streets,
Barkerville a green-hung
grey-board mummy,
Fairview some grassed-in ashes
phoenix moved on.

But here
the ashes are made
and hurried away,
by generations of men
whose children
fight to build castles
daily in the sand.
IMPOSSIBLE SEA  I

Standing on the beach
unable to swim
it is as far as I can go:

with sand shovel
toss melting grains
into the sea
pile them up
go forward
but no engineer:
all is swept away
and then as every day
the tide has changed
and comes at me.

Working south and the
inlet river the border
nowhere to go
Can't hide
the waves will come eastward
the shallows still no consolation
can't go back always
ankles awash
A VANCOUVER HISTORY

Grandfather among newspapers
feeling the raindrops
in Stanley Park
A month later his body is found
floating between two logs
in False Creek--
which should be an inlet
but may be the world's largest
salt millpond

Played false further east
with other old men
long ago pulled from the harbour with gaff-hooks
he came to Vancouver in the 30's
heading west pinched above the wheels
below a C.N. flatcar
and munching on discarded Jap oranges.
Later perhaps the war mills swallowed him
or the beaches

In the 50's you saw him
hanging in old tweeds
looking seaward from the roof
of the first aquarium
making it disreputable

Today he is seen for the last time.
Newspapers pick him up
give plugs to the Salvation Army
and the City Police--
the nation's best suicide squad
of which I approve
THE HERMIT

Cedar trees stiff
in the frozen soil
stopping
what could have been said
about them.

Ridged ground

barring the stepping foot,
clear air distancing the eye

Mountains cut: unreceptive this
snowless winter.
For F.J.

Desdemona wise
to marry Othello
tho an ugly match,
but handsome Ferdinand
can never see
why Elinor prefers
the cankered
secretary.

In this time
a girl we all might have married
was made pregnant
by a half-breed

who by now
has given her two children
a rented cabin
and a thin string
of social assistance checks.

Her wedding night present
was a beating
her second child
a rape
she implies,
and his only other occupation
drinking.

He lies in the cabin
fattening
while she seeks part-time jobs
to feed him.

A good Griselda
from her first seduction,
tho I cannot picture
that first
parting of the flesh for him,
or now
how she can slave
for the feel of him.
VANCOUVER II

Facing the thought
the setting sun
I could not have it other:
it goes down
and that's an end to me.

Strange ideas
to set down here--
that the sunrise is always hidden
sun clearing the mountains in midstride,
that the eye
is led along its path
by the flow of the rivers
the slope of the earth
the opening of the sky
west.

No trouble finding
which way is back
front
the sun setting
far away at the start of things.

Driftwood piles up on the beach
people pile up on the beach
buildings torn down and reborn
year after year
within sight of the sea.

No room for ghost towns
out here on the edge of things:
o no place for ghosts.
Dawn
and I am caught
looking east again.
Gray
the awful gray of the
clouds off the sea
Every morning the dawns are gray off the sea	hro mottled
and the clouds hand static
thru the windshield
in the four a.m. east.

Glen Valley or a
Squamish woodlot
head full of sake and arms full of
stagnant love—
caress her again and
stagger-roll off the aching knee
try to look for ocean blue in ocean sky
try to smile but
check the graying gravel road

check the dawn.
BRIDGE FORCE I

The lights
across the inlet
the girl
across the inlet
the bay
Gatsby pacing the sand, 
I
driving nightly along the beach, 
Magellan
may have loved the girl next door, 
de Lesseps
a maharani--
Leander
Paris
Menelaus
back and forth across the water--
back and forth across the water--
it is the bridge force
it is the bridge force
romance of the remote
romance of the remote
lights made many by the
lights made many by the
luring dance of waves:
luring dance of waves:
the push
breast stroke
the push
hammer stroke
out and
hammer stroke
on.

_____


BRIDGE FORCE II

Robin by the window with a worm flies away.

The problem is still one of movement and mastery. I will go to and go to and to
taking— that is taking—

Fly away Peter Fly away Peter with Paul or Paula, Paulette or Pauline I will reach you Lover please come back I've been travellin' over mounds miles mountains inlets and mountains without end I'm travellin' over over and will do it over

Punch my ticket no the orange one the world is an obstacle of course inlets and mountains without end— I must have paths, lanes, fissures, tunnels, highways, rowboats bridges or waterwings the transmigration of souls on a wing and a prayer and

Look baby I've got you for a day— maybe I'm Superman

——
The rupture is hard to take
and superseding Superman
I drive a Ford for one more hour
burning the world's oil
presenting its cardboard to be punched
and muttering deceitfully:

you old whore I will
FUCK YOUR DISTANCE

Cooperate you bitch he said
swimming the Hellespont
(and she for once irrationally
supported him)

but later someone
reached thru air to
pick up her handkerchief
strained himself.

Warrior after warrior I see
down the heroic darkness of ages
reaching
crossing on his own sword to the beloved
and darling
I would walk a white line for you
the double one down the center of the
Lake Washington Floating ?
or the Oakland Suspension ?
or even the Melbourne Harbour rigid arch ?
or the Trans-Pacific reverse cantilever ?
or the Inter-Stellar simple truss ?
he said,
laying his cloak at her feet
as she tripped him
and knocked out the center span--

which rupture was hard
to take.
IMPOSSIBLE SEA II

Something is wrong
the moon is out tonight
but there is no cure for it
or the moon

Too much horizon
wind blowing in more horizon
out here for the moon's
long journey to the sea

although
in happier times it would be
happier

Watch
it move
made many
below by the fertile

impossible sea

watch them move
though no reason for them or
the move.

Stand alone in sea-breeze and
watch
MEMORIAL DAYS

Every holiday weekend
driving up and down the coast,
the super-highways leading me on
down from snowy Garibaldi
the inlet, the river, the quiet delta pastures
--the too quiet delta pastures--
across the border
past everywhere
rundown taverns
country stores untouched
since their building in the thirties
grass
growing up round the gas pumps
and wrecking yards increasing
until in Seattle
every other monument
a heap of wrecked cars.

On and past:
the flashing
white-slashed asphalt
the neons of shopping centers
electric fences
extravaganzas
up and down the old frontier
shutting off the rot
the grass
the men.

Crescent City
dirty
but a good place to buy wine,
then back to Seattle
choose from rows
of supermarketed shining hubcaps
to show the girls
strolling the streets
back in Fraser Valley towns,
ever growing
sarcastic dark-haired girls
waiting
like each summer.
IMPOSSIBLE SEA  III

Standing on the cliff by the sea
it is an invitation
a certainty
more vivid than the face
across the water--
Go west young man.

It begins here
or on the bridge suspended north-eastwards across
above the waves moving east
on my right
A high and lonely bridge.
The joy that was before her in time
seems a false thing
The land is now verdant quiet and crumbling.
To go on is all that is left
and to go on is the ocean.

A stone falls
slides west
a moment of living.
INTERLUDE

Love the touch of words
the sound of softness
of loudness
let them crowd
round about the ear
sound is a sound thing

Love the god
of sad
of mad
the near cantata of the
tintinabu

la
the pat-patting short sen-sen
vowels
on the anvil of your fear

I will refrain from conjuring
with the brain
and claims to know no devils,
angels

I will give only
from the supple roots of lingua
sound
to your ear

Hear
is all I ask
Treat your mind
to the first sweet notes

see them swell
feel the touch of words
in your stirrups

love this
your first

your incunabulum
of sound
FOR AN APRIL ANGEL

She is a girl
very much inside a white dress
for though she is well-shaped
her clothes will always seem to hang
very much around

[description
is a bird who comes down
all too easy

but this is important
blonde girl
very much girl
running round inside
each day
suits of clothing--

[she will not believe me
This is
all too easy:
even--
this is a too
self-conscious poem!

But there is no choice--
here in this delapidated lab of an office
blinking at the overcast
splashing thru sea-water and
panting up mountainsides what is
lacking when I have to leave

even this girl
unsaid.
In the summer
one gets sunburned on the beaches.
There are not enough bridges
to throw shadows
on the beaches
and the mist-edged sky
brings salt-edged winds
to grate
against flinching eyes.
The sand
sticks to the toes,
the blankets,
goes from beach
to bathtub to rooftop
in a day,
sticks to the held hands
at night—
cuts
between lovers.

Lovers
  yes the summer brings
sad lovers in regret
together:
out of the white of winter
the death of springtime,
out of the dreams
of North Shore hills,
out of the prefabricated bungalows
of automatic love
of love
  for love
  for love
for rainstorms
or for cold and misty mornings
blanketed together beneath the trees . . .

Summer sheds brief sunshine
on the still caressing
corpses of the past,
lights the way to
lip-biting
burials of fear

gives warm days
for lazy contemplations
gives hands to hold
and hands to need holding
faltering eyes
looking for
  faltering eyes . . .

that they have seen each other
is enough to be thankful for.
BRIDGE FORCE V

(ROAD TO JAPAN)

Reading RIPRAP, I
see him striding narrowly
north and south along the coast;
he claims he is looking for work,
and all the while
looking among the rocks
the ferns, the bear grass
in the hay
and up and down the sticky trunks of pine trees
for the excuse to stay.

I on one side of Sumas Mountain
tired of the hop fields and the rain
and he on the other
making lame verses of
platitudes and
thin ice.

Later
he wanders down the Nooksack
away from glittering Baker
sick of it all
"ready to leave"
no San Joaquin Valley old man
to write the ends to desperate poems--
his back to the wall of a berry-pickers cabin
facing mud and dark clouds
giant fire-blackened stumps and scrub cedar--
knowing
"All America south and east"
wondering why America
funneled him out
onto its western edge
to walk with sleepy mongrel dogs
beachcombing for anything
among the hills and mountains
behind.
FAIRVIEW

Sage
the way of the sage brush
by the timbers of the mine-head
by the mortar of the houses
near the charred bed-springs
the twisted grates
and the blown-out wine bottles
green or sun-purple
in the ash.
No movement today
but the wind
blowing warm up the Okanagan
and the errant tumbleweed
lazy among the bricks

The old Fairview townsite
'roaring' silver mining town
largest from
Calgary to the coast
stretching four miles
up the gorge above Oliver.
Posing for pictures
for the first paper
large beards and hopes
striding thru the sage brush
scorning the bite of the spear grass
striking the rattlesnake and
scratching, denting
pitting the earth

The mine shafts now mere
yard square hollows
in the grass--
stumbled upon;
and the houses
more substantial excavations
requiring three steps
to surmount.
In this one
is a woman's shoe
green suede
and side-buttoned
and near a bed-spring
an empty coffee pot--
stains that must be
fifty years old

Still the warm wind up the valley
and the sage brush
wise as
purple glass
years in the sun
calmly spreading thru
inviting bed-springs
FOR A SUDDEN LOVE

Sunshine girl
coming with the summer
as surprise
I find your eyes
the still waters of a warm evening
and the mischief of your smile
the breeze
    that tugs the child to play

Suntan and moonlight
is there no way to resist touching you
fingers yearning for gold
tongue trembling moist
and body
    too too hollow with the fear of you
the fear of you—

I would touch you
as you stand there
sure-bodied and knowing
kiss you
but I fear
I would only brush
the tip of a curl
or caress that smile
pale on your lips
THE VISIT

There is no hope for us.

A row of tall, black-green cedars by the sea obscures the fog-soaked waters.

They cannot help it.

They have not grown close enough to form a grove nor tall enough to touch even with their crowns pressed against the sky and yet their shadow hides you from the noonday sunlight gold-hued girl hides you from the day—hides you even as you radiate my expectation standing half-smiling as if waiting as if waiting for the sunset in my doorway.
THE FACT

Dark bars keep moving over the naked moon.

You sit relaxed beside me small hand shifting the gears, while I drive quickly thru the slatted night humming.
CLOUDS

Standing high in a building
alone
watching the dark rain flash down
somehow I remember the childhood snowstorms
I could not start
and then that last one
when,
(huddled in a ditch-spilled car
with three feet of the stuff)
implacable clouds of hand-size flakes
kept coming down
anyway
Darkness has closed the windows. The young voices the traffic are now even more outside.

An hour ago the sunset showed yellow star-shaped flowers on the bushes by the roadside as if drawn there by a girl. Now her lab coat lying on the desk tells me how an empty office is made emptier.

Odd how one stares at a thing or listens to the dull hum of fluorescent lights.
STILL LOOKING TO YOU

This summer
sharing the cool wind
you too
have seen it become a habit
to expect the rainclouds
that daily hide the sun

Noontimes now
are a figure on the clock,
shadows
  undefined and all embracing,
at night even the moon
must strain
to peek at us

Whitecaps mar the water
remind me
I cannot remember one clear day
of looking at the sea
of seeing the trees contented
the sun unrolling
uncontested in blue

No blue
unclouded with moisture;
no sun
unscarred with clouds

not even a face
bright enough
to deny the rain
nor eyes
blue enough
to swim in
HAPPY ARE THE LONESOME PINES

Viewed thru the rain
from the musty flap
of the tent
the pine trees I remember
all equally drenched
looking distant
and together.

Today
you and I
tho at first saddened
by the loss
of the gregarious sun
now kneel at a spotted window
and feel
no need to shout
to the slowly walking couples
that pass
huddled
under single umbrellas,
nor lack of reasons to turn away
into a solitude
of eyes
BRIDGE FORCE VI

Looking three hundred miles distant to where you are
I find the orange and brown Rockies are mile-high cliffs running north and south; below them, their trench is like the groove of a children's slide--
falling south like the coast.

I remember that from the sea the Coast Range The Cascades The Monashees also run north and south. The Fraser River must flow south to get west; the Columbia detours but can be successful: the land tho perversely corrugated still slopes west to sky and sea.

The grain: is down The force: beyond and out here as you know we look south as if down the blue-roofed tunnel of a long mountain valley

and occasionally say "Back east in Calgary" as if cowboys raised hogs and wore spats. And struggling back to check is not like climbing hills to fetch water-- it is a battle of the mind:
the Continental Divide is our back porch and if there were anything back there WOULD WE HAVE COME THIS FAR?
Peaceful, darling
this side of the Rockies
--so it is named--
like the alpine valley that is always beyond,
as peaceful as the salt-waves
lapping at the onward-gazing pilings of a pier,
and sitting here I wonder
what strange force
unaccountable
could have torn you to the wrong side
of that stone-age
Edith Cavell
and then what other force
can be tearing my eyes against America to you there
and away from the quiet
of this pregnant sea.
MORTE D'ARTHUR  I

King Arthur gets a son on his sister:
   two bodies sweated:
you have lain by her
Begets a son the
   "ruin of the realm"

Merlin
maker of a king
chased by churls thru the morning
forseer of death
--I would have saved myself--

Arthur
awe-striking sword
conceived in a three-hour widow
"to my Lord King Uther"
sudden allegiances
by the swaying arras
of cold stone bedrooms

the shaping of a kingdom
no adultery
but incest made at Tintagil.
MORTE D'ARTHUR II

Quests of honour
for horses
for "the questing beast"
or for knights
  invisible:
past strange castles
on strange horses
"enhorser again"
the battle at Bedegraine
merry-go-round of horses
Sir Griflet, King Clariance
Sir Kay, Gwimliart de Bloi
up
  and down
honour for a horse.

Then King Lot dead
  by Pellenore
to be killed by Gawaine,
with Arthur
  still desiring
and begetting,
and Balin
  travelling
finding only mandatory jousts to death,
the bodies of knights
necessarily fall before him,
and all around the darkness of unknown castles
and the reoccurring sound of curses
that bring only death
blood and brother together.
MORTE D'ARThUR III

Margawze
wife of King Lot
foremost against Arthur
and daughter to Igraine
unwitting mother
of her half-brother Arthur,
travels to his court
"thither to espy"

"passing fair"
she is
and Arthur
"desires to lie by her"
desires her
maybe only for a day
and she
good wife
soon somehow
agrees.
"She rested her a month."

Malory suggests she plays
for her husband's safety:
unknowing man
it is all he can do.

But woman
you are many places--
departing from shadowed gates
at night
and lately from main doors
shadowed in full daylight and full sight
of him:
You laugh and toss hair--
you did that too
didn't you Margawze
nuzzling in the strong arms
of a love-strong king.

This is your brother
does no voice tell
Margawze
how to be "good"

to a man?
MORTE D'ARTHUR IV

Bold King Arthur moving on
thru sister son
and Gawaine . . .

Gawaine last crutch of Arthur
defender of the family
but son of Margawze and Lot:

Gawaine, Sir Gawaine knew not what he was doing,
striking wild at Lancelot across France for family
and Guinevere--

that infidelity by avenged.
MORTE D'ARThUR V

Arthur with Bedevere
hollow stones
by the colorless chapel.

Bedevere
pacing with a foreign sword;
Arthur
lying black with the memory
of the Samite arm.

Whose was the hand
that felled a king of kings?
There is a name
a son
but no evidence.

Blood leaves--
and where the rubied scabbard
magic home
of magic sword?

Homeless
kingless
the sword too must depart;
scabbard, queen,
knight and blood;
those are the precedents.

The lady too must wonder
was this gray man king?
MORTE D'ARTHUR VI

In the beginning were only  
sword and scabbard  
the promise  

  the assurance  
--blue-etched trees  
dancing in the water--  
sword and scabbard  
fresh-washed links with the mirror  
gifts of the eternal mother  
in the lake.

Lusty young knight  
hero  
master of the stone,  
receiver of the waters,  
light of our fireside fathers,  
then lover,  
lover, brother and father,  
father soon forever  
of his own fortunes,  
passive in velvet  
awaiting the child  
watching the child:  

now dying jewelless  
in twilight,  
chastizing one last  
and doubting knight,  
no nearer in this life  
--even here  
on flint and stone--  
to the patient and upright arm.
ELEGY

With eyes on my grandmother
as she lay dying
the white skin whitening
the long throat
tightening in croaks of non-recognition

The skeleton
stretching the thinness
of the sheets,
the clotted hair
fading for the pink of skull,
the face whitening
the cheekbones stiffening
the forehead bruise from the fall
purpling
and her knuckles
the bony grasping knuckles that slashed
at the nurse's face
now fastening
at the bed rails.

Then
did I remember
the money
the hugs
the macaroni
the cakes and the pudding
the obsession for giving?

Then did I remember
the divorce
and abandonment
the distrust of my mother
the cold and whitening face
the guilt
the competition for giving
the long throat tightening
at my father
in croaks of non-recognition.
Look for some stars thru the rain—
it is a faith that must travel light-years.
Kneeling at windows in the daytime standing
in the quiet green of mercury-vapor lamplight at night
staring at each spiralling raindrop,
or merely strolling in the darkness of deserted public beaches staring skyward at the faintly moonlit shapes of maybe strolling clouds that are going somewhere before the dawn;
always looking pondering for impossible assessments of cloudy destinies across distances and distances

What is going on in that dimension or that?
Naked eyes thru the clouds, space capsules thru the night, a ticket to Mt. Palomar or a mind that wanders to her five fifty or three hundred miles away—
there is no stopping it
or the peering thru moving
midnight curtains of rain
to a day
some summer day
that is too many months
or centuries
away.
AFTERTHOUGHT ON ARTHUR

Mere relaxation
as a warm bath
with flowers, or a feather bed
on a cold morning, not a muscle answering a call to go.

Margawze and Guinevere
beginning and end of Arthur.

Flesh within flesh
and Lot fighting gallantly
at Castle Terrabil,
Happy husband faithful, spying wife,
the quivering flesh within, the moist sperm rebounding from dilating cervix.

Then the innocently venging Guinevere more discreet or lucky perhaps not learning as Margawze asArthur each opening of the flesh the joining of the flesh, each opening the granting of that seriousness: fatherhood in a precious womb.

Lie back and yield woman, Margawze, Guinevere or kneeling crouching over him dance on it in the moonlight thou holy masochist

--the violent pleasure of flesh-contorting eruption--the death of kings.
Dear Helen

    tonight
this crackling night of the great pumpkin
the children
bagged out in their costumes
wander thru the speckled fog
    --ghost of darkness
ghosts of streetlights--
questers for the mysterious
ghost of passion
trick or treat.

Twin headlighted
I drift past these holy
bands of pilgrims
bands of children
mothers
nun-like in housedresses
holding
    holy hands--
drift past the reverence
of licorice and black powder
burnt offerings to the ghost
of this banging eve

with motor and headlights
cut thru the aimless
in their ceremonies
    (door to door
    strange faces in the fog
go on
for once more surely
to you
my fiancee.
BRIDGE FORCE IX

Flowering,
the lonely diamond
looks toward beauty
the rose window at Chartres

(O Mary
Mother of Happiness
with pictures of your wedding-dress
sketched on every page
of your good-conduct book)
MEMORY.

And then there is she who came to the high school the year after my graduation Whom I was not to see for three years or know for five but boys talk, and I remember buying an annual and staring at her—

Two pictures first row white sox with legs tucked in body drawn together solemn: as if sheltering from the surrounding smiles.

There was the word lonely and the urge to hold her . . .

Now I have known her for six months and have married her.
THE BRIDEGROOM

He looks up from the bed
to the dresser
which they bought
together.

The sheet and blanket
he hugs
round his neck

her pink
dacron quilt
has escaped him again
--floats on the floor.

Her glass baubled lamp
winks
at his eye.
A blue
stuffed dog,
a row of perfume bottles,
an alien
cocktail boot
tipped.

It is dawn
and light is staring
thru the open
venetian blind.
He could never sleep
in the light.

But for her
sleeping hand
behind him
he would not know
where he was.
TOTEMS

He has been shopping with her
and has seen them everywhere—
the Chippendale, Heppelwhite
French Provincial
in the artificial
livingrooms, bedrooms—

he has pictured
her electrically shaven limbs
draped across
the knobs and knots
of tortured wood,
pictured the familiar hairbrush
staring
from the bowed and inlaid
cabinet fronts

He has watched the people buy
who will take TV dinners
from the "Louis Catorz tables"
who will murmur to Cliburn
from the French Empire stereo

who will retire
to their Early American rockers
unsure

where they are,
knowing only
they have avoided Denmark
in a new
last refuge
of Old Colonial homes.

Everywhere he remembers
that summer
and the park
the old plaid-shirted Indian
with a white helper,
both commissioned by the government
or university,
who copied dead warriors' battles
victories, famines
with lagging strokes
on iron-cored poles.
SONG

Little wife
pressing her pimples
in the bathroom,
little wife
tearing loved flesh
from an ingrown toenail
in the bedroom,

little wife
scalding scarlet
her hands at lunchtime,
or layering the air
with dysentery
at suppertime,

little wife
crowned with curlers
in the mornings,
little wife
greased with contraceptives
in the evenings

how can I write poems
to woo thee
now that I have won thee
little wife
little girl
Outside my window
the buoy
in the bay
is a fixed thing.
The squat harbour tugboats
with great orange
sawdust-laden barges,
the graceful
ocean tugs
with black strings
of empty hulks,
depend on it.

In fog and rough sea
they creep along
towlines shortened
to nuzzle their loads
against its greying shape.
In sunlight
foam streaming from both bows
they seem to aim
their dancing towlines
as if at a floating
compass-pole.

Today
five tugs
clustered round the buoy
as my wife
learned on the phone
of her kitten dying. 
--a thing perhaps
I said
to be expected
after sixteen years.

She sits now
staring at a picture
of a knob-kneed four year old
clutching her kitten,
and tries to eulogize
each cat-fight and purr
in quatrains.

Poor balladed cat (I say)
hanging from the realistic
hands of a vet
"outside my window
the buoy / in the bay
is a fixed thing."

More fixed tho
the voyage
home again.
AS A MAN BREATHES

I

As a man breathes
as he touches
the soil with his hands

calloused fingers sliding
on the dust-smoothed grain

as he warms
his hands
over the open fire
or stares
at his frosting breath
in the night

as he pauses
to watch
the mounting treachery of snowflakes
letting them gather
on his feet,
or walks faster
in the rain
to feel the drops
on his face

or at midnight
as he walks
slowly
touching with his lungs
the moon-cold air,
counting as child
the stars,
counting his steps
cold
against the confronting night.
AS A MAN BREATHES

II

But as a man
shuts his doors
against the night
builds with stone
against the rain,

clears and kills the land
against the world,
for protection,
his mind
for civilization,
as he seeks the best--
metals for riches,
grapes for the cellar,
maiden for jealousy,
as he takes this maiden
and laughs
to destroy her maidenhood
and then
having left her
lies sleepless
seeking the night of his new bride's
lost virginity

as the man seeks the image in the mind
virgin
politician
poet
journalist
musician
"man of letters"
"John Fredrick Carlotti"
--secretary
papers on the desk
names in the news
GBS or GB

as he uses words
forms
makes poems
contracts
again and again
enunciates the "I"
says "taste"
or "bourgeois"
"uncivilized"
"unregimented"
and the harping
"middle-class"
AS A MAN BREATHEs

III

But as the woman
reaches for the warmth
of the body's belonging
in moonlight
in slatted daylight,
as she loves willingly
and loses
while coveting consistently
images of diamonds and wedding-dresses
white
as her frightened cheeks
as the bride
dreams of bungalows and silverware
checkered tablecloths
and sheets
smothered in roses
for the husband,

but then takes a ring
a winter elopment
cold water
    warped floors
crockery stains
the rhythm
    of rusting springs.
And as a boy
frames
his first dollar earned
and shrugs
to see it fade,
or buys a flower
that must wilt
for the mother
or the girl,
buys a car
of rusted metal
stained upholstery
that is his

as a man grows
and puts his arm
around the wife

as he notices
her heartbeat
and her breath
beneath
the bulky cloth

as they walk
by the ocean
see the waves and the clouds
the tin cans and the orange peel
the greyness and the gulls,
touch the stones
the seaweed
the logs
the shells
the ashes from the weiner roasts
walk after walk,
wave after wave

as a man is pleased
by her smile,
as she warms
to see him pleased
the cold seawind in his hair

as a man breathes.
FOOTNOTES


2George L. Trager and Henry Lee Smith, Jr., An Outline of English Structure (Norman, Okla.: Battenburg Press, 1951.) They say in part, "Any utterance made in English ends in one of the terminal junctures. If it is a minimal complete utterance it has no other terminal junctures within it. In that case it must have one or more pitch phonemes, one--AND ONLY ONE--primary stress, and may have one or more other stresses and one or more plus junctures, then there are as many secondary stresses as there are pluses, but not more, and there may be less. Such a minimal complete utterance may be called by the technical term PHONEMIC CLAUSE." pp.49-50.


4I, ii, ll. 157-180, and III, i, ll. 9-22.


9Ibid., p.80.


FOOTNOTES

Continued

14 Ibid., p. 99.
16 The Opening of the Field, p. 13.


