

**WEDDING THE POEM AND ITS
READER:
THE FUNCTION OF NARRATIVE
IN CONTEMPORARY LYRIC POETRY**

Steve Evans

Bachelor of Economics (University of Adelaide)

Master of Arts (Creative Writing) (University of Adelaide)

The Flinders University of South Australia

FACULTY OF EDUCATION, HUMANITIES, LAW AND THEOLOGY

Date of submission: November 2009

A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Steve Evans

November 2009

Acknowledgements

In writing this thesis I have benefited from the assistance and cooperation of several people. I would like to thank Professor Jeri Kroll and Senior Lecturer Karen Vered for their feedback and insightful comments. I would particularly like to thank my wife, Kate Deller-Evans, for her support and encouragement, and for her perceptive advice.

Published Poems and Prizes

Published poems in this thesis:

- ‘Crow on the Cross’ was published in *Unruly Sun* (2007)
- ‘Dachau’ appeared in *The New England Review*, No. 18 (2003)
- ‘Wedding Present’ was in *Fluorescent Voices* (1997)

Prizes:

- ‘Dachau’ won the 2003 New England Poetry Prize
- Draft poems from *The Floating Bride* were the basis for being awarded the 2008 Barbara Hanrahan Fellowship (\$15,000) in the 2008 Adelaide Festival of Arts

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION – EVERYBODY LOVES A WEDDING	10
INTRODUCTION	11
THE HISTORICAL NEGLECT OF NARRATIVE IN LYRIC POETRY	12
A FOCUS ON WEDDINGS	13
METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES	15
SUMMARY	30
CHAPTER 2: SETTING COORDINATES.....	32
INTRODUCTION	33
WHY POETRY? WHY WEDDINGS?	34
WHAT IS WEDDING POETRY?	41
DEFINING NARRATIVE AND STORY	46
THE ROLE OF THE READER	56
WHAT IS LYRIC POETRY?	66
THE NARRATIVE IN THE LYRIC	88
A NARRATIVE INSTANT IN THE LYRIC THEATRE	93
SUMMARY	99
CHAPTER 3: A FISTFIGHT, A HANGMAN, A LION’S BRIDE	101
INTRODUCTION	102
INVITING THE READER TO A WEDDING: ‘THE WEDDING’	109
BEST LAID PLANS: ‘THE WEDDING PLAN’	119
THE ANTI-EPITHALAMIUM: ‘POEM NOT TO BE READ AT YOUR WEDDING’ ..	126
AFTER HAPPILY EVER AFTER: ‘THE BRIDAL SUITE’	128
A LONGER NARRATIVE: ‘MARRYING THE HANGMAN’	136
EATING THE BRIDE: ‘THE LION’S BRIDE’	143
SUMMARY	151
CHAPTER 4: A PALIMPSEST OF BRIDES	154
INTRODUCTION	155
EPITHALAMIA & ANTI-EPITHALAMIA	156
QUESTIONS OF LENGTH	161
THE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE CYCLE: GAPS, RESISTANCE AND INSIGHTS	176
SUMMARY	184
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	187
INTRODUCTION	188
THE IMPORTANCE OF NARRATIVE	191
THE ROLE OF THE READER	192
ANALYSING THE LYRIC POEM	195
SUMMARY	198
CHAPTER 6: CREATIVE COMPONENT <i>THE FLOATING BRIDE</i>	202
LIST OF POEMS	204
<i>CROW ON THE CROSS</i>	206
<i>THE BURNING RIVER</i>	242
<i>LITTLE MURDERS</i>	285
APPENDIX 1: THE WEDDING PLAN – AIDAN COLEMAN.....	313
APPENDIX 2: POEM NOT TO BE READ AT YOUR WEDDING – BETH ANN	
FENNELLY	315
APPENDIX 3: THE BRIDAL SUITE – MATTHEW SWEENEY	316
APPENDIX 4: THE LION’S BRIDE – GWEN HARWOOD.....	317
APPENDIX 5: MARRYING THE HANGMAN – MARGARET ATWOOD.....	318

APPENDIX 6: WEDDING POEMS	322
REFERENCES	347

ABSTRACT

The use of language involves patterning within a network of word meanings. Thus, at least a basic form of narrative function is intrinsic to our speaking, our writing, and our reading whenever we wish to move utterance beyond mere noise. Yet theorists and creative writers, including poets, disagree when it comes to lyric poetry, often regarding the narrative function there as alien, trivial, inactive, or simply too difficult to deal with. This is most unusual, especially given that the lyric poem, too, is inextricably bound up with the reader's sense-making that depends to a large extent on their normal use of language. Why this odd denial of narrative agency in such poetry? Is it really so foreign to the lyric poem?

To demonstrate that there actually is a narrative element at work in lyric poetry, I have focussed on the way that such poetry refers to the constituent events and characters of weddings. This engages the reader with a set of well-known social and cultural practices comprising the trace of the archetypal wedding story, from courtship through to honeymoon, and various stops between. A stock of wedding motifs (such as bride, groom, ring, proposal, exchange of vows, etc.) readily links to other parts of that story, enabling short forms of writing to convey a great deal of information with

only brief and sometimes indirect references. This is possible since the reader makes the expected connection to the larger narrative template.

My thesis demonstrates, with particular reference to contemporary lyric poems (those published since 1950), that a narrative process does underpin lyric poetry. I begin by discussing my motivation for undertaking this project, next considering the development of the epithalamium (the traditional wedding poem), and then focussing on the nature of the lyric poem and of narrative. In subsequent chapters, I apply my findings to a variety of contemporary lyric poems that employ wedding references, initially ones written by other authors and then a selection of my own poems written for this study. I also relate the research process to my own creative work, addressing the connection between the two in relation to the contemporary debate about practice-led research and research-led practice, concluding that the research and practice elements are necessarily interwoven.

My thesis shows that it is a great oversimplification to define contemporary lyric poetry in a way that denies it a narrative function, as has been routine. Storytelling is manifest in our daily lives, and is arguably an essential characteristic of language use. It is a key human tendency that equips us better to communicate with one another and it is just as indigenous to lyric poetry as to other forms of textual communication, even though its traces may sometimes be fainter. A poem might be said to show narrative qualities even when it is very brief and personal, often through quite deliberate reliance on the reader completing the text by invoking personal knowledge of human behaviour, rites of passage and social practices.

In summary, the lyric poem can be said to operate in a narrative mode as part of the poet's and the reader's process of making meaning through language. This is exemplified by the lyric wedding poem.

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION — EVERYBODY LOVES A
WEDDING

The world is a wedding

~Sayings of the Rabbis~

Polano 2003, p. 287

INTRODUCTION

Lyric and narrative seem odd bedfellows. Lyric is often seen as the brief poetic expression of an individual's emotional state whereas narrative is typically regarded as the telling of a story. As long as the emphasis in defining lyric poetry rests so greatly on its subjective and sometimes intense representation of personal feeling, it is not surprising that it is rarely credited with performing a narrative function. That longstanding differentiation is, however, outmoded and unsustainable.

It is curious that critical writing on the narrative function in lyric poetry has been relatively rare; until recently it has mostly comprised brief assertions about lyric's characteristics in which the narrative aspect might receive cursory attention. In contrast, this thesis argues that because narrative is intrinsic to all written communication, it must also function in the lyric poem. Furthermore, it is important to note the narrative function of contemporary lyric because it tells us something about the way that we read, and how we construct meaning in all poetry—indeed, potentially in all texts. The thesis argues that the key factor in the construction of such narrative is the lyric poet's reliance on the contribution made by the reader.

Recognising the narrative function in poetry is also significant because it informs an understanding of the way that poets construct their work, especially in regard to the spaces left in the text and the economies possible in abbreviated pieces of writing that can rely on shared cultural and particularly literary knowledge to fill them. In a genre where everything counts, where

everything is significant, that ability to omit certain detail and to imply rather than to explicitly state allows greater emphasis to rest on other poetic devices such as heightened language. It also allows more experimentation than obedience to full narration would permit.

The different elements of the thesis are outlined in the remainder of this introductory chapter. The study itself is based around a survey of lyric poems, each of which includes a reference to a wedding, and a newly written collection of my own poems that refer to weddings. The wedding reference was chosen to illustrate the reader's power to construct narrative when linking the rather spare material of a lyric poem to a large and complex, but widely understood type of story. This act by a reader exemplifies the inherent narrative function of these brief texts. The lyric poem, in other words, is greater than the sum of its parts.

THE HISTORICAL NEGLECT OF NARRATIVE IN LYRIC POETRY

Fashions do alter in poetry but some change very slowly. The very beginning of Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 350BC) makes clear the most desirable quality of poetry when he specifies 'plot as requisite to a good poem' (1987, p. 39). It is an influential view, one largely adhered to for more than two thousand years. While storytelling and the use of plot devices have been preferred in poetry that clearly embraces narrative, the lyric has been relegated to a lesser ranking. That state persisted until lyric's relatively recent ascendance as the

most prominent form of poetry, though there has still been disagreement about the existence of narrative qualities in the lyric.

In the late sixteenth century prominent philosophers Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes rejected the lyric as poetry altogether on the grounds that it fails to tell a story. They consigned it to philosophy and oratory as part of rhetoric, on the basis that poetry should reflect the Aristotelian requirement for enacting human affairs through dramatic events (Dowlin 1941, p. 167). Holding plot out as ‘the mark of poetry’ (Dowlin 1941, p. 170) subordinates the lyric, treating it and narrative as mutually exclusive. Later discussion in this thesis of what constitutes narrative and lyric poetry reveals that such a strict definition of poetry haunts literary criticism. At best, narrative qualities in lyric poetry still seem to be severely neglected.

A FOCUS ON WEDDINGS

Numerous writers and theoreticians claim that narrative is fundamental to the way in which we understand and relate our own lives, that ‘we are, in essence, narrative creatures’ and ‘narrative is a powerful and in many ways desirable way [*sic*] in which to construe or construct the human self’ (Ruf 1994, pp. 799-800). In order to examine the narrative impulse at work in lyric poems, I have chosen to focus on the way that they refer to the constituent events and characters of weddings, such as bride, groom, ring, proposal, exchange of vows, etc. Each of these represents a specific aspect of the larger wedding story that most readers will recognise. Knowing how these parts fit together

means that there is potentially a bigger, if implied, narrative attached to each small segment.

The wedding narrative proliferates. We are frequently exposed to weddings and their associated images and plot variations in newspaper and magazine articles, stage productions, television shows (documentaries, ‘reality’ programs, and fictional ones), motion pictures, songs, pictorial art, novels, and various other texts. The use of wedding references in poems thus engages the reader with an existing set of widespread and well-known social and cultural practices that constitute the trace of the archetypal wedding story, from courtship through to honeymoon, with various stops between.

A stock of wedding motifs links to parts of that larger story, enabling short forms of writing such as the lyric poem to convey a great deal of information with only brief and sometimes indirect references to it, especially since the reader is likely to make the connection to the larger narrative template to which they belong. A poem that mentions a wedding proposal immediately (if temporarily) conjures the possibility of that proposal being rejected, for instance, introducing the dramatic suspense of that particular decision as a plot point in the wedding story.

The narrative function of contemporary lyric poems is actually a vital aspect of their operation, because readers normally use (and expect to use) language as a sense-making device. Language is a tool for pattern-making within a network of word meanings, and the lyric poem is inextricably bound up with that practice. The lyric wedding poem illustrates that function at work.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

One issue in this study has been to decide on the extent of poetry to survey. The robustness and applicability of findings might be questioned, for instance, were they derived from only a few poems rather than from a large group. My approach, therefore, needs to be explained.

Vladimir Propp's work on the narrative structure in Russian wonder tales (*Morphology of the Folktale*, 1968) operates inductively, examining an extensive collection of stories in order to draw conclusions. Arguably, his task is feasible due to the relatively manageable size of his subject population, one already largely identified and classified (Bordwell 1988, p. 6). Roland Barthes prefers a deductive approach, arguing that one might determine a great deal from a very small sample. In examining structures of narrative generally, he dismisses Propp's method simply because of the magnitude of the latter's task. There are thousands of languages and an infinite number of narratives, he argues, and still a vast number of stories evident within even a single genre, making the strategy of studying all cases within any such class effectively impossible (Barthes 1977, p. 81). Consequently, Barthes uses a hypothetical model to study a small sample of cases in order to identify variances, and to then allow refinement of the model (Barthes 1977, p. 81). The decision then was whether I should study a handful of poems or cast my net much more widely.

The population of contemporary wedding poems has not, to my knowledge, been surveyed before. An argument might be mounted based on a moderately sized sample but an important difficulty is that poetic references to

weddings are often hard to locate without reading the whole of a given poem. The titles of poems do not reliably indicate such content, suggesting that one would need to read a lot of poetry in order to obtain a worthwhile sample, which proved to be the case. As it happened, about half of the surveyed books of poems contained at least one poem with a wedding reference, and some included several; a high frequency when one considers a normal tendency to vary subject matter within a single volume of poems. Purposeful collection of contemporary poems with wedding references ceased when I had identified about 300 of them. By that point, the further wedding references being discovered were no longer significantly different in their treatment from those already encountered.

In Chapter 2, I discuss my motivation for undertaking this project before looking at the development of the traditional wedding poem, the epithalamium. The chapter then focuses on the nature of the lyric poem and of narrative, an essential preliminary to any argument about wedding poetry. Intrinsic to this is a consideration of the contemporary place of poetry, acknowledging that there are opposing views about its relevance and the way in which it is read. For example, there is some reluctance to theorise about poetry and to analyse its techniques, on the basis that this relinquishes regard for it as a mystical art directly tapping into a primal aspect of human existence. We see this tension even in the comments of established poets who write extensively on the nature and technical aspects of poetry, such as Howard Nemerov, Seamus Heaney, Robert Pinsky and Charles Simic. But what does happen when we are faced with a poem?

The Role of the Reader

The relationship between the poem and the reader is a vital one. How does a reader attempt to make sense of a poem, and how does our understanding of this process inform the art of writing contemporary poetry? The perfect reader does not exist, and while we may imagine a common one, that person is necessarily an assemblage of the many (DeMaria 1978, p. 464—see also Eco 1979, pp. 7-10; Fish 1980a, pp. 322-337; and, Kertzer 2004, p. 2).

Writing is a speculative undertaking, and there is always the likelihood of slippage between poet and reader. One way of reducing this is to use anchoring devices such as references to widely understood and experienced social events, like weddings. But having some gaps is desirable—and, in fact, unavoidable. An author may choose to write plainly but also, as Aidan Chambers says in relation to writing for children, to ‘leave gaps that the reader must fill before the meaning can be complete’ (Chambers 1985, p. 46). The lack of closure in a poem such as Matthew Sweeney’s ‘The Bridal Suite’ (1997, p. 5) may not weaken the narrative impulse at all since the poem’s events link strongly to a known story template, instead leaving the reader to speculate on a number of motivations and endings outside the poem.

Chapter 2 thus offers a deeper analysis of reader reception theory as it informs the way in which a lyric poem exercises a narrative function.

What is Wedding Poetry?

Chapter 2 also contemplates the nature of wedding poetry. Writing poetry to celebrate weddings has a very long history and it continues as a part of contemporary cultural and literary practice. References to wedding poems date back almost three thousand years, fragments of some by Sappho surviving from the seventh century B.C. (Jones 1930, p. 351; Tufte 1970, pp. 10-11). I consider the epithalamium (or epithalamion) in order to establish a context for the contemporary form of wedding poem. The epithalamium, a traditional and ancient form of wedding poem, is essentially a ritual poem of celebration addressed to a newlywed couple (Tufte 1966, pp. 33-34). Traditional epithalamia were quite formulaic, as Greene points out in his analysis of Edmund Spenser's 'Epithalamion' of 1595, which is arguably the best known and most popular epithalamium in Western history (Greene 1957, pp. 218-220). They enjoyed great popularity in the Middle Ages and the Elizabethan era. Marvell, Donne, Jonson and Herrick, among others wrote celebrated examples. Shakespeare included them in his plays, and comedies of the era typically ended with them (Tufte 1970, 232).

In contemporary times, the epithalamium is less restricted by the old conventions of order, treatment and form. Wedding poetry nowadays is treated as virtually any poetry intended or adopted for reading at a wedding ceremony or reception. Accordingly, I have taken a broad approach to defining wedding poetry but with the essential criterion that the poem contains an actual reference to a wedding.

Defining Narrative and Story

It is important to understand what is meant by these terms, narrative and story.

We live immersed in narrative, which constitutes ‘a strategy for making our world of experiences and desires intelligible’ (Branigan 1992, p. 1).

Storytelling is a fundamental practice: ‘to learn to speak is to learn to tell a story’ (Le Guin 1989, p. 39). It underlies the very basics of our communications: ‘a generalized and virtual narrativity inhabits every form of organised discourse’ (Zumthor 1990, p. 36). Since storytelling is a basic human desire and such a pervasive activity, any argument that ignores or denies its existence in lyric poetry must be questioned.

Nonetheless, there is confusion about the function of narrative in lyric poetry, as evidenced by disagreement, ambiguity and anomalies in various commentators’ attempts at defining both narrative and lyric. Plato and Aristotle agree that narrative constitutes a recital of events, though they differ in their preferences for how it should be presented. A recent definition is that ‘a narrative is a story, whether told in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do’ (Abrams 2005, p. 181). Scholes and Kellogg similarly require only a story and its teller, distinguishing the lyric as a simpler utterance by a single voice that does not refer to any event (1966, p. 4), and yet this would mean very few poems would qualify as lyric since they do frequently allude to or report events. That anomaly is a key issue discussed in Chapter 2.

What is Narrative?

Defining narrative by analysing the unit components of story, such as its depiction of events, is typical of a structuralist approach to literature.

Elements of structuralism are useful for considering the function of narrative in poetry, especially if we combine them with aspects of reader reception theory. Doing so compensates for structuralism's relative neglect of reader engagement with the text (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 10; Eagleton 1998, p. 116). It recognises readers' urge to interpret texts in terms of story, and that they fill in narrative gaps by calling on their own knowledge and experiences. The latter action involves readers referring to the typical stories with which they are already acquainted. But how do these basic units combine to make a story, and what does it mean for lyric poetry?

Structural theorist Tzvetan Todorov stresses that in a story there should be causal transformation and that a text must show how a state of equilibrium is disturbed and then restored:

An ideal narrative begins with a stable situation that some force will perturb. From which results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in a converse direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is quite similar to the first, but the two are not identical (1981, p. 51)

The idea of story centring on correcting the disturbance of an existing equilibrium (sometimes expressed as compensating for a lack or a loss) is a widely held one. In the archetypal hero tale, for instance, a key character must often right a wrong by performing a deed such as rescuing a vulnerable member of the community, and this often ends with a wedding. That is evident in Vladimir Propp's analysis of Russian folk tales (1968, pp. 128-133) and Joseph Campbell's celebrated analysis of mythic stories, which proposes the hero's journey as a model based on 'tribal ceremonies [that] serve to translate the individual's life-crises and life-deeds into classic, impersonal forms' (Campbell 1968, p. 283). Christopher Vogler (1992) draws on Campbell's work, promoting its use in Hollywood movie scriptwriting and his hero's journey model. Other theorists such as Tzvetan Todorov (1981, p. 51), Edward Branigan (1992, pp. 4-5), and Gerald Prince (in Rimmon-Kenan 2002, p. 1) agree that a central concept of story is pursuing a correction when some initial state of equilibrium is disturbed and must be restored. Their arguments are raised for comment later in the thesis.

Two issues are bound together here. One is that recognising that the passage of time in a text is important for whether we acknowledge the presence of narrative, and this is equally true when we read poetry (Brooks 1984, p. XI). The other is that a meaningful causal relationship must exist between those events across time. But how are these attributes to be evidenced in a story? What are the essential requirements? Because story involves events situated in time that are bounded by starting and ending points, it must also imply periods before and after those although it does not directly represent them. It must imply continuity of action in the gaps that occur within the

period covered by the text, too; otherwise, there would be a series of unreal discontinuities that would spoil its chronological verisimilitude. We need the passage of time in order that the reader may impute motivation or intention, and evaluate the outcome of events.

This potentially places even minimalist poetry within the scope of narrative since story can be identified in a lyric poem whether or not the passage of time and change indicated in the text is slight, and despite the fact that it might be represented in a subtle or incomplete way (Genette 1976, p. 7; Branigan 1992, p. 4). That which is missing from a plot, and can reasonably be imputed as connecting to the world it presents, thus provides a rich resource for poets. This corresponds with the distinction made in Russian formalism between plot and story (*syuzhet* and *fabula*), that is, between how the text presents elements of story and what the reader constructs from it (Abrams 205, pp. 181, 266; Bordwell 1988, p. 11).

Plot does not operate fully until the reader comes to its aid (Block 1978, p. 163; Crosman 1983, p. 91). The causal relationship between events depicted in poetry, and the reader's role in constructing story, are therefore vital aspects of considering the narrative at working lyric poetry. How successfully a short poem conveys a sense of narrative partly depends on the kind of story, and the size of the poem. The amount of information contained in the poem and, therefore, its length, may be indicators of that success but the causal relationship need not be explicit in order to qualify the poem as exercising a narrative quality.

Again, a common and historically enduring story template used in this way is that of the wedding, so when readers encounter brief references to the

wedding process they are readily able to place them in the traditional sequence of events that comprise a typical wedding. Of course, the reader also has to care about the world of the text enough to want to discover what happens next (Brooks 1984, p. 37). Together, the desire of the reader to fathom a poem and a tendency to construct narrative in doing so means that the lyric poem can be rewarding in narrative terms despite its brevity.

While there are theoretical differences regarding the role of the reader and the power of the author (see, for instance, Fish 1980a and 1980b; Freund 1987; Iser 1989, p. 229), the transformative process enacted by the reader when encountering a text is more important for the purposes of this thesis. As Frank Kermode says, ‘the omniscient author leaves gaps in which the reader must work for his own meanings’ (1990, p. 35), pointing to the partnership of poet and reader when engaging with a lyric poem, especially if there is limited and difficult narrative information. The task of maintaining reader desire in that case can be a significant test of the poet’s skills. Chapter 2 elaborates on this aspect of reading the lyric poem.

What is the Lyric Poem?

For centuries longer poetic forms such as the epic were regarded as superior to the lyric. The lyric gained popularity from the late seventeenth century (Jeffreys 1995, p. 198; Hirsch 1999, p. 16), to some extent mirroring the emergence of a greater focus on the life of the individual and a greater inclination to represent more complex, inner states of being (Abrams 2005, p.

115). The rise of the novel as a narrative vehicle arguably contributed to the decline of the long poem, also leaving more scope for the lyric (Gioia 1995, Online).

As mentioned above, there is the curious position that the lyric is now the ascendant form of contemporary poetry but without agreement about what distinguishes it from narrative verse and the degree to which that distinction can be sustained. The dominant approach is still to treat the two as inherently separate, an oversimplification that does not do the lyric justice or reflect how it is read.

The lyric has mostly been regarded as the brief and intimate utterance of one voice, perhaps divinely inspired, revealing an individual's inner state (Heaney 1988, p. 92; Simic 1994, p. 112). It is also said to emphasise the imagistic and musical qualities of language (Preminger 1965, p. 462; Ruf 1994, p. 805; Abrams 2005, p. 154). On the other hand, when assaying narrative poetry, commentators often rely on a poem's greater length, pronounced meter, formal structure, and formulaic diction (Welsh 1978, pp. 20-21). Some others, still, are less restrictive in their outlook (Drury 1991, p. 169; Strand & Boland 2000, p. 139; Abrams 2005, p. 181), acknowledging that some narrative and lyric attributes may exist in a single poem, but this view is uncommon. Differences in the way that readers engage with lyric poetry—recognising its often faster pacing, sharp tension, and different means of closure (or lack thereof)—must also be considered (Opie 1983, p. ix; Strand & Boland 2000, p. 139). Closure is a key issue as it shifts the emphasis away from issues of poetic language and form, raising the possibility that the dynamics of a reader's involvement with the poem are themselves significant.

The continuing and wide disagreement in this area is important because it indicates the difficulty of establishing a harmonious position on the narrative function in lyric poetry. Few definitions match the actual range and capability of the contemporary lyric poem well, though Abrams' definition (2005, p. 153) may come closest, as Chapter 2 explains.

The Narrative in the Lyric

The central issue of this thesis is whether a narrative function exists within contemporary lyric poetry, yet Chapter 2 also considers the way in which the narrative instant operates within a particular single photograph. The chosen image shows a man snapped as he steps into the air above a vast puddle, the picture pivoting on his decision to make that leap. The moment is suspended; neither precisely of the past or the future, yet belonging to both. The future that awaits him is clearer given that we know he decided to jump, or is it? This photograph mirrors the power of the lyric poem in using narrative.

The decision point, so beloved of narrative (and wedding stories), can be fruitfully exploited in lyric poetry precisely because it conjures notions of both the past and the future outside the immediate moment of the poem, and also of the deeper but unrevealed depths of the characters' actions. It offers a wider sweep of events than those directly depicted in the text because the reader sees that they are logically connected to it and can be brought into consideration. In fact, it is often difficult to avoid doing so.

Chapter 2 ends by considering how, though its effectiveness ultimately depends on the reader (Brooks 1984, p. xiv), lyric's narrative authority stems from the poet and the underlying unity of his or her vision and also the drawing together of all the elements of the literary work.

Analysing Selected Poems

The subsequent chapters apply the earlier findings to a variety of contemporary lyric poems that employ wedding references. In Chapter 3, these are poems written by other authors and, in Chapter 4, a selection of my own poems. These last are drawn from a collection, *The Floating Bride*, written for this thesis, and which is attached as its creative component.

Collectively, the surveyed poems written by other poets represent all of the key stages from courtship through to the honeymoon, but individually they tend to deal with just one part of this sequence, and generally in a straightforward way. The bride and the gown are the most common references, with the bride usually presented in a traditional manner. Death or some other threat of loss is often mentioned to create dramatic tension, and Chapter 3 considers the further implications of overlapping an occasion of celebration with one of mourning and sorrow.

Six of the surveyed poems, ranging from just three lines to several pages in length, are discussed in detail, some of them revolving around matters of loss or death. The analysis includes discussing the way a brief form of poetry such as the haiku and the ghazal can use its very limited content to

convey a story, and how Imagist poetry achieves a similar result. The role of the reader is again crucial here, as haiku poet Cor van den Heuvel remarks: ‘To see what is suggested by a haiku, the reader must share in the creative process, being willing to associate and pick up on the echoes implicit in the words’ (van den Heuvel 1999, pp. xv-xvi). As Wolfgang Iser says, ‘it is only by activating the reader’s imagination that the author can hope to involve him and so realize the intentions of the text’ (1980, p. 57).

The narrative tension created in each of the six closely read poems is evaluated, with particular attention given to the creation of story momentum and to the poem’s reference to that typical narrative device, the decisive moment, or ‘hinge-point’ (Barthes 1977, p. 93). One key poem in this respect is Matthew Sweeney’s ‘The Bridal Suite’, about an abandoned groom, which begins *in media res*—after one critical decisive moment (the bride’s disappearance) and before another (the groom’s own departure). As evident in this poem, narrative is characterised by causal links between events, and by shaping plot around a situation in which there is a need to compensate for disorder or to overcome a loss of some kind. Chapter 3’s analysis shows how these characteristics can operate in the lyric.

A common aspect of the featured poems is that, despite each poem dealing with a relatively short lapse of time, the larger and complete story of the wedding from which they are drawn always looms over them. The significance of their subject matter is greatly contingent on the reader’s understanding of how the action and concerns conveyed in the brief poem are situated in that greater story. These poems show that a lyric can tell a story of

complexity even when it is brief, especially with the aid of a collaborative reader.

Chapter 4 extends the previous chapter's discussion of the formulated ideas of lyric expression by applying them to wedding poems selected from the collection that was written specifically for this thesis. Those poems vary greatly in length and in the degree of realism of depiction, changing the demands made upon the reader while continuing to demonstrate the narrative function at work within the lyric. The analysis includes epithalamia and anti-epithalamia (the latter a warning about impending nuptials), other poems that employ the wedding gown and groom's suit as surrogates for human characters, and poems with darker concerns.

My collection shows how the reader engaged with a lyric poem is implicated in constructing a story framework, even if the narrative has a very subtle presence. I should add that the collection is intended to stand on its own feet as well, that is, without attachment to the particular concerns of the exegesis. It revolves around aspects of a cultural practice with which most of us will have a lot of exposure, in real life or in artistic depiction (in literature, visual art, stage performances, TV shows, or motion pictures, etc.), and on which we are bound to have an opinion as an expressive rite within a social custom, the wedding as a gateway to marriage. As a result, I feel the material will find a knowing and interested audience. It also represents a novelty since, though anthologies of poems to be read at weddings are rife, collections of original poetry embracing this theme seem rare—indeed, I could not find a whole book of its kind.

Relationship between Research and Writing Practice

This project has involved both research and creative writing, and the two aspects have been interwoven throughout. I had particular aims for the creative writing component of the thesis (outlined in Chapter 2), that went beyond preparing a collection of wedding poems. These principally involved seeing what kind of interplay the creative writing would have with the research aspect of the project (how one would feed into the other), and how I could achieve my objective of making something new in the poetry that would comprise the collection. Another major aspect was my more general aim of discovery, that is, to see what might be revealed that I had not anticipated at all. In that way, I would be treating the thesis as an open path with new possibilities for exploration.

In Chapter 4 is a reflective section that reviews the process of undertaking the whole thesis and its effect on my own work as a writing practitioner. I address the implications that undertaking this thesis has had for me for me as a practicing writer. In essence, it has raised aspects of my own writing praxis and a continual search for originality, the quest for writing what others have not written, as well as the distribution of a personal poetics throughout my creative and critical work rather than being contained in a summary statement (Sheppard 2009, pp. 3-26). That is to say, my poetics are inevitably constituted in the whole of my output and not an individual statement or manifesto. The lack of a neat document of that kind (recognising that one's understanding of artistic activity is continually evolving) is actually

not problematic. It complements what James Longenbach refers to in our engagement with poetry when he says, ‘Poems show us how it feels to like trouble’ (Longenbach 2004, p. 94). A tidy solution is not always desirable.

SUMMARY

It is a gross simplification to define contemporary lyric poetry in a way that denies it a narrative function, as has been routine. Storytelling is manifest in daily acts of making sense of how we live, and is arguably an essential characteristic of language use. It is a key human tendency that equips us better to communicate with one another and it is just as indigenous to lyric poetry, even though its traces may sometimes be fainter, as it is to other forms of textual communication.

A poem might be said to show narrative qualities even when it is very brief and personal, sometimes through quite deliberate reliance on the reader completing the text by invoking her own knowledge of human behaviour, rites of passage and social practices. Charles Simic’s claim that the prose poem may just be the ‘most outrageous example’ of lyric poetry (1994, p. 118), underlines that different types of poetry share some attributes rather than always being neatly separated. The remainder of this thesis expands on the argument indicated above to show that the lyric poem operates in a narrative mode as part of the basic process of making meaning through language.

Two central notions in this study have been those of resistance and of spaces, or gaps, and each can be regarded in different ways. Resistance is

contemplated as the extent of argument over what constitutes the lyric, and the unlikelihood of harmonious resolution there. It is also considered as the poem's unwillingness to divulge all (or too much too soon), since the pleasure of discovery in reading would then be lost. Allied to this second facet of resistance is the way that the lyric poem uses narrative gaps, and how the reader must work in these to create a fuller sense of the story suggested in the text. That work is, in a real sense, conducted in a space that lives outside the text but which is as necessary as the writer's creative mind to bringing the poem to life. It is push and pull, tension and release, and the stage on which that little drama of reading is conducted is the lyric poem.

CHAPTER 2:
SETTING COORDINATES

...to tell and listen to stories

is a biological function

Umberto Eco 2006, p. 246

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary lyric poetry performs a narrative function that is generally unacknowledged despite often being central to its effectiveness. My response to this apparent failure to adequately recognise a storytelling role has been to undertake a number of specific activities. I read relevant theoretical works about poetry and narrative, the better to examine numerous poems by other poets, and I both wrote and analysed a poetry collection of my own. The poetry by other writers that I chose and the body of my own poems, *The Floating Bride*, relate to weddings. In this chapter, I describe my own motivation for undertaking the project, explain some of the underlying definitions and theoretical tools employed in my analysis, and outline my argument. I believe that this project confirms my claim of a vital narrative function at work in contemporary lyric poetry.

I am aware there is continuing debate about the nature and place of contemporary poetry and how it engages with writers and readers both in academia and at large. For example, poet and critic Dana Gioia's influential article 'Can Poetry Matter?' (1991) and his subsequent writings have fostered much discussion, as has Joan Houlihan in her scathing articles in *The Boston Comment* (2003, Online) under the banner, 'How Contemporary American Poets are Denaturing the Poem'. There is ongoing friction over the basis and even the need for connecting poetic practice with a theoretical underpinning (see Koethe 1991, Online; Harrison 2003, Online). Emblematic of that difficulty if not resistance to discuss it is Howard Nemerov's remark that,

‘The poetic attempt to say the world... is perhaps a matter altogether too mysterious to be talked about’ (1972, p. 3). That outlook becomes evident when we consider the definition of lyric poetry and discover reluctance to give up a view of the craft of poetry as a mystical art.

In subsequent chapters, I expand on this initial discussion by commenting on the ideas of poets and theorists that connect back to the material here. The rest of this chapter sets coordinates for that future discussion of specific poems towards a conclusion about the nature of lyric poetry and its capacity to exercise a narrative function, as evidenced through wedding poetry in particular.

WHY POETRY? WHY WEDDINGS?

I have been a practising poet for more than forty years. I also write short fiction and nonfiction prose, and longer nonfiction, and I have the requisite draft novels stored about the house, but my chief interest is in contemporary poetry. One aspect of how a poem ‘works’ that has continued to niggle at me is how a narrative function is triggered and performed in the moment when the poem becomes a meeting point for writer and reader. Although a narrative function has largely been denied or ignored in lyric poetry, much of it does tell a story—even when its narrative quality might seem understated, indistinct or, oddly enough, seemingly absent. This matter goes to the heart of how we engage with poetry. What happens when we are faced with a poem? (Stanley Fish has some interesting things to say regarding whether the text makes the reader or vice versa, and how a poem is to be identified, as I will

discuss.) How does a reader attempt to make sense of a poem, and how does our understanding of this process inform the art of writing contemporary poetry?

These riddles pushed me to examine my own writing practices and, further, to reconsider how I act as a reader when coming to the poetry of others. I found these issues emphasised a few years ago when I was reading books of traditional Japanese haiku alongside their contemporary Western equivalents, poems normally no more than three lines long. Despite their brevity, these sometimes do display clear elements of storytelling. How is this possible? How could a story be constituted in a mere handful of words? The answer lies as much in what the reader brings to the process as in the poem's inherent 'data', the reader responding to the poem as a package of both obvious and less transparent information, which may be dressed with prompts and clues to look beyond the poem itself. I wrote conference papers as early reports on my research and thinking on such matters (Evans, 2003 and 2004). Poetry can be one of the least direct forms of communication. Though it sometimes wears its heart on its sleeve, poetry can be coyly oblique, even reticent. It frequently employs figurative language devices such as exaggeration, metaphor, simile, metonymy and synecdoche not just for the pleasure of those techniques but to take the longer road to its destination. In fact, taken together, these characteristics are what could be said to distinguish poetry from other writing. They are not unique to poetry but are more concentrated in it. Poetry is capable of being very enigmatic; it can speak in other voices, say what it does not mean, and be ironic. The author of a poem may choose to disguise or understate the information value of the words and

their intertextual relationships, including connections with cultural practices and matters of identity construction, among other things. A literalist, someone disposed to the most efficient means of communicating information, would prefer less art and more directness—and should look elsewhere. Poetry may employ delay and sly approaches, something that it shares with storytelling, enjoying the process rather than rushing to an end. Theorist James Longenbach argues for the value of resistance in the poem, in its deferral of revelation in order to provide reading pleasure (2004, p. 97), and I will return to his views in Chapter 2. Similarly, acclaimed poet Josephine Jacobsen says:

The essence of poetry is the unique view—the unguessed relationship, suddenly manifest. Poetry's eye is always aslant, oblique...Poetic vision doesn't see things head on. The poet's angle of perception is not like any other. Emily Dickinson said it best: 'Tell all the truth but tell it slant' (Jacobsen in Smith 1998, Online).

Poetry is not as single-mindedly instructive as, say, a dishwasher manual. The delight of poetry is frequently in its sideways approach and its capacity for surprise. That lack of transparency and of plain-language utterance may not always be the result of deliberate playfulness, though; other barriers may exist between the poet and reader. For a start, the poet creates the poem as a transmission directed at a future and probably unknown reader:

A poem, as a manifestation of language and thus essentially dialogue, can be a message in a bottle, sent out in the—not always greatly

hopeful—belief that somewhere and sometime it could wash up on land, on heartland perhaps. Poems in this sense are under way; they are making toward something (Paul Celan in Hirsch 2002, Online).

How does the poet know that the reader will be competent to decode and appreciate the nuances imbedded in the poem, and understand it as the author intended? A ‘perfect’ and completely predictable interpretation might actually be unnerving and undesirable, but that outcome is unlikely. A poet’s ability to communicate is governed not only by the extent of her own knowledge and skills, but also by her reader’s similar limitations. A natural breach or mismatch may then arise between the writer’s work and the reader’s ability to interpret it. Assumptions about what differentiates diverse kinds of reader and what might constitute an ideal one are implicit (if subconscious) in the writer’s work, but there is no perfect reader: ‘no real individual or class of individuals understands things precisely as the common reader does’ (DeMaria 1978, p. 464; see also Eco 1979, pp. 7-10, and Kertzer 2004, p. 2). Therefore, whatever a poem carries to ensure its success as a tool of artistic communication with an audience rests to a large degree on finding common ground with an implied reader. Again we can look to Stanley Fish (1980a) in relation to notions of shared experience and interpretative strategies, as I will do later.

Theorist and children’s writer Aidan Chambers says that an author needs a reader and, consciously or not, ‘creates a relationship with a reader in order to discover the meaning of the text’ (1985, pp. 36-37). He cites Wolfgang Iser’s comment that form can be defined as ‘a means of

communication or as a negotiation of insight' (Iser 1974, p. 57), remarking also that an author may choose to write plainly or to 'leave gaps that the reader must fill before the meaning can be complete' (Chambers 1985, p. 46). Apart from what we might see in an author's choices of literary style, 'we can also detect from a writer's references to a variety of things just what he assumes about his implied reader's beliefs, politics, social customs, and the like' (1985, p. 47). This is consistent, too, with the authorial inclusion of references to one or two signal aspects of wedding rites as a kind of shorthand for the larger series of events. Chambers reminds us that the act of telling 'every story of any kind whatever, by the very nature of Story, is told by more than one storyteller' (1985, p. 61); that a story necessarily involves a writer, a narrator, and a reader. A poem, too, is the instrument of an asynchronous dialogue between the poet and reader, the site of a speculative process in which the reader is always implicated.

So, to reiterate, as I was reading short poetry I pondered the compact between author and reader and the nature of their engagement with the poem. How does a poet satisfy the need to be original in a short poem while also maximising reader engagement, that is, without adversely distancing the reader? The answer stems in part from the synoptic nature of lyric poetry and the reader's ability to compensate by filling in its gaps. In particular, I was intrigued by the latent power of lyric poetry to exercise a narrative function, an interest that was further prompted by two other, related factors. One emerged from my personal life, and the other from a specific poem.

The first extra element is that when I was in my early 40s I found myself courting and then marrying. Suddenly, I was intimately involved in all

the steps of the traditional wedding process. More than would otherwise be usual, I began to notice the frequency with which motion pictures, television shows, and stage performances use weddings as a key part of their plot structures. Even television advertising hooks its carriage to the wedding train, with one advertisement showing several Aussie blokes initially watching football on TV, then leaving the lounge-room and discovering their friend trying on the wedding gown of his bride-to-be. The popularity of the wedding partly reflects wishful thinking, a romantic inclination that desires a happy outcome for a love story whatever the obstacles: ‘our culture, when it comes to love, is essentially a honeymoon culture’ (Bazzano 2003, p. 8). This is a longstanding impulse; for instance, Shakespeare’s romantic comedies often end with a wedding.

As clichéd as wedding references may be at times, they are still widely used. The allusion to a type of narrative that is commonly experienced or known, such as the rites of passage associated with weddings, very efficiently establishes shared knowledge. This was exploited in C.J. Dennis’s well known extended poem covering courtship and marriage, *The Sentimental Bloke*, of 1915. The arc of the wedding story has several readily identifiable stages—courtship, proposal, wedding ceremony, reception, and honeymoon—and it also has a host of stock characters. It is perfectly suited to use in lyric poetry, where the merest detail could suffice to alert a reader to the likely (if unspecified) setting, characters, and normally expected plot outcomes.

The second additional element was encountering Matthew Sweeney’s poem, ‘The Bridal Suite’ (1997, p. 5; and Appendix 3), which exemplifies the notion of the compact between poet and reader. Its protagonist is stuck in a

mystery that he cannot solve. He has just married and his new bride is missing from their hotel honeymoon suite; neither he nor the reader has any idea why. This poem challenges because it situates the action in the immediate post-wedding period (thus, obviously if tacitly referencing that ceremony) but it withholds information that would seem to be critical to the reader's clear understanding of the depicted events. The reader implicitly identifies with the groom through shared ignorance about the thoughts, motives and whereabouts of the bride, but this means a gap in knowledge. With so much information missing, how then can it successfully convey a sense of narrative?

Sweeney's poem succeeds because it is built around readers' knowledge of customary social practice, in this case the stages of the wedding ritual, and because the bride's absence runs contrary to normal expectations. These two aspects allow the author to exploit readers' awareness of the social and emotional implications of the situation as well as their inclination to sense the dramatic potential of the events. The reader understands the kind of proceedings that would have lead up to the honeymoon and also feels the weight of expectation that falls upon a newlywed couple. Any number of reasons for the bride's departure may then start to form in the reader's mind. The lack of any one particular and suitable explanation being offered in the poem actually serves to reinforce the sense of bewilderment of the groom, and the lack of specific disclosure is principally why the poem intrigues. Though it denies resolution and an explicit understanding of causal links, and thus one of the tenets of narrative, it effectively mirrors the protagonist's situation. This short poem highlights the ability of a poet to exploit reader familiarity with a specific context and, particularly, to present an effective narrative text without

actually having to detail all of the inherent steps. The narrative may not be closed but, even with multiple interpretations pending, it serves to tell a story. I will return to this exemplary poem later for closer analysis.

By this stage, then, I had three motivators: an existing interest in contemporary poetry, including curiosity about the relatively powerful potential of even quite short lyric poems to convey a story; a personal background involving my own wedding, which inspired awareness of the wedding trope as a specific instance of narrative; and an encounter with a short wedding poem that seemed to effectively illustrate the narrative potential of lyric poetry despite deliberately withholding information. The conjunction of these three key aspects intrigued me sufficiently to investigate further.

At this stage, I wish to deal with some issues of definition regarding wedding poetry, narrative, and lyric poetry. This will establish the basic argument about narrative in lyric poetry before I demonstrate its function in the poetry of other authors and then to the development of my own poetry collection, *The Floating Bride*, in later chapters.

WHAT IS WEDDING POETRY?

One form of wedding poetry that comes readily to mind is the epithalamium (or epithalamion). Literally meaning at the edge of the marriage chamber—from the Greek: *epi* ‘upon’ + *thamos* ‘bridal chamber’—or even the bed, but usually interpreted to mean at its door (Tufte 1966, pp. 33-34), the epithalamium is essentially a celebratory address sung to a newlywed couple.

It has been described as ‘a ritualistic *public* statement, unconcerned with the actual intimate experience undergone by individuals’ (Greene 1957, p. 221), as a ‘poem or oration celebrating a wedding, real or fictional’ (Tufte 1966, p. 33), and more simply as ‘a poem written to celebrate a marriage’ (Abrams 2005, p. 86). With beginnings as a kind of ‘folk song in the pre-history of literature, the epithalamium is rooted in fertility rites and dramas of generation and death, out of which the great modes of comedy and tragedy probably developed’ (Tufte 1970, p. 256).

References to wedding poems date back to Homer’s *Iliad* and original examples are also traceable to Greece in around the eighth century B.C., with fragments by Sappho surviving from near the end of the following century. Some scholars also cite the Bible’s *Song of Solomon* and *Psalms 45* as comparable works (Jones 1930, p. 351; Tufte 1970, pp. 10-11; Welsford 1967, p. 180; and, more generally, Wheeler 1930, p. 210).

Traditional epithalamia were typically formulaic. One of the early masters of the form in the classical era was Catullus, whose works include three longer poems about weddings, *carmina* 61, 62 and 64. The first of these was frequently taken as a model for later epithalamists to follow (Greene 1957, p. 218). Epithalamia were classified and the number of their parts were dictated, usually in relation to stages of the wedding day such as the wedding, feast, procession and bridal retreat. The scope and order of the subject matter were also proscribed, as well as how the bride and groom should be praised (Greene 1957, pp. 218-220; Heatt 1960, p. 78; Tufte 1970, pp. 132, 155; Wheeler 1930, p. 205). Among these recommendations was that the bride and groom be compared to natural elements, including plants and flowers.

Epithalamia were expected to support the institution of marriage and the doctrine of increase, and comparisons with the natural order were intended both to underline the importance of the wedding as a promise of fertility, and to reinforce the value of family as a sign of harmony in the universe (Tufte 1966, p. 39 and 1970, pp. 14, 130, 136; Welsford 1967, p. 201; Wheeler 1930, pp. 211-212).

Epithalamia enjoyed a boom in the Middle Ages and the Elizabethan era: Andrew Marvell, John Donne, Ben Jonson, Robert Herrick and others produced celebrated examples; Shakespeare, as I have mentioned, imbedded them in his plays; and comedies customarily ended with ‘a wedding and shaking of hands—and frequently with an epithalamium as well’ (Tufte 1970, 232). Probably the best known example in the English language is Edmund Spenser’s ‘Epithalamion’, first published in 1595 and thought to be a hymn to his wife, Elizabeth. This intricate poem in 24 parts has been considered as a chronological trace of a whole wedding day and its various stages. This is not an uncommon form; Ben Jonson wrote an epithalamium structured in the same way (Hieatt 1960, p. 77). Certainly, Spenser’s work has excited admiration and close study. A. Kent Hieatt (1960) even argues that numerical analysis of its structure exposes an underlying symbolic message concerning the seasons and mankind’s connection through devoted love to the immortal truths. At least this underlines the significance that can be accorded the organisation of formal poetry. Spenser’s ‘Epithalamion’ maintained the then standing practice of classical allusion, with references to Greek gods, and also followed convention in the ordering of its subject material but it did introduce a difference, through its joyous focus on sensual and other personal pleasures

of the people associated with the wedding rather than a primary concern with praising the institution of marriage itself (Neuse 1968, p. 48; Tufte 1966, p. 39 and 1970, p. 161). This extended a theme already indicated in his earlier ‘Amoretti’ courtship poems, which are seen as logically contiguous with the ‘Epithalamion’ (Lever in McLean, p. 635).

It is drawing a long bow to say that epithalamia always adhered strictly to a fixed design, however, or that they should do so. Epithalamia originally emerged as songs for only one stage of the wedding, the couple’s withdrawal to the bridal chamber, rather than encompassing the preceding feast and procession. One could argue then that the dictates of the rhetoricians should have been more loosely applied. Even in Sappho’s time, the term epithalamia covered ‘several kinds of wedding songs’ (Tufte 1966, p. 33). Indeed, wedding poems in Spenser’s day did not have to strictly follow dictates of content or structure or allusion: ‘not all poems for weddings were epithalamia, and...not all the poems entitled “Epithalamion” fitted strictly into the convention’ (Greene 1957, p. 215). The dominance of formulae did not stop poets exercising their imagination: ‘Epithalamia had long been rhetorical playthings for poets’ (Tufte 1970, p. 155).

I have not restricted my analysis to poems that align with the older and quite proscribed notions of epithalamia. To call my subject material wedding poems is convenient shorthand for poetry that might concentrate on a wedding but which could equally make a powerful but outwardly slight connection with weddings. My objective is not merely to examine poems that are primarily about weddings but also those that may use a wedding reference for other, perhaps even subsidiary, reasons. This approach arises naturally

because my concern is with the use of wedding references in poetry rather than with the epithalamium, as such, which is merely one expression of wedding poetry. I would not leave this section, however, without mentioning that in tracing epithalamia back to antiquity, it becomes clear that writing poetry to celebrate weddings is a longstanding practice, one that also meshes with and reflects contemporaneous cultural practice as it depicts human behaviour.

Wedding poetry in contemporary times is relatively unrestricted. An epithalamium now might be about almost any poem dealing with a wedding. A common epithalamium now is the earnest ditty to be found in books with material specifically collated for weddings, as in this example:

Wedding Day

This day of days
Your separate ways
Become one.

This ring, this vow,
Tell you that now
A new life's begun.

Two roads converging
Then, finally merging
Under the sun.

Good luck holding
A future unfolding
That can't be undone.

(Lomas 2004, p. 14).

This is sentimental and rather crude work, much like the wedding day poem written by celebrity actor Bec Cartwright for her own wedding reception (Cartwright 2005, Online), and which received considerable publicity. There is a demand for such commemorative verse, whatever the quality. The editor of *Poems for All Occasions*, Ron Pretty (2002), remarks that people were 'constantly coming in to Collected Works [a specialist poetry bookshop in Melbourne] looking for poems to read, not only at funerals, but also at weddings and christenings and memorials...all those moments in human affairs, those rites of passage' (2002, p. 4).

DEFINING NARRATIVE AND STORY

I have used the terms 'narrative' and 'lyric poetry' so far as if they were capable of straightforward interpretation and distinction, but that is not so. Since my intention is to examine how narrative functions in lyric poetry, it is central to consider what each of these terms means, beginning with narrative.

Firstly, though there is the matter of why narrative is considered important. To say that narration created humanity is a large claim but several theorists and writers have said as much:

Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories that we tell and hear told, those we dream or imagine or would like to tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives... We live immersed in narrative (Brooks 1984, p. 3).

Structural theorist Edward Branigan (1992, p. 1) says 'narrative has existed in every known human society...it seems to be everywhere: sometimes active and obvious, at other times fragmentary, dormant, and tacit...Making narratives is a strategy for making our world of experiences and desires intelligible'. Philosopher Arthur Danto (1985, p. xiii) says: 'Narration exemplifies one of the basic ways in which we represent the world, and the language of beginnings and endings, of turning points and climaxes, is complicated with this mode of representation to so great a degree that our image of our own lives must be deeply narrational'. A more forceful way of putting it is to say that, 'a generalized and virtual narrativity inhabits every form of organised discourse' (Zumthor 1990, p. 36), or, as writer Ursula Le Guin remarks: 'Narrative is a central function of language. Not, in origin, an artifact of culture, an art, but a fundamental operation of the normal mind functioning in society. To learn to speak is to learn to tell a story' (Le Guin 1989, p. 39).

Oddly, while the importance of narrative seems undisputed, there is some disagreement over what it actually is. A plain definition is that ‘a narrative is a story, whether told in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do’ (Abrams 2005, p. 181). Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg (1966, p. 4) offer something that appears initially similar: ‘By narrative we mean all those literary works which are distinguished by two characteristics: the presence of a story and a story-teller’. They then extend the definition, tracing a continuum from lyric to narrative, but in a way that suggests an anomaly:

A lyric, like a drama, is a direct presentation, in which a single actor, the poet or his surrogate, sings, or muses, or speaks for us to hear or overhear. Add a second speaker...and we move towards drama. Let the speaker begin to tell of an event...and we move towards narrative. For writing to be narrative no more and no less than a teller and a tale are required (Scholes & Kellogg 1966, p. 4).

This is ambiguous if not simply contradictory, suggesting either that when elements of story are included in an erstwhile lyric poem it ceases to be a lyric, or that the lyric poem is capable of showing narrative characteristics by telling a tale. There is obviously a definitional problem when attempting to distinguish lyric and narrative.

Gérard Genette (1976, p. 1) initially defines narrative ‘simply as the representation of a real or fictitious event or series of events by language, and more specifically by written language’, but he then explains the limitations of

such a basic approach. A narrated account is equivalent to an act of speech but is always restricted to telling; it can only be an imperfect imitation of its subject (1976, p. 3). In addition, using a character to narrate introduces subjectivity, Genette says, because it invites interpretation of a previously unannounced internal life that is attached to details of the story (p. 6). Although narration is seldom uncontaminated in these ways, that aspect is not at issue in my study. It is enough for my purposes to acknowledge the broad basis of definition that Genette posits before he delves into the matters of mimesis and narratorial identity.

Attempts to settle on a definition often resort to aspects of textual structure, though the structuralist school of theory holds no consistent line regarding the essential components of narrative and their sequencing. Its approach is sometimes attacked for treating narrative as basically an aggregation of story units and not something that relies on active engagement with a text in order to produce meaning (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 10; Eagleton 1998, p. 116), and other approaches have flowered in its wake: ‘Structuralism...in turn gives rise to post-structuralism, deconstruction, and a resurgence of interest in phenomenology and hermeneutics; mainly because of its limitations’ (Rankin 2002, Online). Despite this criticism, I feel there are elements of the structuralist approach that can be fruitful in considering the function of narrative, as I will explain.

We must consider another implicit thread here, and that is time. As Brooks (1984, p. XI) says, ‘narrative is one of the large categories or systems of understanding that we use in our negotiations with reality, specifically...with the problem of temporality: man’s time-boundedness, his

consciousness of existence within the limits of mortality'. This moves the argument about narrative as a tool for comprehension and ordering information to another level since it stresses the underlying requirement to acknowledge story as involving change and thus the passage of time.

This multiplicity of theoretical approaches highlights consensus about the importance of narrative, its saturating presence, and the implications for the way that we tell stories even in relatively minimal texts. Though these various statements differ in breadth and focus, most of them foreground interpretation and our natural endeavour to make sense; they tell us that narrative is a human concept. They agree that narrative is pervasive both as an artistic artefact and as a tool for living; it is a basic human desire. The nature and definition of narrative has occupied theorists and practitioners for thousands of years because it is intrinsically bound up with how we perceive life and our place in it.

Plato and Aristotle have distinctly different preferences for narrative and dramatic presentations but agree that narrative constitutes a recital of events (*diegesis*), such as the details of an historical incident, and that this differs from drama (*mimesis*), which is imitative, such as in a presentation of those same events by actors speaking or performing in character. That distinction highlights the function of dramatisation in bringing to life the details of a story, but it also indicates a need to clarify the particular sense in which the word 'narrative' is employed in this study.

I am less concerned at this point with whether a story is told in character (its *lexis*, or manner of speech) than with its substance (the *logos*, or what is said). My focus is essentially on whether a given body of words

conforms to the idea of a story in the first place—but that introduces an unwelcome oversimplification. Considering content alone and ignoring the mode of delivery could create difficulty since one is inherently linked with the other; a story may be conveyed through alternating narration and dramatisation, for example. Indeed, maintaining that distinction between narration and dramatisation, with the notion that the former is somehow merely objective recital and devoid of performance, is itself fraught. Even slight variation in narrative description exposes a ‘position’, an editorial outlook, with consequent dramatic implications. We might ask why an account of a person’s entrance into a room includes mention of the shoes they wear, for example, since this indicates significance of the footwear and the very act draws attention to other descriptive omissions (why not tell us about the person’s hat?). Coupled with the fact that a poem’s speaker is never completely effaced (the reader will never forget for long that someone is speaking/narrating), it does seem true that ‘narrative exists nowhere in its pure state’ (Genette 1976, p. 11). Additionally, all representation in literature is necessarily pretence because it can never be the same thing as the actual series of real or fictitious events that it conveys. Luckily, the question of *how* a poem is narrated, though important, is not critical to my current task. At this stage, then, I will largely put aside the matter of the character mode of the teller and the degree of her visibility to the reader.

What then is ‘story’ and how should we test a poem’s propensity to tell it? The degree of effort required to discern a story varies between texts but it is possible to discover story even when a text offers no more than subtle variation between different points in its unfolding depiction. Genette speaks of

the ‘irreducible narrative finality’ to be found even where Robbe-Grillet constitutes ‘a narrative (story) by the almost exclusive means of description imperceptibly modified from page to page’ (1976, p. 7). This is to assert that a story might be found where there is merely slight change.

The Russian formalist distinction between plot and story, *syuzhet* and *fabula*, is important here. The first comprises the text as it is discovered by the reader, the ‘facts’ of the tale as set out by the author and constituted in the text, whereas the second is what the reader constructs from this material (Abrams 2005, p. 181; Bordwell 1988, p. 11). A key difference, for example, might be the reader’s realignment of the related events into a normal chronological sequence if they were initially found out of order due to the author’s use of flashback devices. Plot is thus an incomplete account, the writer’s artistic rendering from which a reader constructs the story. It is implicit then that one story is capable of generating an infinite number of plots, and that we cannot tell all of them. Brooks refers to plot as ‘the design and intention of the narrative, what shapes a story and gives it a certain direction or intent of meaning...the logic that develops its propositions only through temporal sequence and progression’ (1984, p. XI). He calls it ‘the very organizing line, the thread of design, that makes narrative possible because finite and comprehensible’ (1984, p. 4). A mere inventory of events within a story would lack the creative organising/editing imprint of a storyteller, and plot conceived in such terms is greatly dependent on reader recognition of the author’s intent and design.

Aristotle argues that action in plot takes precedence over character; the nature of the plot reveals what one needs to know about human behaviour

(1987, pp. 39-40). He also believes that a plot should have a clear beginning, middle and end; that a story should begin at a point where no preceding events would have a necessary connection, and end where no subsequent events need follow (1987, p. 39). This places a premium on including all of the events that are critical to the story and knowing which ones should be left out because they are not important enough.

Can determining existence of a story be reduced to testing for ‘a résumé of action [whose] progression...*does* involve causality, sequence and consequence’ (Kinney 1992, p. 10)? That is, do we automatically or consciously ask of a text whether it demonstrates a plausible set of contingent conditions, a series of logically ordered events, and an understandable outcome? And, if so, would all of those attributes need to be evident on the page, or might the reader contribute to them, at least in part? These are key questions, not least because they deal with the interaction between text and reader and the way that the text is given life.

They relate to narrative in general but we also must consider the particular case of narrative verse, which the *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* describes succinctly as poetry ‘that tells a story’ (Preminger 1965, p. 542). Poetry in general may not tend to be as forcefully narrative now as the centuries of verse represented in *The Oxford Book of Narrative Verse*, which editor Peter Opie (1983, p. vi) described as ‘nothing more than a story-book...a book of tales...with this in common, that each of them has been made, through the peculiar alchemy of verse, more memorable and significant’.

The taste for narrative in poetry is strong. Critic and poet Dana Gioia (2003, Online) remarks that although Modernism resisted narrative poetry in favour of the lyric, it is an argument that ‘no alert critic... would risk today’, given a contemporary grass roots preference for storytelling in verse. If not all narrative verse is as forceful and overtly linear as in the popular forms to which Gioia mainly refers, the act of telling is often foregrounded in the contemporary poetic idiom despite plot fragmentation.

Where we look for indications of story, we respond to depictions of recognisable events, ones that have resonance in our prior understanding of human behaviour and customs. Familiar incidents and social practices have greatest currency, hence the statement (regarding the epithalamium in this case) that: ‘the poem acquires dramatic impetus not from an institution—marriage—but from a series of concrete actions—a wedding’ (Welsford 1967, p. 219). The perceived social value of a tradition registers with the reader, though it is rather abstract. Foremost is the familiarity of the related events themselves, as real happenings able to be visualised. The event can thus be effectively and efficiently summoned to the reader’s mind due to the writer’s use of just one well-chosen word: wedding, bride, altar, vow, and so on. The planting of one such term opens the door to association with the rest, so that they can crowd in to the reader’s mind along with the archetypal story to which they belong, and which gives them meaning.

Distinguishing the characteristics of narrative has occupied literary theorists through centuries. Is there some general area of agreement, and how that would inform an understanding of narrative in lyric poetry? Aristotle’s preference for orderly structure and completeness would be tested by much

modern fiction let alone poetry. He argues that a causal chain of events is critical to story. Structural theorist Tzvetan Todorov also feels that this needs to be evident in the text (1997, p. 232) and he emphasises that causal transformation must show how equilibrium is disturbed and then restored. Again, a short poem might struggle to demonstrate such material comprehensively, but much would depend on the magnitude of the story, and the size of the poem.

There is some consistency in one kind of storytelling. In his extensive survey and analysis of a type of folk tale, structural theorist Vladimir Propp (1968, pp. 128-133; see also Rouhier-Willoughby, [date unknown], Online) identifies a repeated structure that centres on a hero compensating for a lack or a loss. Joseph Campbell (1968, p. 283), embracing a Jungian approach in analysing mythic stories, proposes a similar model in his own idea of the hero's journey: 'the tribal ceremonies of birth, initiation, marriage, burial, installation, and so forth, serve to translate the individual's life-crises and life-deeds into classic, impersonal forms'. Campbell emphasises the lasting amenity of myth in helping to bind up the individual's fullness of identity in the society as a whole (pp. 382-383), and Christopher Vogler (1992) draws on this work, championing its use in the context of Hollywood movie scriptwriting. Edward Branigan (1992, pp. 4-5) offers a five-step model of causal transformation in narrative that concerns the disturbance and subsequent repair of a situation initially in equilibrium. Gerald Prince essentially agrees, defining a minimal story as comprising a static event to which an active force is applied, bringing about an altered static event (Rimmon-Kenan 2002, p. 1). All of these theorists share a key concept of

story that revolves around an undesirable situation being corrected, characterised by three principal elements that are causally linked. An initial state is altered by an intervening force, which triggers a consequent purposeful attempt to restore equilibrium.

The events themselves must be more than mere incidental occurrences; the triggering intervention has to have significance, since no action would be required if it did not produce a meaningful loss or inferior state of some kind. That situation generates a desire on the part of the hero to overcome, to put things right.

THE ROLE OF THE READER

This view of story is more than mere structuralism since it implicates the reader. For instance, we could look at Todorov's argument about minimal units in another way and say that what his approach really values is identifying the basic *conditions* of narrative, including but also moving beyond the depicted events. Chief amongst these factors has to be change. The passage of time is necessary for the reader to impute motivation or intention, and to evaluate a likely or apparent outcome.

In a narrative, some person, object, or situation undergoes a particular type of change and this change is measured by a sequence of attributions which apply to the thing at different times... The beginning, middle, and end are not contained in the discrete elements, say, the individual

sentences...but signified in the overall relationships established among the totality of the elements, or sentences...Narrative is thus a global interpretation of changing data measured through sets of relationships (Branigan 1992, p. 4).

Once we detect change, we can ask why it is happening, but a precondition for this position is that we also have to care, to have some kind of investment in the subsequent judgement—which once more introduces the role of the reader. The change is not just gauged at the level of the individual phrase or line, but at a larger one. Thus we acknowledge the power of the reader's prior exposure to other texts and the important function of reader desire:

The source of the codes is in what Barthes calls the *déjà-lu*, the already read (and the already written), in the writer's and the reader's experience of other literature, in a whole set of intertextual interlockings. In other words, structure, functions, sequences, plot, the possibility of following a narrative and making sense of it, belong to the reader's literary competence (Brooks 1984, p. 19).

Brooks (1984, p. 37) emphasises the reader's passion for determination, for finding meaning and significance in the text. The time of the text is unique; it borrows the reader and seduces her into a game in which she is invited to glean meaning and structure, and it stands outside her normal

life. Brooks says that ‘we can, then, conceive of the reading of plot as a form of desire that carries us forward, onward, through the text. Narratives both tell of desire—typically present some story of desire—and arouse and make use of desire as dynamic of signification’. Desire is not just a reader’s perception of a personal need but also of a continued willingness to act on the urge to satisfy it by reading further. If a story is to pull a reader through, it must create a wish in the reader to want an outcome beyond the present, right up until the story reaches its end. That need cannot be satisfied too soon or the story will falter, reaching a false conclusion.

Reader response theory ‘recognises the reader’s role in making meaning’ (Tompkins 1980, p. 223) and has been described as focussing on the way in which a general readership responds over time to a text. For a given reader, that response is ‘the joint product of the reader’s own “horizon of expectations” and the confirmations, disappointments, refutations, and reformulations of these expectations when they are “challenged” by the features of the text itself’ (Abrams 2005, pp. 271-272). There are different theoretical positions regarding the role of the reader, however, and no apparent prospect of harmonising these (see Freund 1987). Disagreements revolve around the extent of the power of the author; for example, whether the reader writes the text (per Fish 1980b), or whether reading replicates the reader. Phenomenologist Wolfgang Iser, who refers to this area as communication theory (1989, p. 229) is positioned somewhere between these last two, viewing the text as the site of a creative partnership. I will return to him shortly.

In his book *S/Z*, Roland Barthes identifies five interacting levels of connotation, of which the first is the hermeneutic code. This is essentially a question and answer process by which the reader seeks resolution: the code works to ‘articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer’ (Barthes 1971, p. 17). The basic effect of this code is expectation, assuring that reader interest will be maintained and that ‘the enigma of the narrative will be solved’ (Mayne 1976, Online). The task of the hermeneutic code is to reveal the truth that the narrative has had to hide as it develops, and ‘in its barest expression, it refers to standard elements of traditional plot structure: exposition, climax, denouement (Mayne 1976, Online). ‘Expectation,’ as Barthes says, ‘thus becomes the basic condition for truth: truth, these narratives tell us, is *what is at the end of expectation*’ (1971, p. 76).

The reader is necessarily implicated in a process of problem solving, or making meaning, which cannot be completed until the whole text has been read but which is underway from the outset of reading. He or she is inclined to add to the construction of story as part of their normal repertoire of responses to a text, as cognitive theorist Andrew Elfenbein comments, when their ‘concepts from background knowledge connect with concepts from the text to become part of the developing memory representation. Their activation and the strength of their connections will also fluctuate during reading according to their perceived relevance’ (2006, p. 488). The associative triggers presented in the text are vital in that process. Theorist Peter Hühn says, ‘meaningful sequences come into being only with the help of reference to contexts and word knowledge. Authors and readers, that is to say, can grasp or understand

texts only by referring to pre-existent meaningful structures to familiar cognitive schemata that already have a meaning' (Hühn & Schönert 2005, p. 5). They connect the text with their own sense of the world.

The reader revises the text, as semiotician Michael Riffaterre describes it, when he moves forward through it in an act of structural decoding conducted in relation to the poem as a single unfolding work—with its peak significance necessarily embedded in its end, where the importance of the beginning and middle can be fully seen (1978, pp. 5-6). The reader undertakes performance of the semiotic process, what Riffaterre refers to as the 'praxis of transformation' (1978, p. 12). In this stage, a struggling reader would begin to rationalise, trying various means to bridge semantic gaps: 'He resorts to nonverbal items, such as details from the author's life, or to verbal items, such as preset emblems of lore that are well established but not pertinent to the poem' (p. 13). The reader refers to his known systems of signs, testing them for suitability of fit with the possible and emerging meaning of the text. The poet can profitably use an understanding of that reading process when writing a lyric poem.

When Frank Kermode says that 'the omniscient author leaves gaps in which the reader must work for his own meanings' (1990, p. 35), he is alluding to the writer's judicious non-disclosure and that 'the narrative works as much by what it does not as by what it does say' (1990, p. 37). Such omissions can pose positive if tacit questions for the attentive reader to ponder (What did actually happen in the attic? Do I understand why this character collects shoe laces?), that is, if they ultimately add value to the reader's experience of the reading. A reader's progress through a text thus comprises a

series of questions, answers, and eventually ascribed meaning; an accumulation of changing ‘positions’.

Theorist Stanley Fish once offered a class of students in English religious poetry of the seventeenth century a list of authors’ names left over from a class on linguistics. He found that they could construe the details to fit within the framework of issues and meanings consistent with their own area of interest. He has repeated the exercise and discovered similar results. He says, ‘acts of recognition, rather than being triggered by formal characteristics [within the text], are their source’ (1980a, p. 326). A list becomes a poem because the reader sees it as one, whether directed to try to do so or from some other motivating force. Fish continues:

It is not that the presence of poetic qualities compels a certain kind of attention but that the paying of a certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic qualities. As soon as my students were aware that it was poetry they were seeing, they began to look with poetry-seeing eyes, that is, with eyes that saw everything with in relation to properties they knew poems to possess (1980a, p. 326).

Virginia Jackson would add that they could not then *unsee* it as one either, even if an alternative explanation and therefore interpretation subsequently arose; the two readings would survive in tandem regardless of which is seen to have more credibility or authority. Speaking of Dickinson’s writing, and whether or not it was intended to be read as poetry, Jackson says, ‘...we cannot go back to a moment before they became lyrics, or back to a moment

before lyric reading was the only way to apprehend a poem' (2005, p. 116).

Fish's students had interpreted a poem that they themselves had discovered or, one might say, had made.

Fish argues that 'readers of poetry know that no part of a poem can be slighted (the rule is "everything counts") and they do not rest until every part has been given a significance' (1980a, p. 330). He contends that a poem and, in his particular case, also an assignment, 'do not have their source in some bed-rock level of objectivity' (1980a, p. 331). In analysing an awkward expression in a particular poem, he says that 'to clean [it] up is to take from it its most prominent and important effect—the suspension of the reader between the alternatives its syntax momentarily offers' (1980b, p. 73). This focus on the achievement of the text through what the poem *does*, parallels the tension required in the plot of a story. It highlights in this case the value to the reader in deferment, in the text leaving possible readings and plot options open for a while. Fish (1980b, p. 75) argues that it is with simple texts, those seemingly requiring little effort to interpret, that we are denied such pleasures and that 'poetry...is characterized by a high incidence of deviance from normal syntactical and lexical habits' (p. 76), thus demanding more interpretative work by the reader. That quality of deviance is common in lyric poetry, so we would expect its readers to have to make greater effort.

As far back as the early twentieth century, W.B. Yeats recognised that 'if the situation [in a poem] is sufficiently banal, sufficiently everyday or transparent, the poem leaves "undetermined" a number of relations and connections which the reader supplies' (Block 1978, p. 161). In other words, the reader is called on to complete the poem and will be more competent at

this task if the gaps found there are associated with what is familiar. 'The reader searches his own experience, both human and literary, to find the frame of reference and significance to which the poem applies' (Block 1978, p. 163). Even when a text frustrates expectations, 'the expected frame of reference plays a role, since it makes us aware of norm-breaking, and encourages us to infer a story even from disparate narrative elements whose logical connections may escape us' (Crosman 1983, p. 91). The text is a product of the writer's intentional acts that partly control the reader's responses, according to Wolfgang Iser, but they also contain gaps and 'indeterminate elements' that the reader must fill (Abrams 2005, p. 266). He states that 'central to the reading of every literary work is the interaction between its structure and its recipient' (Iser 1978, p. 20), and that the frustration of the reader's expectations is essential: '...it is only through inevitable omissions that a story gains its dynamism. Thus whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in gaps left by the text itself' (1980, p. 55). This act of reading creates the text as an individual 'performative utterance' (Iser 1989, p. 6). Such indeterminacy is vital since it allows the reader more room for interpretation; it is 'the fundamental precondition for reader participation' (Iser 1989, pp. 9-10). The alternative would be to somehow lock the text into one and only one meaning, a clear impossibility.

A reader's sense of the imagined world having some 'reality' is heightened when some of its constituent parts have recognisable counterparts in his experience of reacting to the actual world. It is because perfect

knowledge is impossible that reader imagination is so important. Guiding devices in the text help control the reader:

...reception is a product that is initiated in the reader by the text, but is molded by the norms and values that govern the reader's outlook.

Reception is therefore an indication of preferences and predilections that reveal the reader's predisposition as well as the social conditions that have shaped his attitudes (Iser 1989, p. 50).

And:

...the reader's code guides the selections that make the text/world relation...concrete for him...Thus text and reader act upon one another in a self-regulating process (Iser 1989, p. 229).

The reader is a product of her times, experienced to a degree in the practices of engaging with a text, the reading process, and bringing to it a wealth of knowledge about cultural and sociological behaviours. The intention of the text can be spoken of 'only as the result of *conjecture* on the part of the reader,' according to Umberto Eco (1990, p. 58), who adds that 'the internal textual coherence controls the otherwise uncontrollable drives of the reader' (1990, p. 59). This describes a process of reading in which the text 'becomes' as it guides the reader. One aspect of that engagement is to bring reading/decoding skills to bear in order to control the text in some degree, and

to create a satisfying experience through creating story. To that extent, ‘every narrative is a miniature, and every book a microcosm, for such forms always seek to finalize, bring closure to, a totality or model’ (Susan Stewart 1993, p. xii). The goal of reading in this view is to bring the text to a form in the reader’s mind that maximises its efficiency—everything possible is assigned an integrated meaning and purpose; there is no waste. Each reading, then, is essentially oriented towards reduction and closure, even if that is ultimately thwarted.

The main thing to be gleaned from considerations of the reader’s role is that the text does not stand alone; the author and the reader are compelled to work together, even if sometimes awkwardly and with varying success. The language that helps to establish the stage and the features of the textual performance includes a common repertoire of references to rites of passage, acceptable and taboo behaviours, and tribal stories. The wedding is prominent among these, with recognisable events comprising the arc of the typical narrative in that case.

We use narrative to navigate through life, to remember, to communicate, and for entertainment. We use it to make journeys through texts, creating the circumstances in which we see a story that projects into the future, and which poses a mystery worth solving. In the smallest lyric poem it is possible to present components of a story that, however minimal, meet that criterion. They excite interest and provide information that connects to elements of a reader’s existing knowledge to produce an interpretation of a story, however provisional. The reader is never provided with a complete decoding tool or a full set of plans with which to decipher the plot: that would

destroy the enigmatic quality of storytelling that is fundamental to our desire for entertainment. We live in the gaps, with what is not said, and the urge to intuit what will follow is our essential diet. Suspense and the deferral of revelation add to our delight. In perceiving narrative, we survive on basic information, on spare if vague clues, and a sense of how motivation drives the affairs of humankind. There is no reason why that desire should be acknowledged in soap operas, novels, short stories, plays, movies, TV serials, and our own lives, but not in lyric poetry.

WHAT IS LYRIC POETRY?

Defining the Lyric

This thesis concentrates on poems after 1950 since the intention is to deal with those that are recognisably part of the current world of the lyric. Theorist Peter Hühn says, ‘the analysis of lyric poetry...is notoriously lacking in theoretical foundations—perhaps to the extent of opening the way to the development of a theory of the lyric’ (Hühn & Schönert 2005, p. 2), and he does pursue this aim in his narratological research.

One approach is to treat the lyric as essentially the plotless expression of the state of one mind, which will stand independently of any text in which it is located (Olson 1969, pp. 59-66) but definition of the lyric, formal or otherwise, has varied over the centuries:

...any universal agreement concerning a distinct generic status and definite boundaries for the lyric remains an implausible fiction; in any event such an agreement is undesirable because it would only obscure the complex history of the term lyric (Jeffreys 1995, p. 198).

The lyric has not always been highly rated. For a great time it was subordinated to longer forms of poetry such as the epic, though it began to claim popularity in the late seventeenth century (Jeffreys 1995, p. 198). The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw 'an extraordinary rise in the prominence and prestige of the sort of lyric poem' that displaced the longer forms of epic and tragedy (Abrams 2005, p. 115), with a greater focus on the validity of the individual's personal experience and inner states. Part of this growth coincided with the emergence of the novel as a favoured vehicle for narrative (Hirsch 1999, p. 16), stealing some of the ground of the long narrative poem:

The transformation of poetic taste is nowhere more evident than in the almost impossibly high expectations now placed on narrative poetry. The evocative compression and lyric integrity of Modernist poetry left most readers impatient with the loose, expansive style of traditional narrative verse. The new narrative must tell a memorable story in language that constantly delivers a lyric frisson (Gioia 1995, Online).

We may ask then what really distinguishes the lyric from narrative poetry, and one aspect to consider is the formality of structure. Andrew Welsh

points out that ‘most long narrative poems have required a consistent meter which organises the language into regular verse-lines, and in oral epics further organises it into fixed patterns of formulaic diction’ (1978 pp. 20-21). The appearance of such poems reflects a formal discipline that may not be evident with a lyric poem, but this is not a decisive characteristic since a lyric poem may also adhere to regular form and metre. Length may be a guide, but unless one imposes brevity as a criterion for lyric poetry, that alone will be insufficient. Another element of structure is the organisation of the text in terms of sequencing and completeness. Obviously, a longer poem has the potential to contain more information for the reader to work with but there are also the matters of how it is organised and whether, in the end, it constitutes or even implies a finished story.

Another aspect of difference is the reader’s own approach to reading. Peter Opie (1983, p. ix) says that ‘narrative verse needs a different reading technique from lyric and reflective poetry’, absorbing the story in a first reading and then allowing pauses during a second reading to ‘be dazzled by the brilliance of... metaphors’ that is, deferring a focus on such things until the story, which has primacy, has been absorbed in a first reading. His analogy is that ‘a narrative poem is in the nature of a sea voyage, and it is no good poking about in the rock pools waiting for the sea anemones to unfold their fronds’(p. ix); the big-scale features matter more than the small. According to Opie then, the first reading of narrative poetry is meant to be energetic, riding the momentum of the plot rather than dwelling on technical virtuosity and effect.

The emphasis in narrative poetry is much less on effects of particular lines as on the larger plot path. Theorist Jonathan Culler remarks that, ‘If narrative is about what happens next, lyric is about what happens now— in the reader’s engagement with each line’ (2008, p.202). The lyric, he says, is a ‘linguistic event’, foregrounding the use of language: ‘Narrative structures are translatable, but lyric, in its peculiar structural patterning, forgives the givenness, the untranscendability, of a particular language, which seems to its user a condition of experience’ (2008, p. 205). But Culler’s approach seems to posit a false dilemma, unnecessarily denying a narrative structure to the lyric when it is really a matter of degree rather than exclusivity. Pulitzer Prize winning poet Mary Oliver also speaks of the reader’s focus when dealing with the lyric:

The narrative poem is generally longer than the lyric poem, and its tone is without such a tightly coiled force. It is discursive, it pauses for moments of humour and slowly unfolding description. It sets an easy and readable pace, and helps us to enjoy sequential events. At times, in the lyric poem, we feel we are in a vortex; when we listen to the narrative poem, we are comfortable. Engaged, and at times entranced, we could listen for hours. We do not love anything more deeply than we love a story—narrative is at the centre of all literature (1994, p. 85).

Even this does not mean that narrative should preclude lyric, or vice versa. Prominent poets Mark Strand and Eavan Boland prefer to treat narrative and lyric functions as detectable characteristics rather than restrictive

formulae. Instead, they emphasise the evolutionary aspects of such function in poetic forms. As an example, they highlight the stanza's use in both capacities over time, and its 'superb capacity to maintain a tension between narrative and lyric elements, to close off a story and open up a drama, all on the same page' (Strand & Boland 2000, p. 139). This emphasis on elements (or functions) rather than forms appears to be a more sensible approach than treating poems as if they must swear allegiance to the narrative or lyric flags. It acknowledges that the two attributes can co-exist. Poet Eamon Grennan regards lyricism as being about both 'fragmentation...fracture...things seen in passing' and 'an attempt to slow things down a bit and hold on' so that the poems can 'bring the macro and the micro constantly into a single focus' in a kind of 'unified field of being' (in Williams 2006, Online). This addresses the idea of poetry that captures the instant but also moves beyond it to identify a greater world of reference. One of the few writers I have found who directly acknowledges the narrative function that is possible in lyric poetry, John Drury, says that 'good lyrics often have a secret or camouflaged plot, a suggestion of action *in* or *around* the poem (just before or just after)' (1991, p. 169), which he sees as partly a matter of compression or intensity:

Lyric poems capture the moment of crisis, narrative poems the unfolding of conflict. Lyric poems represent stasis, the "still point of the turning world" in T.S. Eliot's words, while narrative poems represent action and motion, the turning itself (just as we have plot turns and twists) (Drury 1992, p. 169).

Underscoring the tension in the lyric, the notable US poet Robert Pinsky relates the lyric poem to lack and desire, the very things often used to describe plot in stories:

The word "wanting" means both to desire and to lack. These related feelings are basic to life and to poetry. The lyric poem organizes the sounds of language so that the very cadences and patterns express wanting something (Pinsky 2005, Online)

Several features have been advanced as suitable tests to define lyric poetry. In the original Greek, lyric 'signified a song rendered to the accompaniment of a lyre' (Abrams 2005, p. 154), and the dominant approach was originally to treat its chief expressive characteristic as an intimate involvement with sound and song—as its classic root in 'lyre' suggests. We still often tend to think of lyrics these days as words set to music. More recently, other technical criteria such as attending to matters of form—mentioned above—and focussing on imaginative distillation have been emphasised. Aspects of using heightened language, often combined with an emotional or mystical element, are also included:

- 'the lyric is the union of concision and amplitude in a highly developed and recurrent metrical form' (Whitmore 1918, p. 595);
- 'the lyric...require[s] of us an immediate sublimity' (Edmund in Collins 1930, p. xi);

- ‘the musical element is intrinsic to the work intellectually as well as aesthetically: it becomes the focal point for the poet’s perceptions as they are given a verbalized form to convey emotional and rational values’ (Preminger 1965, p. 460);
- ‘The lyric is a short poem derived from individual episodes in a person's life. The long poem is a more major and more thoughtful statement. It does not rely upon an emotion the way lyric does’ (Precosky 1987, Online);
- ‘All lyric poetry always celebrates a single theme or tone of motif’ and shares an essential concern with mastering tempo (Packard 1992, p. 61);
- ‘the lyric moment...a sort of fervent crescendo when the emotional world of the writer joins with the emotional world of the reader’ (Dobyns 2003, p. 45); and
- ‘a lyric is any fairly short poem, uttered by a single speaker, who expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought or feeling’ (Abrams 2005, p. 153).

More complexly, Frederick Ruf suggests three characteristics that he claims are ‘generally’ associated with the lyric:

1. Lyric has one voice, as does narrative.
2. What the lyric voice speaks of tends to be less public than the subjects of drama or narrative.

3. The relation between the lyric voice and what is spoken is *intimate*.

We tend to feel as though we're eavesdropping, overhearing the private thoughts of the speaker (1994, p. 805).

Though I observe Ruf's qualifying use of 'generally' and 'tend', I also note his assertion that lyric poetry can actually sustain more than one voice (alternating monologues, or even a dialogue). This is also evident in verse novels, for instance some of Australian poet Dorothy Porter's. Ruf contends that lyric poetry can relate to public events, which would seem to leave the last and commonly proposed characteristic, intimacy, as maybe a better indicator at this stage. Ruf regards the position of the narrating voice as the key:

...the distinguishing difference, between narrative and lyric lies in the fact that narrative perceives someone else's thoughts from without and presents them in a magisterial voice, while lyric speaks of thoughts from within and entrusts them to the reader. The difference lies in the *relation* between the voices and the inward state (1994, pp. 805-806).

Narrative, he adds, is also a matter of 'far greater scope' since it 'presents a single voice that relates a great variety of characters, actions, and objects, all pulled together into one account' (1994, p. 809). The capacity of the narrator to know all or to operate in a more limited way is fundamental to interpretation of religious texts, for instance, which is Ruf's primary area of concern, but we might equally apply it to thinking through issues of textual

completeness and coherence, comparing the narrator's and reader's roles. For example, does the writer allow the narrator to present the reader with a full picture and to speak in the most intelligible terms to aid reader understanding, or is the reader forced to work with limited information that is obliquely presented? A shorter prose story is handicapped in regard to exposition because it must work within the discipline of fewer words than a novel, and lyric poems are similarly restricted, but there are ways in which brief forms can compensate for their relative lack of data—or, indeed, capitalise on it.

The defining characteristics have widened over time, as the lyric has become much more inclusive. Virginia Jackson says that 'from the mid-nineteenth through the beginning of the twenty-first century, to be lyric is to be read as lyric—and to be read as a lyric is to be printed and framed as a lyric.' (2005 p. 6). This gives primacy to the reader, acting on whatever criteria is applied to class a poem as lyric. It is, in a real sense then, out of the hands of the poet. Jackson describes a process of lyricization, by which 'lyric did not conquer poetry: poetry was reduced to lyric. Lyric became the dominant form of poetry only as poetry's authority was reduced to the cramped margins of culture' (2005 p. 8). Here then, she is striving to remind us that classifications are retrospective: 'history has made the lyric in its image, but we have yet to recognize that image as our own' (2005 p. 15).

So what characteristics are ascribed to the lyric?

Preminger, in the *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, offers a short but assertive list, albeit a qualified one: 'Though the attributes of brevity, metrical coherence, subjectivity, passion, sensuality, and particularity of image are frequently ascribed to the lyric genre, there are schools of poetry

obviously lyric which are not susceptible to such criteria' (1965, p. 461), and that in the contemporary era, lyric poetry is 'thematically representational of the poet's sensibility as evidenced in a fusion of conception and image' (1965, p. 462). A recent issue of the Australian poetry journal, *five bells*, includes essays on the nature of the lyric, in one of which, Sheryl Persson remarks:

In the twenty-first century, a lyric poem, although the boundaries are flexible, is usually short, non-narrative, and is one in which the poet writes about her or his thoughts and feelings...the essence of the lyric is an attempt to understand some aspect of our complex experience of life (2004, p. 9).

This is to return to a definition that favours a fundamental 'intimate and individual expression' approach. She adds: 'The general rule that can be extrapolated is that lyric poetry works upon a basis of a contrast between some problem or some unattractive or disorderly aspect of life and the idea of a better more attractive order' (p. 11). While I disagree that this is 'general', it highlights an idea central to plotting of narrative that a story should evidence some lack that provides the protagonist with the motivation to seek change, for example, 'to save a maiden', and thus presents a causal sequence of events. In the same issue, Phyllis Perlstone reinforces Persson's claim regarding emotional representation, saying that 'this combination of the autobiographical and the meditative expresses openness to emotions and the dilemmas endemic in reality [and] often marks the lyric poet' (Perlstone 2004, p. 7).

Hühn says that: ‘Attempts to define lyric poetry systematically and theoretically as a distinctive genre after the model of drama or narrative have failed to produce satisfactory results’ (2004, p. 141). Nonetheless, he lists the basic features of lyric poetry: ‘heightened artificiality, self-referentiality, subjectivity, and deviation as well as the production of unstable illusion’ together with a tendency to overcode language (2004, p. 142). Werner Wolf, in attempting a reconception of the lyric, produces a list of nine traits — potential oral performativity, brevity, heightened language, versification, heightened self-reference, a pronounced and seemingly unmediated consciousness (the ‘lyric I’), favouring the individual perspective (subjectivity), minimising the importance of external actions, and absolute utterances (less referentialised with regard to normal expression, and projecting personal experience) (2005, pp. 23-24). Obviously some of these are closely related, and most are detectable in some prose and present a difficulty of degree — that is, the extent to which their presence is a reliable sign and the problems in determining measurement. Wolf stresses ‘the impossibility of a watertight, systematic definition of the lyric’ (2005, pp.33-34, 39). He concludes that the best way is to look for a preponderance of the suggested traits, conceding though that the lyric is very much whatever the reader thinks it should be (2005, p. 39).

The absence of a clear definition is obvious, and the debate continues. A call to define lyric less strictly has been resisted, with reluctance to treat so-called language poetry and its particular focus on form and disrupted syntax as part of lyric at all (McCooey 2005; Rowland 2005). The poetics of language poetry, a postmodern movement that emerged in the 1960s, draw attention to

form and pattern in the uses of language that might normally be overlooked, taken for granted; they foreground the activity of writing itself (Perelman 1994, p. 307). Language poets claim to ‘systematically disarrange the language’ and ‘let the words demand their own form’ (Walker 2008, Online): ‘there is no natural speech, only artificiality naturalised’ (Filreis 2008, Online). The poem is thus treated, consciously and somewhat suspiciously, as a mere device. While decrying the artifice of narrative structure and what they see as the relatively static determinism of nouns, language poets nonetheless acknowledge their reliance on the reader to fill in gaps. Alison Croggon, whose poetry has sometimes employed demanding elisions and quite fractured syntax, writes: ‘the gaps or the silences in the lyric are as important as the words’ (Croggon 2002, p. 55; though, curiously, this statement occurs in an extended prose poem). The reader is implicitly part of the process of making meaning:

Language writing is often posed as an attempt to draw the reader into the production process by leaving the connections between various elements open, thus allowing the reader to produce the connections between those elements. In this way, presumably, the reader recognises his or her part in the social process of production. But just as important, the ambiguity of the structure of many of these poems should remind the reader that any connections drawn are arbitrary. It is the framing process itself, and by extension the process of ideological framing, which is no longer taken for granted (Hartley 2008, Online).

Language poetry is represented in the Australian anthology, *Calyx* (Brennan & Minter 2000), and collections by Kate Lilley (*Versary* 2002) and Michael Farrell (*ode ode* 2002), among others. In some cases, the reader has to work quite hard to engage with language poetry. Reviewing the Farrell book, poet Kevin Gillam describes the poems as ‘difficult’, ‘almost incomprehensible’, and pieces of ‘exalted obscurity’ that ‘alienate the reader’ and rarely create ‘an opportunity for linkage’ (2004, p. 51). There is something paradoxically both intellectual and anti-intellectual at play, which strives in part to de-institutionalise language and get back to an unadulterated and ‘original “purity” of words’ (Kinsella n.d., Online); encouraging a response from the reader that is more intuitive. Charles Altieri, in responding to Margaret Perloff’s book on poetry criticism and the claim that ‘it seems historically necessary now for poetry to engage the discourses and media of a technologized society’ (Altieri 1991, p. 582), acknowledges the need to find alternative poetic expressions but is wary, adding:

Just as we need a poetry that addresses technology and the suspicions of inwardness that it inculcates, we need a poetry that can convince us there are arenas of our lives that remain not entirely shaped by such technological frames. Thus Sharon Olds not only develops a domestic lyricism, she also seeks in the domestic a source of values capable of resisting everything that Perloff thinks poets must incorporate into their work. In my view that resistance is at least as important a contemporary stance as are the efforts to develop somewhat less domestic models of intimacy one finds in Robert Hass and the later Ashbery (Altieri 1991,

p. 585).

Interrogating poetry on these terms seems to overlook that there *can* be an overlap between the technology of the poem and its thematic or subject concerns, notwithstanding that there is a charm to resisting the conventional. Difficulty of definition is not a recent issue. As Charles Whitmore acknowledges in the early twentieth century, one cannot always give ‘a precise and satisfactory statement of what constitutes the essence of the lyric form’ (1918 p. 584), and he favours the poet’s imaginative distillation above all other characteristics. Seventy years later, renowned Irish poet Seamus Heaney (1988, p. 92) says, ‘...poetry, having to do with feelings and emotions, must not submit to the intellect’s eagerness to foreclose. It must wait for a music to occur, an image to discover itself’:

The poet is credited with a power to open unexpected and unedited communications between our nature and the nature of reality we inhabit. The oldest evidence for this attitude appears in the Greek notion that when a lyric poet gives voice, ‘it is a god that speaks’. And the attitude persists into the twentieth century (Heaney 1988, p. 93).

James Longenbach ponders the balancing act required when a difficult poem is encountered, speaking of its resistance, its unwillingness to completely divulge itself. He says:

If the poem is resisting itself strenuously enough, then chances are that our own resistance to the poem will be overwhelmed. The language will give us pleasure because it gives us work to do, work that can never be completed no matter how fully explained the poem might be. (2004, p. 97)

Longenbach argues that the world must remain a place of wonder, a riddle in many ways: ‘the wonder of language depends less on meaning than on the ways in which it means, the shape of the temporal process we negotiate in the act of reading or writing a poem’ (2004, p. 100). But there are limits to holding the reader at a distance; mere opacity in expression is not a substitute because there must be the right balance between maintaining reader desire and withholding fulfillment. He adds a rider:

...if one danger is the poem whose language does not return us to the world’s unintelligibility, another is the poem that embraces the unintelligible so single-mindedly that there is nothing to be lost. If the resistance to poetry is the wonder of poetry, how do we prevent resistance from becoming a fetish, something with which we are merely fascinated? (2004, p. 102)

Lyric poetry is already celebrated for calling attention to the power of language to produce subtle but powerful effects on its reader, including something approaching mysticism. Poet Charles Simic says that ‘lyricism, in its truest sense, is the awe before the untranslatable. Like childhood, it is a

language that cannot be replaced by any other language. A great lyric poem must approach untranslatability' (1994, p. 112). The notion of divine inspiration persists, with its connotations of tapping directly in to a subconscious generator of pure meaning. Paul de Man says that 'as a primitive art, closer to natural impulses, lyric poetry is 'precisely the antithesis of modernity' (1970, p. 154), and former US poet laureate Robert Pinsky claims that the best poems '...involve a bridge or space between the worldly and the spiritual' (1988, p. 3). Poet Hale Chatfield observes that there is a 'common notion not only that verbal art can aspire to the condition of music but also that such an aspiration is a moral imperative' (2002, Online). Thus, poetry may be regarded as involving an unspoken meaning that is first received physically and magically, before the intellect begins its translation.

Hazel Smith and Roger Dean consider this from the writer's perspective in their recent book on the relationship between research and writing practice:

Creative writing practitioners have sometimes argued that theorisation or documentation of the creative process risks subduing the creative fire or reducing the range of responses to their work. But such arguments reinforce the mystification of the creative artists and romantic ideas about the spontaneity of the creative process. Creative practitioners traditionally had an ideological investment in such mystification because it shored up the idea of the creative genius (2009, p. 25).

There is a tension here, what James Longenbach refers to as the resistance to poetry. It is active in delaying the delivery of what the poem promises, so that the reader is suspended awhile in a state between wanting the poem to deliver and yet also wanting to enjoy the pleasures of deferral. It seems a rather sexual metaphor. The poem itself can be said to embody this delicious anxiety, keeping a 'place to hide' (2004, p. 9) that eludes a final interpretation. The reader thus needs to move beyond any tendency towards dry translation of the poem, trusting in the beauty of language and emotion as seductive pleasures in themselves. Longenbach prizes one poetic staple that might help slow the reader, sound: 'We trust the poem because it wants to be listened to, spoken, savored in the mouth before it is understood' (2004, p. 37). Writing of George Oppen's poems, he argues that they 'demonstrate the inseparability of story and song, sincerity and objectification, aural pleasure and experimental form' (2004, p. 45). The tension between wanting language, at its most immediate and figurative in the lyric poem, to make us feel elevated beyond intellectual reasoning (at least, in the first moment) is at odds with the purely technical, analytical perspective:

Objects of wonder must remain perpetually unnamable if their power is to be relished repeatedly, and the language of great poems will resist our mastery long after we have explained the events they happen to be about. (2004, p. 101)

The highest form of lyric poetry would then be that which *most closely* approaches the primal; that transcends language or, at least, reduces it to its

most basic and most common elements. This is rather like depicting the poet as shaman, as conduit, and these lyric qualities are contrasted with poetry that adopts a narrative mode, often with a reduction of lyric qualities and less ‘inspired’ speech (in the sense of having been breathed into the poet from the subconscious or from magical outside sources)—as if narrative poetry demands plainer speech in order to serve a different priority, that of the story.

As long as language involves signification, which it must, there will always be a moment of mediation and interpretation, however. Language is not natural but learned. No matter how swift that process of translation, and no matter how appealing the idea that we are linked by some innate shared nature, it is not the same thing as magic. There is still a strong mediating impact. Ian Jack points out that while it is ‘still sometimes supposed that lyrics are spontaneous utterances created without thought...the whole history of lyric seems to suggest that his audience frequently exercises a strong influence on a lyric poet’ (1984, pp. 1-2).

The concept of pure expression is problematic for poetry’s technicians, as it wards off analysis, thwarting those who want to tinker under the bonnet of the car, so to speak, in order to find out exactly how things work. That does not mean that we are always entirely conscious of the way language operates. It might still be said that ‘Poetry is a voicing, a calling forth, and the lyric poem exists somewhere in the region—the register—between speech and song. The words are waiting to be vocalized’ (Hirsch 1999, p. 5). To stop at this, with the stress on the musicality of lyric poetry and on the physicality of the human body’s involvement, with or without conceding some kind of emotional engagement, would be to omit recognition of a common underlying

function at work in lyric poetry. As with the definitions above, the fact that a song may tell a story tends to be omitted from consideration of its character. That kind of demarcation is consistent with Aristotle's influential classification of poetry as epic, drama and lyric in his *Poetics*. While it reflects the conventions of his time, and conventions may change, the fact that Aristotle's scheme has endured also suggests that it possesses a timeless truth.

Aristotle treats epic as a form in which the narrator tells a story in the first person and then allows the characters to speak for themselves, usually in a long recitation. Drama, he says, involves the characters alone speaking, and lyric is where the work is only uttered through the first person (see also Hirsch 1999, p. 15). These definitions are not always adhered to now, however. While first person utterance still prevails as one defining characteristic, lyric poetry might include a variety of voices. It may still emphasise musicality and heightened language but relatively plain speech is also frequently employed. Aristotle, though, regards lyric as lacking plot, his own stated hallmark of poetry. Prominent British writers and philosophers Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes helped to ensure the 'dominance of dramatic and narrative poetry' in their own time, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Dowlin 1941, pp. 167, 181), relegating lyric poetry to a subordinate role, one without storytelling.

Can the lyric coexist with narrative, and vice versa, especially in contemporary poetry? Despite his emphasis on concision, Whitmore thinks that poetry in general 'can assuredly tell a story' (1918, p. 591), but he does not elaborate this attribute with respect to lyric poetry in particular. To highlight the confusion over this aspect, we need only revisit the

epithalamium. Wheeler describes it, with particular reference to Sappho and Catullus, as ‘essentially a lyric method’ (1930, p. 220). Tufte comments that Sir Philip Sidney’s epithalamium, a ‘short pastoral lyric’ of 1580 or 1581, reflects both ‘the lyric mode of Catullus 61’ and ‘the narrative epic epithalamium of the classics’ (1966, p. 39). Spenser’s ‘Epithalamium’ has been described as ‘a wedding *hymn*...a lyric rapture...a song which surges forward in a series of musically sweeping stanzas and images’ (Cirillo 1968, p. 20), as ‘the song which is the poem’ (p. 25), and as ‘the most magnificent lyric ever penned of love triumphant’ (Smith & De Selincourt, 1937, p. xxxvi), even though it comprises 24 distinct sections in a chronologically linear and narrative sequence. While these comments refer to epithalamia of different writers, the subject poems are not so disparate as to explain the apparent variation in commentators’ remarks unless we acknowledge that the works are capable of showing both lyric *and* narrative characteristics. The epithalamium can be both a song and a device for establishing harmonious resolution to a story, the restoration of equilibrium.

During the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century, the boundaries of epic, drama and lyric began to blur. According to Hirsch, readers began to ‘experience how the narrative or story like element drives lyric poems; how the musical element, the rhythm of emotions, charges narrative poems; how the element of dramatic projection empowers many narratives, many lyrics’ (Hirsch 1999, p. 16). Director Peter Brooks still maintains differentiation, saying that lyric poetry ‘strives towards an ideal simultaneity of meaning, encouraging us to read backward as well as forward (through rhyme and repetition, for instance), to grasp the whole in one visual and auditory

image...whereas narrative stories depend on meanings delayed, partially filled in, stretched out' (1984, p. 21). This is a false dichotomy; the two positions need not be exclusive. They could be operating at the same time in a lyric poem, with movement between attempts to construct a linear story as well as appreciation of the rewards of continuous reflexive readings. Abrams comments that 'there is an implicit narrative element even in many *lyric* poems' and illustrates this by pointing out characters' actions to be inferred when reading William Wordsworth's poem, 'The Solitary Reaper' (2005, p. 181). Such specific acknowledgement in relation to lyric verse is rare, however. At the point of Abrams' quoted remark, his explanation does not extend to deeper analysis or attend to matters such as other ways to discern the presence or process of narrating story in lyric poetry. Clearly though, when reading a poem that refers to a wedding, one might apply the same method as Abrams in inferring actions that are not explicitly detailed in it.

Cognitive theorist Reuven Tsur points out that an indirect but 'highly favoured way' in which language can be used in poetry is 'to generate the unique diffuse character of emotions: to evoke in the reader's imagination a landscape in which orientation may take place' (1997, Online). A poem might use techniques (longer words and lines, for example) that slow the pace of reading or that suggest a reduced level of energy, in order to produce a feeling that will support the intention of the piece; but without direct statement to that effect. It might rely on the sound of the words to create an atmosphere of urgency or of relaxation. Tsur says that 'emotional quality is present in the poem not only by way of telling but also by way of showing' and that it may be dispersed through the poem (1997, Online). The effect so produced can be

generated by subtle means, ones that need not draw attention to themselves, and the reader is conditioned to read in a particular frame of mind. In a similar way, the use of a wedding term can be part of a deliberate intention, in different situations, to indicate a place and an atmosphere and a state of mind; for example, to suggest happiness or apprehension or acceptance or other emotional states.

Thus far, we have several characteristics that might help us define lyric poetry but no real consonance. Those few anthologies that identify as gathering lyric poetry use quite different bases to do so and, surprisingly, they cannot even agree on whether to specify musicality as a basis for inclusion or for exclusion. There is still an abiding, if not universally applied, criterion of the individual self-reflective voice that utters a monological response to a crisis or epiphany (Jeffreys 1995, pp. 200-202). The laziest definition of all recognises a tendency to conflate the lyric with poetry altogether, making it the standard form, and thereafter only establishing criteria for *exclusion* of other types of poetry. Jeffreys argues that this is an unsurprising outcome of poetry having been ‘pushed into a lyric ghetto because prose fiction became the presumptive vehicle for narrative literature’ (1995, p. 200).

Discovering the longstanding lack of agreement over which attributes are key to defining lyric poetry is not so surprising in one sense. I doubt that it matters given that the term has virtually become a synonym for nearly all contemporary poetry, and also because pinning it down in a formulaic sense seems both genuinely impossible and practically unnecessary. What benefit would flow from agreeing on a rigorously applied and useable set of criteria? Some poetry would be inside the corral and some outside, and similar quarrels

would likely emerge within each camp about the characteristics of their own poetry of interest. It is true that this very lack of agreement about the nature of the lyric is at the heart of this thesis, however, because it evidences resistance to acknowledging the narrative function in lyric poetry. In any case, it does not stop us moving towards a working definition of the lyric (even as that term seems to mean just about all contemporary poetry), and for the purposes of this study, a more inclusive view is appropriate.

Thus, I would define lyric poetry as displaying some if not all of the following: brevity, musicality (which I couple with a sense of heightened language), an emphasis on subjective utterance by individual voice(s), and a degree of intimacy. I find this falls closest to Abrams previously offered summary of a lyric as ‘any fairly short poem, uttered by a single speaker, who expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought or feeling’ (2005, p. 153). In all, I would also look for a sense of disclosure or epiphany that draws the reader back into reviewing the poem. Of the lyric’s characteristics, it is brevity that bears most weight for the purposes of this study since it reflects an inextricable connection to the extent of information made available to the reader, and that informs their ability to glean a sense of the fuller story of which the lyric is part.

THE NARRATIVE IN THE LYRIC

Having considered the problem of defining lyric poetry, it is now necessary to turn to the narrative function within it. The signs of narrative are more practical than ecstatic, but there is no reason why they cannot be

represented within lyric poetry's altered states. In any case, both narrative and lyric writing rely on a common factor, the reader. What then are the signs of narrative function in the lyric? Narratologist Peter Hühn says that 'lyric poems generally feature the same fundamental constituents as narrative fiction', which he lists as 'sequentiality, mediacy, and articulation', that is, having a temporal sequence of events that are mediated from a particular and narrated perspective (2004, p. 140).

Critic Sonny Williams (2006) argues that poets mostly fail to offer truly engaging narrative. Clearly stating a preference for big adventures, he argues that poets are missing the opportunity to 'place individuals in a larger outward context and explore ideas too large for the lyric poem'. He adds:

Unlike prose, poetry moves more cinematically, from line to line, image to image, scene to scene. Time is compressed, and the skilled poet can manipulate the movement and pacing of story in less space than prose. Words carefully chosen and placed can produce a wealth of allusions and meanings that prose cannot (Williams 2006, Online).

While lyric poetry (and many verse novels) might not meet Williams' personal criteria for a satisfying story, his argument allows the possibility of narrative production in lyric poetry. Narrative becomes easier to recognise when attributes of storytelling, such as explicit causally linked events, become more evident—both more explicit and greater in number. A short poem may have narrative characteristics in common with a verse novel or a conventional

novel—just fewer of them, and more often implied than explicit. Lyric poetry is capable of alluding to a world outside its literal content.

Tzvetan Todorov, for instance, recognises the role of causality and its influence on the nature of the reader's engagement:

If a narrative is organized according to a causal order but keeps its causality implicit, it hereby obliges the potential reader to perform labor the narrator has refused to do. Insofar as this causality is necessary for perception of the work, the reader must supply it; he then finds himself much more determined by the work in the contrary case: it's actually up to him to reconstruct the narrative. We might say that every book requires a certain quantity of causality; the narrator and the reader supply it between them, their efforts being inversely proportional (1981, p. 46).

Williams may have an ally in Ursula Le Guin who says that: 'Narrative is a strategem of mortality. It is a means, a way of living. It does not seek immortality; it does not seek to triumph over or escape from time (as lyric poetry does)' (1989, p. 39). I would qualify her parenthetical remark, though, and have it read 'as lyric poetry *sometimes* does'. In any case, Le Guin argues that the key property of narrative is its assertion of directional time. She illustrates this with an example of how seemingly disconnected things in a dream might easily be drawn together in a motivated and rational story, and describes the dreamer engaging in what she calls 'rendering sensible-seeming' (1989, pp. 40-41). Making sense is not to be denied the

reader of the lyric poem either. To engage in lyricism is not necessarily the same thing as to flee narrative/storytelling.

Peter Hühn acknowledges the presence of narrative when he says that ‘the notoriously problematic subjectivity of the lyric genre can be defined neutrally as an operation in which the speaker provides him- or herself with a story mediated in a poem in order to constitute his or her identity’ (2005a, p. 256). He bases the argument for the presence of narrative on two conditions; sequentiality (also termed action) and identity. Of identifying the former in a lyric, he says:

Borrowing the concepts of frame and script from cognitivism makes this possible in two ways. They provide a controlled means of linking a poem to its sociocultural context via the reader’s relevant world knowledge, and these schemata provide a new, specific, and precise way of describing the distinctive kinds of progression in poems (and thus their meanings) (2005a p. 257).

In broad terms, ‘frame’ here refers to an identifiable theme and ‘script’ to the separate acts that make up or operate to serve it, that is, they are the central concern of the poem and the depiction of states that convey it. These changes might relate to tangible objects or to a mental /emotional state, or both. In any case, what is notable is that Hühn also stresses that the construction of story depends on the reader’s inferential contribution, working out what is happening in the ‘fuller’ world indicated but not richly detailed by the poem.

Frederick Ruf stresses that narrative (and he routinely uses the word to mean story) has not only more information to present but also more intelligibility, notwithstanding any gaps and disruptions, because of the way that the reader perceives the authorial voice:

This authority is not seriously undercut by ‘peripeteia’, that is, surprises or discontinuities in a narrative, for in spite of them, as Thiemann points out, the narrative still ‘move[s] towards a discernable conclusion’ (86). In fact, we might say that the strength of the narrator is increased for we attribute to the narrator an underlying unity that exists despite all sorts of hindrances. The narrator is telling us all these events, full of mysteries and surprises, so, evidently, he or she is not subject to peripeteia. In some sense, the narrator “contains” the entire story, gaps and all. He or she possesses coherence even where it does not seem to exist (1994, p. 810).

Logically, this must also be an argument for according lyric poetry a narrative authority. The poet’s choice of that form, with its attendant limitations of length, is no less deserving of a reader’s trust in authorial voice and a sense of underlying unity. A reader’s confidence in the narrator might be stronger in a longer text where there is repeated opportunity for any doubt to be allayed, but whether the text is perceived as moving ‘towards a discernable conclusion’ is surely an issue unique to each case. Not all textual

gaps will be productive for the reader but in principle their judicious use can be very fruitful, in lyric poetry as in prose.

We search for patterns and logical links that are causal and chronological, even if we have to identify them on a provisional basis pending better information. Presented with a bridal gown, a honeymoon suite, and a groom, but no bride (as in Matthew Sweeney's 'The Bridal Suite' poem), a reader will instinctively reach for a rational explanation of the events that would give this situation sense. The power of a textual fragment to encourage story building is shown below.

A NARRATIVE INSTANT IN THE LYRIC THEATRE

To illustrate a key element of narrative function, the paradigm of opposition that pulls a reader through a story, I will now offer a brief description of a situation. It will also provide an analogy for the narrative process as we encounter it in the lyric poem.

Let us imagine a man in a street whose path is blocked by a very large puddle. What might happen next (putting aside the slapstick possibilities of passing cars and a sudden drenching)? He might retreat altogether, or look for a path around the obstacle, or walk through the puddle, or try to jump over it, for example. Henri Cartier-Bresson, who was famed for his mastery of the photographic portrait and especially for his ability to see and to react quickly to an opportunity to record a fleeting image, apparently encountered a similar situation.

In 1932, he stuck his camera between the slats of a fence near the St.-Lazare railway station in Paris at precisely the right instant and captured a picture of the watery lot behind the station, strewn with debris. A man has propelled himself from a ladder that lies in the water.

No wonder other photographers couldn't believe Mr. Cartier-Bresson's luck, much less his skill. The term that has come to be associated with him is 'the decisive moment'...Mr. Cartier-Bresson described 'the simultaneous recognition in a fraction of a second of the significance of an event, as well as the precise organization of forms that give that event its proper expression' (Kimmelman 2004, Online).



Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos

There are two important things to note here in the context of this meditation on narrative and the instant. The ‘decisive moment’ may refer to Cartier-Bresson’s ability to rapidly realise an image as an aesthetic object and to appreciate its composition, but Kimmelman’s comments are illuminating in another respect because they also refer to Cartier-Bresson’s recognition that the image will have the capacity to signify, to be organised, to express.

The ‘decisive moment’ is ambiguous in that it could equally apply to a character’s threshold moment, when an action can be undertaken or withheld, one path or another taken. This point of multiple possibilities will eventually be resolved by the still pending decision, but until then it presents an unresolved plot outcome (my thesaurus offers ‘up in the air’ as an alternative to ‘unresolved’, a happy coincidence given the photograph here). The moment is suspended; it belongs briefly and equally to more than one future...and then the step is taken, as we see in the picture.

The reader flicks back and forth between the moment that preceded the jump and its after effects, both of which are outside the frame, in much the same way as a reader contemplates the larger context in which a brief poem is located. The instant of decision is when the other alternative futures are cancelled. The narrative is propelled along a ghostly track of possible pathways that are each firming up as consecutive decisions are made. The paradigm of opposition functions in a story to provide a series of these decisive moments, each of which must be determined before the next can be offered—though not every one of them is apparent to the reader. Such graduated closure, the serial collapse of plot potentialities, is how the plot

becomes manageable. In terms of the wedding story, it may be when the groom or bride says 'I do' or, instead, runs from the church.

This frozen moment, the narrative instant, implies a number of things. It suggests a larger story structure in which the instant must be imbedded, which means a period before and a period after it. It follows that we must have a cause and an outcome, otherwise the moment is an immaculate conception, miraculously independent of the normal causal connections in the world. A narrative framework requires such links that make a logical connection between successive events, or else they will be perceived as merely coincidental and unrelated. In addition, reader interest will be raised if there is uncertainty of outcome and also something of significance at stake, since both predictability and triviality would rob the moment of dramatic tension. Ideally, too, the choice that is to be made is at least partially within the protagonist's control, so that he carries some responsibility for what happens. The creator of the narrative instant also presumes a reader's capacity, tendency, even need and desire to draw inferences about these things. Brooks remarks that he wants to 'see the text itself a system of internal energies and tensions, compulsions, resistances, and desires' (1984, p. XIV), that is, as a kind of energy system in which the reader is vitally implicated.

That is a lot to expect from the combination of a single image and a reader but it stems reasonably from our capacity to situate meagre evidence in a greater context in order to make sense of what we encounter, even if that is done quite provisionally. We continually ask 'what is going on here'?' Whether the story then constructed is weak or strong in narrative detail is not the main point, but rather that a story *is* latent in the smaller work regardless.

We do not need to construct a cogent plot on the immediate occasion of each encounter but to be willing to work towards one. The tendency to infer action is evident also in photographer Robert Capa's famous 1939 diptych, 'Tour de France', which shows the faces of a street crowd before and after the passage of the peloton but does not show the competing cyclists themselves. As poet Heather McHugh remarks of these images, the action is missing but the idea is present (1993, p. 25):

All poetry is fragment: it is shaped by its breakages, at every turn. It is the very art of turnings, towards the white frame of the page, toward the unsung, toward the vacancy made visible, that wordlessness in which our words are couched (McHugh 1993, p. 75).

There is no reason to discriminate between a photograph and a small lyric poem in relation to the reliance on inference, as each one is suitable ground for the reader's exercise. Either might use a connection to a wedding because that connects to a wealth of ancillary wedding events with which a reader might construct a larger framework, a tentative story. A wedding photograph embodies both the instant and the arc of the larger narrative from which it is taken. It does not exist in isolation because it already belongs and indicates (signs) the relational world that gives it fullest meaning. Our understanding of that image is triggered by reading it and deducing the context: we stand at a distance and construct a place for the frozen moment which is part of a continuum. Kinney says that it is overly tempting to 'deal in tidy binary oppositions (poetry/prose, lyric/narrative)' (1992, pp. 8, 191).

Ultimately, she decides that poetic narrative illustrates that poem and narrative can co-exist, thus contributing a vital dynamic tension (p. 191).

While Roland Barthes devotes a chapter of *Image Music Text* to photography (1977, pp. 15-31), his interest there is not in its narrative potential but primarily in the capacity of the image to operate as code, albeit in a limited way, and the way that it functions in conjunction with any accompanying text. Nonetheless, the framing of particular contents in an individual photograph results from an editorial choice about inclusion and omission (what is inside and outside the image, and how this is presented). Barthes recognises that the created image may use iconographic elements and the viewer's likely association of ideas that go with certain stock figures and symbols (1977, p. 22).

A lyric poem need not present an unequivocal decision point, though that would be a strong indication of a narrative mode. In some poems, it might offer little more than gestures towards an event but, even then, with the reader's contribution through their recognition of the situation and its significance, it is possible for the poem to perform a narrative function. Signs of a wedding in a lyric poem conjure myriad possibilities—they may be miniature but powerful because they reflect acts on the stage of a commonly understood theatre of human behaviour.

SUMMARY

At the beginning of this chapter, I outline the genesis of the project and posit a general lack of recognition of a narrative function within lyric poetry. The next stage necessarily involves defining wedding poetry, with a brief historical account of the traditional wedding poem, the epithalamium. Wedding poetry is then broadly defined as ‘poetry that might concentrate on a wedding but which could equally make an incidental connection with weddings’. This enables me to cover the widest range of wedding references and to consider them more fully than a proscriptive approach would allow.

Defining narrative and story is more complex, especially given the different theoretical positions that inform some views. There is general agreement among theorists that telling stories is intrinsic to our comprehension of the world and to negotiating our lives in it—and that story can generally be regarded as embodied in any account of change through time. Distinguishing plot from story highlights the reader’s role in working to construct the latter, with obvious ramifications for the way that lyric poems are read. Stimulating the reader’s desire to work through textual material is key to the argument that fragmented and discontinuous elements in a lyric poem may still be adequate to allow a narrative process. The role of the reader is thus critical, since she integrates the text with experiences and knowledge that exist outside it, routinely employing an indefatigable tendency to try making sense, that is, to bring the text into a scheme of order that she already possesses. Narrative functions to unite the text and the reader, establishing an

interpretative framework that the writer anticipates in order to maximise the effectiveness of their work. In broad terms then, my view approximates that of the structuralist and communication theorists in this respect.

Defining lyric poetry is more problematic. Lyric is the dominant form of contemporary poetry and thus most relevant to understanding current modes of writing and reading poetry. Commonly agreed characteristics of lyric poetry are brevity, musicality (which I team with heightened language), an emphasis on subjective utterance (usually by an individual voice in the first person), and a degree of intimacy. A sense of disclosure or epiphany is also likely. This kind of poetry makes demands on the reader, strongly relying on her inclination to construct meaning and narrative from occasionally sketchy and disordered material. The inescapable conclusion is that there is a narrative function in lyric poetry, and I illustrate the process at work with discussion of a single photographic image, which is analogous to the minimal features to be encountered in a lyric poem.

In the following chapter I will begin to apply these ideas to analysis of specific wedding poems by other authors and then turn to the poems that I have written for this project, *The Floating Bride*. In the process, I will draw out in more detail some of the theoretical aspects of narrative and the lyric poem raised so far.

CHAPTER 3:
A FISTFIGHT, A HANGMAN, A LION'S
BRIDE

*...no author worth his salt will ever attempt
to set the whole picture before his reader's eyes*

Wolfgang Iser 1980, p. 57

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss the kind of research undertaken to discover wedding references in contemporary poetry, and then explain the significance of the findings. This applies the ideas raised in the previous chapter about both lyric poetry and the nature of narrative. I then illustrate aspects of the narrative function at work in such poems by analysing selected poems in detail.

In the body of wedding poems that I have surveyed, the key features of courtship through to the wedding ceremony and eventually to the honeymoon are represented, if sometimes only through implication. It is unusual that a single poem deals with that whole sequence; instead, we are mostly presented with a slice of the continuum and expected to imagine the events on either side. These poems tend to show a clustering of techniques and themes. The poems generally depict wedding activities and attitudes towards them in a straightforward way, and wedding references more often play a supporting rather than central role.

The poets do occasionally give absurdist approaches rein; a wedding gown becomes the sail of a boat in Charles Simic's 'Marina's Epic' (Simic 1995, pp. 91-93), and brides drift through the skies in Andrew Motion's 'A Dream of Peace' (Motion 1997, pp. 86-93). Most poems treat the wedding as a traditional and solemn occasion and, by inference, place it as a high point in a couple's life. Frivolity and satire are rare, though there are some sarcastic references when issues of fidelity are raised or when women's roles in society are raised for critical comment. On the whole, the wedding is treated

respectfully and provides the poets with an occasion to make serious observations about the nature of human relationships.

As we might expect, the poets predominantly choose the bride as their subject. The mythology of the bride figure is so firmly entrenched that it provides a ready resource to which poets naturally tend when writing about weddings (and it might also help that the bride has the boldest costume). Historically, she has been seen as imbued with the virtues of innocence and a type of femininity that have been highly valued. The bride is seldom re-invented in these poems, that is, she is not made into a starkly new kind of creature. She is still conservatively represented as a traditional figure with a central position in the ceremony. This treatment also makes the bride a site of contestable ideologies that ask what is desirable for women in this role if, indeed, they are required to play it at all. In the second part of Sarah Day's poem 'Brides', for instance, the bride-to-be is in procession, moving towards what she sees as an event over which she now has no control (1987, pp. 63-64).

Brides are often represented in the poems as iconic but powerless, symbols of a socially required rite and position. I was surprised that there was not more joy and more irreverence. Where were the poets' depictions of brides as vital and responsible figures? Where were the brides as rebels or as powerful agents of their own futures? Because of their marked absence, I wrote such women into poems for *The Floating Bride*. In contrast, the bridegroom was comparatively under-represented and this relative absence is a little puzzling; it makes for a very lop-sided wedding. In the surveyed poems, he is more often incidental; a necessary figure but not generally

sufficient to justify a focus of his own. He is there to ‘make up the numbers’, or even merely to be inferred rather than being explicitly depicted. In general, the groom stands, ghost-like, somewhere off to the side.

The most common wedding motifs in the surveyed poetry, other than the bride herself, are veils, rings and photographs, and especially the gown. Their use may seem predictable to the point of cliché in some cases, but they are instantly recognisable, which is a virtue when literary economy is concerned. Critic Kathy Hunt writes that, ‘if a cliché is defined as a truth told too often, all truths great and small are at the mercy of a writer’s sincerity and ability’ (Hunt 2005, p. R15). Clearly, the onus is on the poet to lift the familiar, such as a reference to a bride, so that its contribution to the poem moves beyond predictability. Some poems in this research did not achieve that distinction but they mention recognisable objects as part of their repertoire of getting the reader to identify and react to a shared iconography, thus helping to frame the story.

Wedding motifs in the poems are often simply named for what they are, without any particular poetic effect seemingly intended, though they may help to locate or describe actions and actors. The poet may simply want the reader to know that a particular character is a groom in order to fix that person and his role in relation to what we expect of grooms when subsequent events are made apparent. It is an informative function—in other words, there is no special art at work: ‘There is no poetry in the direct expression of an idea, the poetry is in the figurative, symbolical, metaphorical expression’ (Elie Rabier in Brown 1996, p. 99).

Using 'bridal' or 'wedding' as an adjective clearly identifies gowns and rings and photographs as wedding paraphernalia, but such advertisement is less necessary with references to veils as they are infrequently worn outside weddings (though that may be changing with the influx of conservative Moslem customs to Western countries). Within the poems, the terms act as clear, shorthand references to the weddings, and many of the poems identified in this project rely on that charged association without having to elaborate explicitly on the nature of the connection; that is, they rely heavily on reader knowledge.

A range of poetic devices relies on knowledge of the paraphernalia and practices of weddings. The metaphoric value of references to gowns, veils and rings is critical to the success of these poems since their brevity is consistent with the poets' need to be concise and to allow other issues to be given more weight. Metonymy, when a characteristic object stands for the actual subject, is sometimes employed, such as when, for example, 'gown' is used to mean 'bride'. Synecdoche, the naming of a part that stands for the whole, is also part of the arsenal, when for example 'ring' might mean 'marriage' (Matterson & Jones 2005, p. 46). The poems would otherwise labour under the need to spell out each link that is being made, such as when the single word 'bride' is being used as a sign for 'submissive woman' or 'optimistic woman' or 'woman on the verge of blissful future' (some irony intended).

A feature not addressed in the literature of lyric poetry but discovered in research for this thesis (and might prove fertile area for further researchers) is finding the most prominent theme in the wedding poems is death. This might seem unusual until one considers that the key premise of weddings is

hope. Death arguably represents the extinction of that optimism, or at least a reminder of its fragility. A shadow is thus thrown over weddings, dramatic tension requiring that a happy outcome is to be complicated with uncertainty and the possibility of sadness. But why introduce death to a wedding poem at all? With rare exception, these poems do not merely celebrate the delight of marital union; they are not aimed at an audience that demands happy endings or simplistic treatments. Just as other artistic representations of weddings offer light and shade, and create suspense rather than a sure and happy outcome, these poems taste a darker joy. By incorporating references to death they remind us of the fleeting nature of our human affairs and earthly pleasures, and that nothing should be taken for granted. It is a subject with a natural appeal for the poet wanting to make an impact in a brief poem, as poet Simon Armitage remarks in his edited anthology, *101 Very Short Poems* (2002, p. xiv).

Death and love are intertwined in another way, through the longstanding notion that each orgasm is a ‘little death’: ‘In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to “die” means to experience the consummation of the act of love’ (Brooks 1966, p. 182; and see Flinker 1999, p. 214). In an article exploring Renaissance literature’s representations of sexuality, and the orgasm in particular, Paul Hartle points out Aristotle’s claim that the orgasm is life-threatening (Hartle 2002, p. 80 re ‘*De Longitudine et Brevitate Vitae*’) and that John Donne takes up this idea in several of his poems, notably in ‘The Canonization’ (‘We’re Tapers too, and at our own cost die’; 1994, p. 7), in ‘Farewell to Love’ (‘...each such Act, they say, / Diminisheth the length of life a day’; 1994, p. 49), and in ‘The First Anniversary’ (‘Wee kill our selves

to propagate our kinde'; 1994, p. 175). A recent example embodying this idea is in Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, in which US military commander Brigadier General Jack D. Ripper 'rants about fluoridation being a commie conspiracy to "sap and impurify our precious bodily fluids"' (Axmaker 2008, Online). With death casting a shadow even over moments of sexual bliss, it is no surprise that it would be thought of in conjunction with weddings also.

There is another connection between the lyric poem and death. Disruptions in poems can be used to ward off coherence and thus 'connection, consequence and death' (Cameron 1979, p. 203), achieving a brief kind of timelessness. Fragmentation resists the construction of a linear narrative path with its attendant 'arrival' or completion; incoherence and an open ending help to leave the poem unresolved. That might be the reader's perception in the transient moment of fullest engagement with the text, when time appears to be suspended. In one sense, this tallies with a view discussed in an earlier chapter of this thesis regarding the difference between the narrative and lyric poem, the lyric poem offering an intensely felt experience and the narrative a more discursive one, and yet immersion in a long prose text arguably offers a greater period of displacement from real life.

Trying to escape a sense of order through such techniques is a forlorn ambition in the end since a reader frustrated or delayed by textual fragmentation will still pursue a scheme that registers with her own conception of pattern and logic in life. When regarding a lyric poem with intellectual detachment rather than the immediacy of the intensely felt reading experience, it is clear that such strategies must also inevitably and

simultaneously elicit notions of the opposite, that is, of death and closure: ‘All action, these poems seem to insist, and consequently all narrative and story on whose shoulders action is carried, leads to ending, leads to death’ (Cameron 1979, p. 203), but it is a technique that can only slow rather than negate the process of recognising a narrative path in the poem. Claims of distancing death or distracting from it by use of such lyric techniques must concern merely temporary sensations and, thus, be essentially illusory victories. In any case, the focus on death in the remainder of this chapter relates to representational aspects in the poetry.

In this chapter, then, I look at a number of poems in detail to illustrate the use of wedding references and their thematic aspects. Some concern brevity, at least one poem might be read as an anti-epithalamium, and several do revolve around issues of loss or death. The main poems discussed are:

- ‘The Wedding’ – Steve Kelen
- ‘The Wedding Plan’ – Aidan Coleman
- ‘Poem Not to Be Read at Your Wedding’ – Beth Ann Fennelly
- ‘The Bridal Suite’ – Matthew Sweeney
- ‘Marrying The Hangman’ – Margaret Atwood
- ‘The Lion’s Bride’ – Gwen Harwood

What remains now is to consider the selected poems and to see the extent to which each could be said to exhibit a narrative function. All but the very brief Kelen poem are attached in Appendices.

INVITING THE READER TO A WEDDING: ‘THE WEDDING’

Addressing the problem of how to define a narrative sequence, structural theorist Tzvetan Todorov considers the individual’s faculty for judging whether a complete narrative sequence exists in a given text or not. A mere image or description may not be regarded as comprising a narrative; there is some boundary area where texts are considered to qualify as narrative or not (Todorov 1977, p. 232). This innate competence is too imprecise to function as a reliable test in itself (along the lines of, ‘I think there is a narrative, so there must be one’); it relies on impressions rather than an externally validated process of classification or on any particular and reasonably robust defining characteristics. Todorov (1977, p. 232) thought that more was required: ‘the tale requires not only action but also reaction, it also requires a lack of coincidence. One should not just gather random phrases and call them a poem. There should be an evident causal chain in the text, with a triggering incident or situation and a corresponding effect rather than merely a bundle of unmotivated and disconnected elements.

Given the brevity of most lyric poems, we could anticipate that this causal chain might not be wholly represented in them. In such a miniature piece as Steve Kelen’s ‘The Wedding’, reproduced in full below, we see that the narrative thread may initially seem tenuous, but that it is present and active:

The Wedding

Punch-up in car park
Groom spits teeth, classic wedding
Never forgotten

Kelen 2000, p. 22

This poem concisely depicts a scene that appears in numerous accounts of weddings and wedding receptions, the confrontation. Haiku-like in structure (seventeen syllables disposed as 5-7-5 beats across three lines), the poem encapsulates much that is important and stereotypical of weddings, especially with its implicit tension and manifest conflict, as playwright Jack Hibberd has remarked of weddings in general and of his famous wedding reception play, *Dimboola*, in particular (2006, pers. comm., 7 March).

Even in a very short poem, it is conceivable that there are redundancies. For example, we may ask whether the final line of the Kelen poem is really necessary. It might be deleted without significant loss of narrative value for a typical reader, then simply reading, ‘Punch-up in car park / Groom spits teeth, classic wedding’. Even ‘classic wedding’ could be discarded, becoming the revised title—or that line be retained and the title dropped: in traditional haiku no title would be used (Hardy 2002, p. 16), though it is common in recent Western versions. The phrase in question does

seem to preclude an even more brutal conclusion, so it performs a useful closing role in particularising, especially since it could be read as expressing the significance of the event to the narrator.

What do we actually know about the events that the poem presents? There is a fight that involves the groom, and it occurs outside the site of the wedding or reception. What causes it and what follows are not explained. We might imagine that the brawl stems from a simmering dispute. The individual possibilities are many, but the general types are few and we draw on our existing knowledge of such events to refine the likely explanations.

Analysis of haiku by Masako Hiraga shows that they ‘assume common knowledge that shapes the cultural cognitive model’ employed by readers to gauge the meaning of the text. Hiraga (1999, p. 461-479) refers to the poets’ and readers’ reference to customs and everyday experiences during this process. Each element in a brief poem is important for its contribution, just as with the construction of narrative:

Every separable element in a narrative can be said to have its own plot, its own little system of tension and resolution which contributes its bit to the general system. Not only every episode or incident but every paragraph and every sentence has its beginning, middle and end (Scholes & Kellogg 1966, p. 239).

Haiku may communicate much more than their few words initially suggest, as Kyoko Selden remarks of one of Hosai Ozaki’s spare but resonant pieces: ‘it conveys all the more fully the sense of completion and of the still

standing detached observer. This is typical of Hosai's language through which he recorded, one step behind himself, his knowledge of the present instant' (Ozaki 1993, p. 13). The moment is alive with multiple possibilities; it is contextual, living on its attachments to the world that give it meaning for the reader. We see this in an untitled haiku by Jack Kerouac, where the bride is a figure who may be ghostly or real:

The falling snow—

The hissing radiators—

The bride out there

Kerouac 2003, p. 163

The poem presents the seasonal reference traditional to haiku that contrasts heat and cold in order to emphasise the vulnerability of a presumably displaced bride, and suggests the snow-white wedding gown worn by the bride. The reader has to summon possible explanations for this strange situation. Interestingly, Charles Simic also sets characters in a snowstorm in his short poem, 'Blizzard of Love', and pushes the reader to explain events that occur when a bridal figure appears out of the swirling whiteness (Simic 1999, p. 44). One might expect a claim to be made for intensity of vision in haiku poetry that is consistent with traditional definitions of the lyric. The translator of *Modern Japanese Poetry*, James Kirkup, states this about Japanese poetry (in what itself might be called a lyrical outburst):

Every poem is an essence, a distillation of a whole lifetime, a whole civilization, through a vision or an insight ... eternalised in a breath, a sigh, a shout of joy or indignation, a laugh, a song, a prayer, an expression of impossible longing (1978, p. xxxii).

At first blush, a small lyric poem might be thought too compact to permit reader construction of a coherent narrative, but its 'compactness is relieved by the attendant amplitude, felt not only in what is actually said but in all the suggestions implicit in skilfully chosen words, or in the movement of the lines' (Whitmore 1918, p. 596). In other words, there is more to the poem than the mere information content of the words on the page; suggestion must be received and recognised, and acted upon by the imaginative reader. In addition, there is scope for a reader to apply her own knowledge of the cultural background on which the poem relies. Haiku scholar Harold Stewart writes that, 'the haiku poets could assume in their audience a familiarity with the lore and legends, ceremonies and customs, of their common cultural heritage' (1969, p. 10). This would enable the readers to bring to their reading a relevant knowledge of context that would explain and amplify some of the more subtle nuances within the poem. We might recall what has already been said in an earlier chapter here about the integral role of the reader, given what one internationally recognised editor and writer of haiku, Cor van den Heuvel, says:

The poem is refined into a touchstone of suggestiveness... To see what is suggested by a haiku, the reader must share in the creative process,

being willing to associate and pick up on the echoes implicit in the words. (van den Heuvel 1999, pp. vv-xvi).

On the surface, the lyric poem may be thought to face obstacles in making high demands on the reader. It can be argued that its ‘comprehensiveness is extremely limited because the world that is engaged is so small...and because the vision is not accomplished, not finished’ (Ruf 1994, p. 811), but that charge could be levelled at other kinds of text also, and it is still the reader who takes up the work of completion. Ruf (p. 811) adds, as a further criticism of the lyric poem, that there is ‘a sense of a larger, looming world outside of lyric’s vision which makes the lyric stance far from magisterial’. What would he make of the Kelen poem? While emphasising limitations of the lyric in apparently lacking a masterful authorial presence (the ‘magisterial’ stance), Ruf tacitly and simultaneously underlines the valuable role of the reader in recognising key aspects of the world that looms outside the poem rather than having to be told them.

A poem need not be magisterial in the sense that Ruf intends, as that would require more exposition than the imperatives of lyric style would normally employ, or often need. Making deliberate omissions or using textual lacunae to prompt reader engagement is evident in westernised haiku too, as in Gary Snyder’s Zen Buddhism inspired poetry: ‘The poems demand that their reader exceed rational and discursive approaches and engage his imagination, and ultimately his intuition, actively in the completion of the poetic experience’ (Norton & Snyder 1987, p. 43). Snyder’s poetry, like the Kelen poem, usually elides the speaker, but still narrates.

The haiku is not the only type of brief poem that exercises a kind of narrative function. The ghazal also relies on our innate urge to read texts as narrative. A terse poem of between five and twelve closed couplets (called *shers* or *shi'rs*), its form dates from at least the thirteenth century and persists today. The Persian mystic Rumi (1207-1273) is a celebrated exponent. In the classical ghazal, according to Lorna Crozier, 'you have to be willing to give up anything that resembles narrative. Story is sacrificed for suggestion, implication, allusion' (2003, p. 60); yet this view is hard to sustain. It is more that ghazals distance the clear links that narrative employs in order to pull the reader into the task of making connections.

While the ghazal should avoid obvious storytelling, it cannot and should not completely efface it. The presence of a narrative connection in some traditional ghazals is highlighted in one study that states, somewhat critically: 'the work is simply a hodgepodge of lyrics strung together by a slender thread of narrative' (Dankoff 1984, p. 9). There is normally a tension in the ghazal between creating a finely balanced series of images that point to a unifying view but that do so rather shyly, avoiding a transparent naming of the very links on which they ultimately rely. In fact, Crozier remarks that sometimes 'the poems don't seem to be going anywhere...often the ideas and images seem unrelated. As readers we are asked to do a lot of work. The form demands trust as we look through the glass darkly to see or intuit the hidden harmony that is there' (Crozier 2003, p. 64), which reveals the first plank of narrative construction, the reader's engagement in sense making.

The ghazal is not then actually antagonistic to narrative. Rather, it is deliberately delicate about it how it employs the reader's tendency to

construct meaning and narrative. It knowingly embraces the art of the glimpse, of being tentative, but it is still about unity: 'The form challenges our notions of what can be brought together and held' (Crozier 2003, p. 68). A similar view is put by Frances Pritchett, who says that the seeming independence of the individual *shi'r* is a 'trick of perspective. For the *shi'r* in fact inhabits the whole ghazal universe, and so becomes one node in an elaborate, richly articulated network' (1994, p. 89). Even as ghazals resist interpretation that would go beyond surface meaning, they pose a deliberate test of the reader's resolve to find it (1994, p. 193) and to make connections, as ghazal writer Eric Folsom also notes (1996, Online). A similar intention can be gleaned in other lyric poetry, where the pleasure of language is never completely divorced from story, even in such abbreviated forms as the haiku.

The ghazal is garrulous compared to the haiku, however, and it operates on the basis of connection between the couplets, using a narrative's momentum: 'the couplet's closure is not allowed to last, for one seemingly complete pair of lines is followed by another tugging it forward until the inconclusive finale' (Crozier 2003, p. 69). Patrick Lane's use of four-couplet, end-stopped ghazals 'to stop himself from drifting into a hint of narrative' (Crozier 2003, p. 74) actually underlines the power of narrative to assert itself. The natural state of the reader's engagement with text is construction of story. Such a minimal poem as the ghazal embraces narrative just as it dances on the edge of it. Indeed, in one of her own ghazals, Crozier writes, 'Hasidic wisdom says that God / made the world to tell him stories' (Crozier 2003, p. 16).

In another poem also simply titled 'The Wedding', Andy Kissane similarly represents a wedding in his contemporary adaptation of the story of

Tristan and Isolde, a tale of love and tragedy that dates from the twelfth century. The poem reflects something of the tone of the Kelen poem and also alludes to the reader's knowledge of the common characteristics of weddings, especially in relation to their lines 'classic wedding' (Kelen 2000, p. 22) and 'It was like any other wedding' (Kissane 2000, p. 52). This is an excerpt:

It was like any other wedding
The bridesmaids' dresses
The speeches
The awful music
The telegram from the football team
And Uncle Morgan's joke
That my hem needed taking up

Kissane 2000, p. 52

As with haiku, a reader would bring sufficient knowledge to both of the above poems to understand the significance of the car park incident and the probabilities for various, subsequent courses of action, even if there were some uncertainty about the particularity of events on either side. Edward Branigan, who opposes the treatment of lyric poetry as if it has a narrative function, nonetheless writes:

...a narrative schema becomes important. It helps to direct our search for pertinent causes by proposing a segmentation applicable on many scales of action and 'filling in' any connectives that are missing from the surface structure. We discover and justify connections among narrative elements with respect to such schematic functions as goal, reaction, resolution, epilogue and narration (Branigan 1992, p. 29).

This supports the idea that the reader locates the events of the poem in a personal frame of experience. Branigan goes on to say that: 'these schemas are a way of working through cultural assumptions and values. Thus 'cause and effects' emerge, as it were, after the fact as explanatory labels for a sequence of actions' (1992, p. 29). We interpret the text provisionally as our reading proceeds, imputing motives and outcomes based on our own knowledge and cultural stance. The poet has invited the reader to share in the basic premise of what constitutes stock wedding plot lines, thus limiting the wayward interpretation of key events. As with prose fiction, a poem must always engage the reader's imagination, avoiding predictability and overexposition. It is true, then, that '...no author worth his salt will ever attempt to set the whole picture before his reader's eyes', as Wolfgang Iser says, and that 'if he does, he will very quickly lose his reader, for it is only by activating the reader's imagination that the author can hope to involve him and so realize the intentions of the text (1980, p. 57).

BEST LAID PLANS: 'THE WEDDING PLAN'

In Aidan Coleman's poem, 'The Wedding Plan', a prospective groom incisively recounts the politics of his in-laws' reaction to news that their daughter is engaged to marry. In various ways, the family members seek to delay the wedding. Far from posing the wedding as a general cause for celebration, the poem treats it as a fraught occasion:

They've planned a holding operation:

hired ushers,

an actor for the 'speak now

or forever...'

and a car outside

with the motor running,

tickets to anywhere.

Coleman 2005, pp. 31-32

The narrative tension in the poem derives from varying the sentiment associated with the standard sequence of wedding events instigated by

courtship and a proposal of marriage. Instead of sharing the couple's pleasure in deciding to wed, the family offers reluctance bordering on outright hostility. The poem builds on the tradition of star-crossed lovers and family feuds, stacking the odds against the newly engaged.

Story requires difference. It would not satisfy readers and hold their attention if the elements together told them no more than they already knew. A story needs what William Labov calls a 'most reportable event' that readers value highly: 'A most reportable event is the event that is less common than any other in the narrative and has the greatest effect upon the needs and desires of the participants in the narrative' (Labov 1997, Online). The reportable event in this poem is the surprise of the family reaction and their resort to strategies that would delay or even halt the planned wedding. Novelty and surprise are highly valued: 'A narrator evaluates events by comparing them with events in an alternative reality that was not in fact realized' (Labov 1997, Online).

The narrator's constant weighing of story paths and potential outcomes must in some ways prefigure the assessment by the reader about which of the realities is ultimately to be realised. Will the wedding go ahead? Will the couple achieve their goal despite the family's explicit resistance? This process of deferring an outcome (in the case of this poem, indefinitely so) requires us to undertake a provisional reading in which there is interplay of several possibilities, pending further information. The poet knows that this can be carefully employed to keep the reader guessing until the last moment, and that giving away such data too soon will mean that the poem may overstay its welcome or need some other driving interest to take over. Coleman's poem

casts great doubt over whether the wedding will proceed, increasing the dramatic tension. Far from running on the spot, and concentrating on just the simple utterance of the family's opposition, he conjures different manifestations of that attitude and, crucially, leaves the ending open.

The doomed marriage is a staple of book and film and, in this case, it is the women in the family who most voice resistance. When their strategies prove fruitless, they switch to taking over the planning of the wedding as a way of stalling. It lets them remain connected to the daughter and, therefore, able to maintain their advice to call the wedding off. There is also a standing offer to supply the daughter with an escape route: 'a car outside / with the motor running, / tickets to anywhere' (Coleman 2005, p. 32). The narrative devices of tension and uncertainty are exploited.

This poem captures the momentum of the greater wedding story at its second dramatic peak, the first being when the proposal of marriage was made. That earlier stage involves a hesitation, a decision point at which the story temporarily hovers while we wait to see the direction in which events would move—except that we are not shown it. We know that the answer to the proposal was Yes, but that action precedes the timeframe of Coleman's poem, and so we are dealing with its aftermath. It might be regarded as a bound motif, as Boris Tomashevsky would have it, one that is essential to the story (Tomashevsky 1965, p. 62) but in this case it occurs before the poem begins. Neglecting mention of the earlier event does not detract from the dramatic energy of the poem. We know that it is a necessary prerequisite of facing the family, and since it is a logical precondition, it does not need to be

shown when its precise details are not especially important in themselves. It is enough to know that it has happened, and we can safely assume it.

This recognition of decisive story moments or what Barthes calls 'hinge-points' (Barthes 1977, p. 93) highlights the dilemma facing the couple, and though it may not be quickly recognised, there is an unstated decision point mooted within the poem. It concerns how the couple reacts to the family's opposition. Do they elope, for instance? Or do they, instead, acquiesce for the time being and decide to proceed slowly, hoping for gradual acceptance? That is what is left hanging at the end of the poem. But that sense of open-endedness and ambiguity can be satisfying, and even pursued by a reader. As poet Kevin Brophy remarks:

...as we listen or read not only do we hold and consider ambiguities but at a barely conscious level we seek out ambiguities...Poetry tends to fragment the normal procession of language, thought and experience. We are suspended upon ambiguities or upon the multiple meanings of images (Brophy 2003, p. 86).

Barthes comments that 'narrative is a hierarchy of instances' in which it is not sufficient to merely follow the consecutive steps, the horizontal axis as he puts it, but to read across the story as well, in the vertical axis (Barthes 1977, p.87). He contends that stories can be regarded as a series of functions, the smallest unit of criterion being meaning, wherever that may be found (p. 88). In other words, everything in a story necessarily contributes to it, but we can classify the component parts according to the degree to which they enable

the narrative to move forward rather than just providing filling. The conflict between the family members over the wedding provides just such a meaning. Tomashevsky (1965, p. 71) says that: ‘The development of a story may generally be understood as a progress from one situation to another, so that each situation is characterized by a conflict of interest, by discord and struggle among the characters’. Clearly that is what we have in the Coleman poem. The young couple faces unexpected opposition and now must resolve a response.

As far as we can tell, the Coleman poem dwells on events that occur in a single meeting, maybe in the space of just a couple of hours. We have the elements of narrative; action and response, suspense and meaning, and reliance on the reader’s assumptions about events that must have preceded the beginning of the poem. The stakes attached to this scenario and the implications for the future direction of the couple are high. The poem also leaves it open to the reader how the story may evolve beyond the last detail that it offers, ensuring that there is awareness of a larger contingent story being told.

Narrative can exist synergistically with and be deliberately modified by lyric method in poetry. In examining the function of narrative in long verse forms, Clare Kinney acknowledges that the Spenserian stanza ‘temper[s] the linear unfolding of the larger narrative with the more synchronic design of the lyric’ (1992, p. 6). The two are not mutually exclusive. But why start with long verse that is so close to prose with its great volume of information, which is the raw material, so to speak, of narrative? More challenging would be to begin at the least ‘unit’ and see whether narrative still holds, and why. At least

Kinney points to the temporary nature of the closure that each stanza affords, only ‘briefly distract[ing] us from the larger sequences of meaning in which the stanza is merely a unit’ (1992, p. 7). The effect of the whole work is what ultimately matters, and the constituent elements combine to that goal, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge says: ‘the common end of all *narrative*, nay of *all* Poems, is to convert a *series* into a *Whole...*’ (in Griggs 1932, p. 128).

It is easier to ‘find’ evidence of narrative and sub-narrative in longer poetic works; there is simply more material to juggle, more potential for connection. Kinney’s analysis perceives a greater energy in the text, which subverts attempts to contain it tidily in a single narrative thread; the text creates a story or stories that are bigger than the text itself.

One cannot overestimate the potential impact on a reader of a fleeting and apparently small reference. The Imagist poetry movement that developed early last century relied upon just that. It sought an instantaneous epiphanic effect that might be wrought by a single visual image (or a quick succession of these), often drawn from objects or actions based in the past and common life, and expressed in as few words as possible (Pratt 1963, p. 29). A well-known example is Ezra Pound’s ‘In a Station of the Metro’, which is distilled through several longer drafts until it emerges as a couplet, albeit with a title that acts as an extra and informative first line:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough.

Pound in Jones 1972, p. 95

With such emphasis on clear depiction and the immediate power of the image, it is no wonder that Pound remarks, ‘The image itself is the speech’ (Pound 1914, p. 469). The image needs to work without elaborate exposition, thus placing more reliance on the reader to make cognitive leaps.

No true poem can be without human content; but in the Imagist poem, the human content is implied rather than stated. It is implied in the very choice of the image, as well as in the tone with which the image is treated (Pratt, 1963, p. 30).

‘In a Station...’ exemplifies the work of the Imagist movement with its brevity and the metaphoric interplay of its key elements. A straightforward juxtaposing of faces and blossoms allows the reader to make the obvious connection; the intent of the poet could hardly be mistaken. In some ways its antithesis would seem to be T.S. Eliot’s celebrated 1922 poem about death and renewal, *The Waste Land*, which is built around a host of intertextual, cultural and myth references, and a repeated water motif. Its accompanying footnotes explain some of these, as if Eliot were hedging his bets and not trusting the reader to sufficiently understand the complexities of this long but compressed poem without such props. The use of the notes suggests an inherent weakness in the poem or a lack of faith in the reader (Williamson 1967, p. 120).

The parallel with wedding references is at the level of the individual word, idea or image that immediately resonates with the reader—in other

words, more like ‘In a Station...’ than with the myriad references to be found in *The Waste Land*. But that is not to say that any particular reference in the latter could not function quickly and effectively in that manner, directly conjuring other images and experiences from the reader’s world.

The shorter the poem, the fewer the semantic units to which we can attach a sense of the characteristic signals of narrative: climax, anticlimax, reversal, change of pace, etc., but limitations of size do not eliminate narrative from brief poetry. Instead, reducing its imminent presence, such ellipsis increases reliance on the reader to compensate for a lack of rich narrative detail in the text. Coleman’s poem demonstrates that narrative function is not the prerogative of manifestly narrative poetry.

THE ANTI-EPITHALAMIUM: ‘POEM NOT TO BE READ AT YOUR WEDDING’

Some poems observe a wedding in a straightforward and positive manner. Others start in anti-epithalamic mode but are devised to turn, so that after a cautious start they end with an affirmation of love and partnership. One such is Bill Holm’s ‘Wedding Poem For Schele and Phil’ (2005, pp. 97-98), which begins ‘A marriage is risky business these days’ and ends with a celebration of marriage. Others may remain critical of the wedding and, usually then, marriage itself, such as Kate Jennings’ ‘Couples’ (1977, p. 54) or simply hesitant about what seems an inevitable event, as in Gregory Corso’s poem ‘Marriage’ (1963, pp. 15-19). The next poem, though, might be seen as a

companion to the Coleman poem since it also shows reluctance to give blessing to a wedding. In this case, someone who has been asked to write an epithalamium weighs the gravity of that request. Clearly, the narrator thinks the signs are not good for the future happiness of the couple and considers how to tell them this. It ends:

Well, Carmen, I would rather
give you your third set of steak knives
than tell you what I know. Let me find you
some other, store-bought present.

Fennelly 2003, Online

The Coleman poem condenses its action into a very short span of time. The Fennelly poem presents us with action over a number of days, selecting particular moments that convey the important aspects of the predicament, but it is still brief—actually 109 words compared with Coleman’s 133. It opens with factual information that is more than a series of events concerning a request. To take up Barthes’ point about a vertical axis (Barthes 1977, p.87), we see that the beginning of the poem also conveys a set of obligations. In the first place, there is the matter of the requested wedding poem being regarded as a reciprocated favour.

There is the tacit possibility that the narrator may have felt insulted by this offer, or that she had little choice—both situations likely to engender

some bitterness. The stronger issue is the difficulty that the narrator feels about the writing task itself, and it is not immediately revealed that the hub of the problem is not an artistic one but to do with her attitude to the impending marriage. As in the Coleman poem, it is not clear whether the reaction has to do with the particular match or with marriage in general.

Unlike the Coleman poem, we have more than contemplation of a position—we also have the resultant action. The scope of the poem is greater, and the meditative stage persists in our minds after the consequent action has been decided and taken, echoing Roland Barthes' comment: 'Sequences move in counterpart; functionally, structure of narrative is fugued: thus it is this narrative at once 'holds' and pulls on' (Barthes 1977, p. 104). We can see the sequence and the causal connection in the poem between elements of the story that move us forward, but we also carry earlier impressions, judgements and knowledge external to the poem with us as we go. The poem offers a slice of time in the period before a wedding and we can project forward and aft from it, while it also remains a contained story in its own right. Its narrative elements seem to be quite clear.

AFTER HAPPILY EVER AFTER: 'THE BRIDAL SUITE'

Matthew Sweeney's poem, 'The Bridal Suite', sits neatly at the end of the sequence of wedding events. In this poem we are introduced quite abruptly to the situation of the protagonist. There is no editorialising; no preparing the reader with a preamble that sets the context or sketches the characters or background of the players—instead, we step straight both into the specific

time and into the state of mind of the groom as he worries about his recurring dreams: ‘On the third night in the bridal suite / without the bride, he panicked’ (Sweeney 1997, p. 5). After fretting over the mysterious absence of his bride, the groom has had enough, and he abandons the suite.

To look at aspects of storytelling here, it is useful to begin with an account of the poem that reduces its content to rudiments; a groom wakes alone in his honeymoon suite, realises that his wife will not be returning, and so abandons it. Rendering the poem’s plot elements in such an unadorned manner highlights the minimalism of the story. It is certainly clear, though, that we have more complex information than either of the preceding poems offered. We could say that nothing much happens in the poem, and the timeframe is short, indeed shorter than in the Fennelly poem, with the directly represented events occurring in the span of part of just one night, the third one after the wedding. The ‘real’ action is both brief and undemonstrative; it consists of the groom waking, bathing, telephoning, gazing out a window, and departing. There is what might be regarded as more substantial action but it is contained only in anxious dreams. Is this a story, and what constitutes a story, in general?

We can apply Gerald Prince’s model (mentioned earlier in discussion of disequilibrium as a driver of plot), in which at least three components are required for the existence of story: an initial situation A (stative) is followed by and joined to B (active), which causes and is therefore followed by C (stative) (Prince in Rimmon-Kenan 2002, p. 1). In other words, an existing situation is modified by an intruding action to create a new situation. Taking Matthew Sweeney’s poem as an example, this conjunction of stative + active

+ stative could be construed as wedding + quarrel + abandoned groom. The dispute, we might presume, has caused the absence of the bride. Instead, it could be that the bride might not have quarrelled with the groom but had private doubts, taken her own counsel, and then abandoned her partner.

The model used by Prince overstates the requirements for a story if we treat the three segments as having to be expressly evident in the text, since causality can often be projected onto temporality. As critic Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan remarks: 'Does this mean that any two events, arranged in chronological order would constitute a story? Theoretically speaking, the answer must be Yes...the temporal conjunction requires us to imagine some world where these events can co-exist' (Rimmon-Kenan 2002, p. 19). Here, Rimmon-Kenan is writing of story in prose, and though she does not say so, her argument must be equally true of poetry: two sequential events would be potentially no less a story in a poem than in prose.

In the Sweeney poem, a couple marries and then the groom is alone in the bridal suite. The intervening causal factor can be inferred, if not with certainty. The mystery, the lack of information, forms part of the reward for the reader partly because the bride's absence is a mystery to the groom also—though as we read we do not know this for sure, and we can never know. Nonetheless, the storytelling capacity of poems should be beyond doubt. If we look at Sweeney's poem recast as a skeletal account of constituent events, we see that it contains many more than two or three sequential incidents concerning the same character. Yet 'The Bridal Suite' is a lyric poem, and lyric poems have seemingly been warned off telling stories.

Narrative poetry is usually distinguished by virtue of its greater length,

for one thing, using a wider range of techniques to spell out its intent, though it may lapse into obviousness in the process: ‘the “narrative” tends to exhaust the signified within the signifier’ (Zumthor 1990, p. 105). Narrative poetry also has a tradition of representing a clear sequence of events. The role of poetry as a vehicle for story could thus be reserved to that which fits a quite formulaic model. Epic poetry, dealing with heroes and mythological creatures and quests, neatly fits that scheme but is not the only variant. Modern ballads and bush poetry, for instance, typically present a series of incidents in normal, linear chronology that drives a story towards an unequivocal ending. On the other hand, lyric poetry, with its traditionally assumed emphasis on musicality and intensity of feeling, is cast as the more personal, even eccentric, poor relation though in the modern idiom especially, it can be a powerful tool for conveying a strong sense of a story’s development. For instance, contemporary readers may be more inclined (and more able) to fill in gaps, so that what might have appeared previously to be a discontinuous gathering of bits and pieces is now perceived as having a satisfying structural integrity. In fact, the size of the lyric may help with this: ‘Large-scale texts such as novels or epics cannot be continually ‘present’ to the reader with an identical degree of intensity’ (Iser 1978, p. 16). Other things being equal, we would expect a poem to be more easily grasped because of its brevity. The reader has a better chance of apprehending the whole.

As this research has stated, the distinction between narrative poetry and lyric poetry is largely artificial and difficult to sustain. Lyric poetry employs what are often regarded as the characteristics of prose fiction to tell a story. Its relative brevity means that it has to employ greater economy in

doing so. The prose poem may just be the ‘most outrageous example’ of lyric poetry, as Charles Simic claims, drawing all things and all people together: ‘The prose poem reads like a narrative but works like a lyric, since it relies on juxtaposition of images and unexpected turns of phrase. An interrupted narrative, it insists that it has to be read over and over again until its words and images radiate their full mystery’ (1994, p. 118). What this signifies is a blurring of the demarcations, a loosening of claims on the territories and properties formerly treated as belonging to one or another style of poetry only. With that haziness of definition comes the possibility of abandoning notions that any single form of poetry alone has sole claim on storytelling in particular. Simic’s notion of an ‘interrupted narrative’ acknowledges that a reader may not be presented with, or need to be presented with, the complete concept of a story in all its details of events and exposition of motivation.

The reader’s recognition and construction of narrative is aided in another way. Social norms are read as conservative—they resist modification—but this creates a tension that is productive. In contemporary texts, as Wolfgang Iser says, these norms signify not just endorsed behaviour but also the wider spectrum of all possible behaviours (1989 pp. 38-39). What is perceived as a normal and tolerable action must have a counterpart that is neither of these—good suggests evil, for instance. Acceptable attributes of heroic characters thus raise notions of alternative behaviours that may prove to be both against type and more challenging. Such amplification into opposites offers a more complex and realistic dimension, a contrast between light and shade that is also the basis of suspense since it admits that change is possible and a different situation may eventuate. In the situation of a wedding,

it might mean that the innocent bride has a potential and darker alter ego, and the readily summoned notion of a happy path to the altar suddenly conjures its own shadow, a troubled and uncertain one. The reader cannot know one of these without acknowledging the other.

‘The Bridal Suite’ is not a narrative poem as it would have been defined previously, yet it does tell a story. Since the events in the poem must occur after the wedding, it allows both retrospective and prospective views. On the one hand, we look back at what might have happened, having to guess at this since no suitable detail is forthcoming. Was there a specific argument or a simmering dispute that fractured the relationship? Was this marriage a mismatch from the start, an awkward alliance that the commitment of the actual wedding revealed, to the anguish of the bride? Did the bride plan all along to flee and, if so, what advantage did she obtain by going through with the wedding? Was the groom some kind of liability—too innocent or cruel or dumb to be borne by his new bride? These are all matters of conjecture as to cause and motivation. On the other hand, we also look forward and wonder what will become of the bride and groom. Is she waiting somewhere, soon to change her mind? Would she be taken back by the groom if she did? Is there some further, worrying revelation around the corner?

None of the many possibilities here is inherently more suitable to the reader than another but the fact that there are so many possible answers, does not negate the narrative role of the poem. ‘Like other kinds of narrative, narrative poems also typically end with some kind of narrative resolution...there may be narrative elements in lyric poems which are brought to a close in a similar fashion’ (Furniss & Bath 1996, p. 381). I would turn

that about and say that the open-ended narrative is not to be denied to so-called lyric poetry either. A lack of obvious closure does not remove the element of story from a poem whatever its usual descriptive label anymore than it does from other forms of writing. One can dig at the expectation of closure in narrative poetry as poet Mark Strand does when, irreverently, he claims to be working on a negative narrative poem that refuses to begin or end and that has become ‘an inexhaustible conjunction’ (Strand 2001, pp. 63-65). There is a risk that a deep concern for story structure in a poem, such as insistence on an unambiguous ending, could become both part of a circular definition and, thus, an unhelpful imposition

The success of ‘The Bridal Suite’ depends greatly on one critical factor; our common understanding of what constitutes the archetypal wedding narrative. The specific story sketched in the poem relies on the reader knowing what kind of emotional investment a bride and groom usually make in preparing for their wedding and life in marriage. We also know the sequence of steps in the wedding ritual, and even if they are presented in isolation or disorder they can act as something like ‘satellites’, as critic Seymour Chatwin (in Kermode 1981, p. 89) calls them, which ‘form associations of their own, nonsequential, secret invitations to interpretation rather than appeal to a consensus’, and which eventually coalesce around nodes of recognisable behaviours. They might be present as anchor points within a text, reminding us of the social rituals and connections shared between people.

Collectively, these ingredients mean that the path of a wedding offers great potential for disruption. This is the tension that can add drama and thus

reward a reader, even when the story's ultimate goal is a happy ending, and regardless of whether that goal is achieved within the text. The question may be broadened from 'will they get there?' to 'how will they get there?' Setting 'The Bridal Suite' three days into the honeymoon, places the groom at the point when the wedding is still fresh and the prognosis for the marriage would normally be assumed to be rosy. Sweeney thrusts us instantly into the problem of the missing bride. The question hanging over the whole poem is 'why?': why is she missing, and, almost more importantly, why is he still waiting? The effect of withholding background details is to heighten tension, forcing the reader to surmise possible scenarios and outcomes, the latter extending beyond the timeframe of the depicted events.

The poem resurrects a decision point that has already occurred in the recent wedding ceremony when the couple formally resolved to commit to marriage. We might guess that the bride has since faced another decision that led her to a different commitment (unless she went into the marriage unwillingly), and we subsequently learn that the groom makes his own decision to leave the hotel. These choices exemplify the paradigm of opposition, in which a story progresses through a series of alternative pathways. As each decision is made to follow a particular fork in the road, so to speak, the other possibilities collapse; they are no longer available to be taken. In a sense then, the story is built on a succession of mini-deaths or closures, as various alternative plot pathways are eliminated. More than this, the outcome of the poem is a signal of the death of the marriage since both bride and groom have separately abandoned the site of their honeymoon. The marriage, and thus the wedding, is dead.

The reader performs an aesthetic act, which is partner to the original author's artistic act of creation, and essential to realising a literary work: 'the text only takes on life when it is realized...the convergence of the text and reader brings the literary work into existence' (Iser 1980, p. 50), and very little is sometimes needed for a reader to construct a story from a text. A poem can tell a story very well even if it is nominally a lyric poem, contrary to traditional definitions. As Iser also says, 'The unwritten aspects of apparently trivial scenes and the unspoken dialogue...not only draw the reader into the action but also lead him to shade in the many outlines suggested by the given situations' (1980, p. 51).

Poetry assumes an economy of diction and information, with the result that its readers have become adept at filling in gaps. A lyric wedding poem, in particular, makes it comparatively easy for a reader to glean a sense of story because it is part of the poetry about our own lives. The underlying and general immanent story is well understood prior to the particular and apparent account that is presented in the poem. The printed poem is a Snow White utterance that must be revived by the kiss of the reader, its implied audience. In the case of Matthew Sweeney's 'The Bridal Suite', this task involves picking up a story that is in mid-process (an interrupted narrative, to use Charles Simic's term) and imagining the rest.

A LONGER NARRATIVE: 'MARRYING THE HANGMAN'

A more complete and explicit narrative is evident in a poem dealing with a courtship that has a dark side. Margaret Atwood's 'Marrying the Hangman'

(1978, pp. 48-51) is longer than the other poems featured here. Greater length alone does not guarantee the creation of narrative in a poem but it certainly coincides with an increased level of 'factual' detail and also of complexity within the imagined world. The availability of extra information means there is a greater chance of a story being perceived since there are more data that a reader can try to connect.

The principal character in 'Marrying the Hangman' is a woman who has been condemned to death. She understands that her only reprieve would be to marry the executioner, but that job position is vacant. This fact saves her for the time being but it also cruelly prolongs her waiting to die. Additionally, it produces uncertainty since she has no way of testing whether there might be a real chance of release through any such marriage. What if the new executioner were already married, for example? It does appear that there might be a way through this dilemma, however, and the female protagonist decides to become the agent of her own salvation. There is a male prisoner who is not facing death and, in a double proposal, she persuades him, firstly, to apply for the undesirable position of executioner and, secondly, to marry her. In this way, death saturates her marriage: she is alive but living with a man who has become a legally sanctioned killer in order to save her from execution. Had he taken the first step (becoming the hangman), but not the second (marrying the woman), he would have become her killer. Either way, the positions of the two characters are bound in a knot of life and death. Atwood concludes the poem with notes that indicate it is based on true events.

Again, in this poem we see the narrative function of decision points. The standard Western Christian wedding vow contains the words, 'till death

do us part'. The wedding in Atwood's poem is a contract that turns this on its head since it offers the bride reprieve from death but simultaneously ushers the groom into a life of killing; they will have a kind of life within death. It reminds us that living always harbours the germ of death. The couple's wedding offers the consummation of marriage, yet the groom also personifies death, offering another kind of consummation to some prisoners when he is called upon to execute them. Atwood says 'poetry...tends to revolve a good deal around sex and death, with regeneration optional (Atwood 1995, Online).

Apart from being at the heart of abiding questions about human purpose, death often provides a point of resolution in a story: 'problems of love and death...are the fixed bases of the entire course of human history' (Tomashevsky 1965, p. 64). Indeed, the ending of some stories is marked by a death or a wedding:

Novels and plays, for example, often close with either the death or the marriage of their principal characters (the former in comedy, the latter in tragedy). Yet such events may also work to achieve closure in a strong sense by purporting to resolve the struggles, tensions, and loose ends of the whole narrative or dramatic action (Furniss & Bath 1996, p. 381).

Weddings can function in a similar way, and the two may be harnessed together as we have seen in the Atwood poem. Numerous other poems join death and the wedding in a direct manner, such as John Bray's 'Death at the Wedding', from his series of adaptations from Greek mythology: 'Death, not your lover, was your bridegroom...' (1978, p. 41), and there are various other

scenarios. Anne Sexton's poem, 'All My Pretty Ones' (Sexton 1962, p5) has the narrator's father die just before he is to re-marry, and in 'Santa Cecilia in Trastevere', Jan Owen sets a wedding in a church, emphasising that it is used for both funerals and weddings, sometimes on the same day (Owen 2002, p. 92).

More grimly, poets have written of one wedding partner as death itself: Mike Ladd with 'Poems from Water', where death becomes a bride (2000, p. 54); Seamus Heaney with a re-telling of *Antigone* in 'Burial at Thebes' (Heaney 2004, Online); and Margaret Atwood with 'Midwinter, Presolstice' where the narrator dreams of 'repeated weddings with a stranger, wounded / with knives' (1970a, p. 20).

In Michelle Roberts' poem, 'the oyster woman', women's garments of death and weddings are directly juxtaposed (1995, pp. 30). Margaret Atwood combines death and the wedding in another poem, 'Charivari' (1970b, p. 37), where a black man is killed for daring to marry a white woman. Ritual slaughters for weddings appear in Aaron Baker's 'Chimbu Wedding' (2003, Online) and Mike Ladd's 'Anakhronismos 7' (2003, p. 12), both poems offering a meditation on mortality, while Charles Simic depicts the whole of life as a wedding feast that ends with death in 'Ambiguity's Wedding' (Simic 1999, p. 52).

What these poems say collectively is that life is transient and one should celebrate what can be enjoyed. The shadow of death is a reminder that we should not take love for granted. 'Marrying the Hangman' is essentially a prose poem, but it illustrates the continuum between what is traditionally conceived of as lyric and non-lyric poetry. Atwood's prose poetry sections are

interrupted by two, shorter, lyric moments, the first of which represents the dialogue between the prisoners as they initially sketch the terms of their trade. The man offers freedom and safety; the woman offers physical contact and pleasure.

He said: the end of walls, the end of ropes, the opening
of doors, a field, the wind, a house, the sun, a table,
an apple.

She said: nipple, arms, lips, wine, belly, hair, bread,
thighs, eyes, eyes.

They both kept their promises.

Atwood 1978, p. 210

The poem ends with another verse of this kind, echoing the same discussion between the characters, but with a deliberately less romantic base. It is cryptic but understandable; all the terms resonate within the field that they create, and within the compact that the two characters have agreed upon.

He said: foot, boot, order, city, fist, roads, time,
knife.

She said: water, night, willow, rope hair, earth belly,
cave, meat, shroud, open, blood.

They both kept their promises.

Atwood 1978, p. 211

We have the information in the rest of the poem to help us make sense of these discontinuous pieces, plus our personal knowledge of the protocols and social niceties. ‘The reader is forced by the pauses imposed on him to imagine more than he could have if his reading were continuous’ (Iser 1978, p. 192), and a similar process of reader compensation/completion is required when a poem presents only a partial picture of events. We can extend this notion of connection between seemingly disparate data to the specifics of a wedding narrative. The blanks in a story can be treated as linking devices that demand the reader’s problem solving skills, as Wolfgang Iser asserts: ‘The first structural quality of the blank, then, is that it makes possible the organization of a referential field of interacting projections’ (1978, p. 197). Applied to poetry, this means that a reader constructs a field of narrative reference from as few as two elements, such as a man and a church. The reader recognises similarities and differences between the different elements, and their possible influence on each other. The reader’s ideation ‘explains’ the movement from one element to another, with the first encountered element being conditioned by the second one, creating a theme. For example, the element ‘a man’ may be followed by the additional element, ‘church’, so that a reader makes a provisional explanation for their conjunction. This might

include a practice of standard religious rites such as a baptism, wedding or funeral. To this theme is added a third element (no bride?), and so on, each one introducing its own gap to be filled. The gaps in the text are thus the glue that binds the reader to it, initiating the reader's process of building sequences through a process of cumulative revision and continual transformation that collectively constitutes story (Iser 1978, p. 203).

The power of a decision point to affect the path of the story and therefore its potential outcome is addressed near the end of the Atwood poem when questions force the reader to consider alternative outcomes where there might otherwise have been a narrowing of story options. The narrator asks whether the woman has made a good choice. Was death preferable, after all?

What did they say the first time they were alone together in the same room? What did he say when she had removed her veil and he could see that she was not a voice but a body and therefore finite? What did she say when she discovered that she had left one locked room for another? (Atwood 1978, p. 211).

'Marrying the Hangman' is more complex than the Sweeney poem, partly at least because its length affords Atwood the opportunity to expand on elements of the situation. Her narration contemplates what the characters are thinking at various stages, and meditates on the relevance of their situation for contemporary lives, particularly those of the narrator and her friends. Had Sweeney's poem somehow been stretched to a similar length, it could also have accommodated such digressions and a more explicit contemplation.

The key narrative points in the poem are that a woman persuades a man to save her life in exchange for becoming his bride, and then revises her view of the contract. In addition to this, we have a more explicit contemplation of the nature of the exchange that underlies a wedding contract, and also of the power of storytelling. Sweeney could have elaborated his poem along such lines also but leaves the reader to make such interpolations without his prompting. What we can see with these two poems is that despite a more elaborate structure in the Atwood poem, both could be reduced to a basic outline.

What does it prove to distil a poem to a few, basic elements in this manner? Surely, that could be done for any poem, with varying degrees of finesse and success? The key aspect is recognition that there are narrative functions implicit in the poems, to which we respond by connecting the content of the poem to the broader knowledge we possess about the greater narratives of the world.

EATING THE BRIDE: ‘THE LION’S BRIDE’

A poem that treats death in quite a different way to Atwood’s is ‘The Lion’s Bride’ by Gwen Harwood (2003, p. 44). It is a first-person account that uses the notion of a wedding to emphasise the nature of the protagonist’s relationship and his depth of feeling. The protagonist is a lion who professes love for his keeper’s daughter and her daily practice while barefoot of delivering a special bowl of food to him. One day that routine changes. The poem ends:

an icy spectre sheathed
in silk minced to my side on pointed feet.
I ripped the scented veil from its unreal
head and engorged the painted lips that breathed
our secret names. A ghost has bones, and meat!
Come soon my love, my bride, and share this meal.

Harwood 2003, p. 44

Thus the poem depicts a series of actions that form part of the animal's normal day and which set the reader up for what is to follow. We can visualise these and we can imagine some form of strange attachment between the lion and the woman. The second stanza (most of which is quoted above) presents the consequence of the lion's limited understanding being inadvertently tested, so there is a clearly evident causal chain. It is obvious from the beginning that the narrator is a lion and not a human being. Death is central to this poem, incarnate in the lion as groom because we know the history of human interaction with such animals and their predatory behaviour. Just as with lion-taming acts in the circus, tension is implicit in closely juxtaposing predator and prey. How long can the seemingly natural order be deferred? Will he or won't he eat her?

The poem hinges on the lion's failure to recognise the female keeper when she is dressed differently, and its crucial irony lies in him wishing to share his new meal with the person whom he is, in his ignorance, eating at that

very moment. One could be critical of the poem's contrivance and its reliance on an uneven suspension of disbelief. After all, why would someone depict a character feeding a lion while barefoot, other than as a device that better allows for the mistaken identity necessary in the second stanza? For the purposes of this thesis, the key focus is the use of the term 'bride'. It is firstly offered in the title of the poem, where it poses an immediate puzzle. What could normally be a bride to a lion except a lioness? The revelation, technically at the very end, of the bride being a human is actually eased into by preceding references in the first verse where the lion speaks tenderly of the woman.

That the so-called marriage is between animal and human twists the narrative nonetheless, and the effect of its inclusion at this final point is interesting. Where the last line might otherwise have read 'Come soon my love and share this meal', inserting 'my bride' simply and clearly indicates the intensity of the relationship from the lion's perspective and also heightens the sense of intimacy. There can't be a much more physically intimate act than consuming a loved one; it is a real consummation, which simultaneously foreshadows the lion's greater sense of loss that will emerge when the woman fails to reappear in her usual guise. At the heart of the poem is the tacit idea that a groom may not truly see his bride for who she really is, especially when she assumes the costume that transforms her into a totem.

In this case, a small wedding reference summons a host of notions about the nature of the wedding ceremony as it betokens a sacred union, but kills the prospect of that occurring because of a gruesome consummation of a different kind. The effect is to heighten the effect of the killing through the

use of just one word, 'bride'. The use of that word emphasises the narrative power latent in wedding references.

In each poem, the enduring shape and detail of the archetypal wedding narrative encourages quick recognition, allowing readers to knowledgeably fill in gaps. The relatively stable nature of the wedding narrative does not mean that it is fixed in cement but its durability means that poets can use it as a frame from which to deliberately stray, sure that the reader will be aware of the distance of departure. The reader will draw an inference, adding their own contribution to the significance of the poem, without the poet having to spell things out. Again, it is a matter of economy, affording the poet an opportunity to focus on heightened language rather than elaborate construction of story, yet usefully employing elements of narrative that point to a story.

Reading is an active process of interpretation triggered by but not wholly resident in the raw material of the text. For the poet, the process of relying on the reader's knowledge is part intuition (a subconscious act) and part strategy (the exercise of literary craft), and the poem is always intertextual: 'Poets do not write in a vacuum. They write from experiences and perceptions, but those experiences and perceptions are with other poetry and literature as well as with the world' (Kohl 1999, p. 95).

Literature is performative, a continuous act of making meaning that both writer and reader undertake. This performance manifests our constant connection to story templates that help us to make sense of life. Far from resisting the extent to which stories play on permutations of these meta-narratives, we should be embracing them: 'we must finally acknowledge that we cannot even recognise uniqueness except as a deviation from some norm.

A world of unique objects would not only be overwhelming and intolerable; it would not even be perceptible' (Scholes 1975, p. ix). Lyric poetry exemplifies the power of even minimal texts to amplify their effect through synergistic connection to an ur-narrative.

Robert MacFarlane noted as a kind of warning rather than actual criticism about poet Ciaran Carson, that 'the recitation of anecdotes does not constitute literature,' adding that, 'he usually succeeds in going beyond simple recitation and in transfiguring what he describes' (1999, p.22). This last qualification points directly to the failing that Todorov identifies when he rejects mere iteration as narrative. He goes on to say that, 'the simple relation of successive facts does not constitute a narrative: these facts must be organised, which is to say, ultimately, that they must have elements in common' (Todorov 1977, p. 233). Narrative requires a marriage of the two characteristics of difference and similarity; it needs to draw together the seemingly disconnected elements and reveal their shared qualities.

Applied to poetry, it means that narrative traces would not be identified or acknowledged where the poem's lines only comprised disconnected statements. Confronted with a poem of this type, we might ask where the necessary organisational function would lie that might yet bind the text so that the reader actually would discern a narrative (I recognise, of course, that locating narrative is not the goal of every reader with every poem). It could be argued that the material enabling this transformation must be in the poem itself, but a poem does not acquire life and meaning without a reader. The reader's experience and intuition about the personal and cultural

resonance of the text completes the compact with it that enables the sense of a narrative to be gleaned.

Some poems offer a detailed and integrated whole story, while others give the merest clues to its existence. Both methods are products of the same process of interpreting and stating our place as acculturated creatures. We understand a text, its type and its concerns, through placing it in a greater discourse. We note literary techniques through our prior reading and training (metaphor, synecdoche, allusion, etc.). We understand its moral, ethical, and social implications from our personal attitudes, cultural experiences, and historical knowledge. No poem is produced in isolation. A new poem acts backwards in relying on the existing store of poems, to which it adds, and it acts forwards in preparing different ground for the next poem.

As John Kertzer (2004, p. 2) says, ‘Ideal readers catch every allusion and influence, but at the cost of losing the shock of first discovery’ since those readers’ vast knowledge diminishes some of the impact that the poem would otherwise offer. The poet’s inflections, hints, and partial references will more readily be identified and, if necessary, decoded. The experience of reading a poem will be richer for those in the know, though not necessarily a weak one for others—that would depend on the nature of the reference. If a fragment of speech from an obscure play has a valid place in a poem, the knowing reader will be rewarded whereas others must either research the odd phrase or live with their ignorance. As a result, poets can, thankfully, step back from complete exposition.

Kertzer remarks that, ‘the process of understanding...is contextual and systematic’ (2004, p. 2). In other words, we derive meaning from

understanding how the words that are put before us draw on the prior existence of language and grammar, and of historical events and psychological behaviour, etc. These preconditions enable the text to operate more effectively and more efficiently. Among these are the symbolic stories of our age, including the wedding narrative, which is imbedded in social practice and in a multitude of existing story variations.

The argument for the immediacy of initial literary experience superseding any intellectual enquiry is fraught. The direct experience of a striking metaphor, for instance, may be said to have an impact before it can be subjected to the interrogation of criticism (Frye 1996, p. 27). There is, however, still an intervening step of intimate mediation, whether consciously invoked or not; a moment of reception, interpretation, comparison and evaluation that implies a distance from the work and that cannot be eradicated without losing the central value of the metaphor itself. In other words, it has to be consciously processed. Apart from the reaction to a purely sensory quality in a text, such as its sound, there is no instant reader response. Instead, it is an intellectual one that relies on understanding ideas, concepts of image, meaning and language, and also on testing for novelty. Kertzer (2004, p. 3) notes that ‘understanding lags behind experience’ and cites Lyotard’s comment that “‘no mode of thought is capable of thinking” directly, only of reconstituting in a displaced form’.

Roland Barthes refers to the moment when we interpret texts: ‘however casual may be the act of opening a novel or a newspaper or of turning on the television, nothing can prevent that humble act from installing in us, all at once and in its entirety, the narrative code we are going to need’

(1977, pp. 116-117). We begin to read a poem knowing we apply skills that complement the writer's intentions. With the right knowledge, we can use a poem to open doors in time, looking into the past and the future. We can unfold the poem until it is a map many times bigger than it began, and use it to travel into the heart of the human condition.

The choice of material for a poem is important, of course, but no proof against opacity, even with originally lucid setting out. 'Implicit intertextuality is highly vulnerable to the erosion of time and cultural change, or to the reader's unfamiliarity with the corpus of the elite that bred a particular poetic generation' (Riffaterre 1978, p. 136). This is likely why writers often resort to the more durable and, thus, less sensitive tropes, whose use increases the prospects that a higher proportion of readers will understand their allusions. The familiarity of the wedding narrative recommends itself in this capacity and allows the writer a deal of play with the reader. In this process, the writer may feel comfortable rendering the narrative flow deliberately discontinuous, or introducing deliberate gaps in meaning, for example.

Both acts could be undertaken in order to pull the reader into providing structure and sense according to a shared set of referents. The value for the writer in doing this includes allowing reduced exposition, as well as engendering a partnership with the reader. What may appear to be greater freedom of interpretation for the reader is, according to Riffaterre, illusory. Rather, he says, it is 'a scanning of the sociolect's commonplaces, the practice of a lore of well-tested exempla, the recognition of forms and hallowed symbols...' where 'the reader continually seeks relief by getting...back to safe reality' (Riffaterre 1978, p. 165) and towards an elusive final meaning.

SUMMARY

Lyric poetry employs common prose fiction techniques to perform a narrative function with which it is seldom credited. The argument in this thesis necessarily involves re-considering the traditional definitions of narrative poetry and lyric poetry. By extension, we also have to ponder the very nature of poetry, and how narration and story are intrinsic to human nature. As Paul Zumthor (1990, p. 36) forcefully argues, ‘... a generalized and virtual narrativity inhabits every form of organised discourse... every artistic production, poetry as well as painting and the plastic technical arts including architecture, is a tale (*récit*) at least in some latent way’.

The principal poems discussed above represent different stages of the wedding process but, interestingly, not the actual wedding ceremony. The action in Steve Kelen’s poem occurs outside the place of the wedding, for example, such as at the wedding reception. Aidan Coleman’s poem deals with the aftermath of a proposal to wed; Fennelly’s addresses reluctance to write an epithalamium to be read at a wedding ceremony or reception; and Sweeney’s adopts the perspective of a groom abandoned in his bridal suite. What the difference in focus and the apparent segmentation demonstrate is that the overall wedding story lends itself to being readily divided into a three-act structure comprising courtship, wedding and honeymoon. This is superficially consistent with Aristotle’s desired three-part structure, but we must proceed with caution:

By ‘whole’ I mean possessing a beginning, middle, and end. By ‘beginning’ I mean that which does not have a necessary connection with a preceding event, but which can itself give rise naturally to some further fact or occurrence. An ‘end’, by contrast, is something which naturally occurs after a preceding event, whether by necessity or as a general rule, but need not be followed by anything else. The ‘middle’ involves causal connections with both what precedes and what ensues. Consequently, well-designed plot-structures ought not to begin or finish at arbitrary points, but to follow the principles indicated (Aristotle 1987, p. 39).

None of these poems claims to represent the whole arc of the three stages of the full wedding story from courtship to honeymoon. We do know where each one fits in that sequence, though, and we are capable of understanding the significance of each in the wider tale. By regarding each poem as partly contingent on such location we give it more power to resonate within the larger but implied narrative, and with freedom to construct details for the outlying sections of the story rather than being bound by more precise and limiting specifications. In any case, there is nothing arbitrary about the starting and ending points of these poems. Each frames the events that comprise its central concern, even while it also reaches beyond the page to connect with a fuller but unstated narrative, the events that precede and follow. Like Aristotle, theorist William Labov stresses that a writer should be able to justify the selection of a chronological starting point on the basis that prior events don’t require elaboration; they should be safely assumed because

their specific details have no direct and important bearing on the tale (Labov 1997, Online). A wedding story might then begin with the ceremony itself rather than aspects of the courtship, or start at the end of the ceremony rather than its beginning, or at the reception rather than the wedding ritual, or, indeed, the honeymoon, as each case warrants.

There is tension in reading, between lingering and moving further into the text. This is more pronounced with the lyric poem than prose because the reader expects (the poem demands?) that attention be given to every word in a slower and more intense engagement with the poem instead of glossing. Yet, were proponents of the lyric to claim there is the stasis of the isolated word/image, it would be illusory. There may be momentary hovering over an idea or an image, and that is a normal part of reading, but it is not total stillness nor complete quarantine from the connection to other texts and the world of experience because these are what give the poem its life. The next sentence pulls the reader on, or the next word does, even as the first one resists, each like a little gravity system out of whose orbit the reader must inevitably launch themselves.

The stories that lyric poems tell are not necessarily limited by the number of their words, as the poems selected for this chapter evidence. They serve to show that a lyric poem can indeed tell a story of some complexity, especially with a collaborative reader who has prior knowledge of the full 'wedding narrative'. At each step, it is the reader who responds to the lyric poem by filling in details that are not explicitly contained. As philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein says: 'Uttering a word is like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination' (1953, p. 4e). Lyric poems *can* tell stories.

CHAPTER 4:
A PALIMPSEST OF BRIDES

Even a lyric poem has...an exoskeleton

Roger Seamon 2006, p. 253

INTRODUCTION

If, as poet Howard Nemerov says, ‘poetry is a species of thought with which nothing else can be done’ (1978, p. 13), then all talk about it would seem futile, including his own. Nemerov, I believe, is emphasising the need to understand a transcendental quality of poetic expression, one that shortcuts connection between the idea and its reception, almost as if to force language into a more direct and non-lingual role:

...because poetry deals first with experience, and only derivatively with meaning; it attempts to catch the first evanescent flickerings of thought across the surface of things. It wants to be as though the things themselves were beginning to speak; they would speak somewhat darkly, the light that came from them would be black light at first (Nemerov, 1978, p. 11).

That is not the same thing as refusing any discussion of poetry, however.

While poetic expression may seem a thing apart, *all* thought is a mystery in its own way, which is what poetry partly celebrates.

In my accompanying collection of poems, *The Floating Bride*, I apply ideas of lyric expression but with a constant eye on the narrative function that is also at work. In this chapter, I analyse a number of those poems in order to illustrate that aspect at work in different ways. The collection includes short

poems with depiction that ranges from realistic to the surreal, and longer poems where there is more scope for fleshing out the detail of events. Their subject matter varies considerably but each poem contains some kind of reference to a wedding. At times that is quite central to the poem and at others it is peripheral, a variation that was deliberately undertaken in order to present a mixture of approaches.

In the following analysis, I initially consider poems that would qualify as epithalamia, or that otherwise relate strongly to that form. After considering my own versions of this traditional type of wedding poem, I examine examples with anti-epithalamic content, the essence of which is a direct or indirect warning against being wed (Tufté 1970, p. 247). Next, I look at a variety other poems, initially focussing on matters of length, with differences in the way that their narrative function operates. One, 'On Second Thought', connects a couple's hesitance to commit to marriage with their use of surrogates, the wedding gown and groom's suit. 'Dress Sense' also focuses on the wedding gown as a symbol of the bride and virtually a character in its own right. Another, 'Crow on the Cross' uses animistic elements similar to folk tales, and there are others that celebrate and otherwise comment upon weddings.

EPITHALAMIA & ANTI-EPITHALAMIA

I have written two poems in contemporary epithalamic mode, that is to say, poems employing a celebratory tone to address real and living newlyweds and the fact of their wedding. The traditional epithalamium was systematised,

observing a number of rhetorical devices, including reference to recommended classical characters and events, as well as to Nature. The older epithalamia were not always so prescribed as well-known examples like Edmund Spenser's 'Epithalamion' might suggest, however, and tended to present marriage as a 'practical condition of adult life' (Tuftes 1970, p. 257). Contemporary epithalamia certainly tolerate more deviation from the traditional template.

As a writer, I hoped for a productive tension between the lyric and the narrative in these poems, between wanting the reader to linger over a word or image for its own sake while also acknowledging the essential movement of the poem, thus sometimes shifting on to its next part with a little regret, a little look backwards. In this, what matters is manifold: both the instant and the flow; the beauty and the bones. A certain ambiguity is expected and, indeed, necessary, so that the poem can better breathe rather than being too narrowly interpreted. Some of these issues, that bring together aspects of the creative and the critical dimensions of writing poetry are contemplated in the following.

The first epithalamium in *The Floating Bride* is 'Water', which arose when a friend asked whether I would write a suitable poem for his daughter's wedding. Writing for people I had never met seemed a folly but when I learnt that the couple was to wed in a dry creek bed in the Outback, I reconsidered. and stuck with a basic theme, water. This would underscore their choice of location for the ceremony and provide metaphoric material that was relatively easy both for me to work with and, I trusted, easy for the audience on the day to understand. I chose a deliberate declaratory tone in order to add a sense of

solemnity. This is one of the least narrative poems in the collection, presenting philosophic (even sermonising) statements largely in metaphor rather than telling a story with discrete event steps. It does end with a prospective step, though, as the married couple looks to the future. The musicality of the poem is not prominent, though the use of part rhyme at alternate line endings makes that more obvious in the last verse ('water, mine, river, same, together, one').

The second epithalamium, 'And Yes', is quite different. The groom had asked me to read a poem of his choosing at the ceremony but three days beforehand requested that I write and read one of my own instead. I accepted warily, soon realising I would be unable to create a traditional song of praise in the time available. In order to start, I wrote about how hard it was to write, a resort sadly reminiscent of creative writing students who hand up stories about *not* writing their stipulated assignments. It quickly became a meditation on the nature of the epithalamium itself and on its inadequacy when faced with the depth of a couple's commitment. It begins:

What can one say to newlyweds
that doesn't involve a sweet retreat
to ancient pleasures?
Here are the inevitable lines
alluding to the beauty of a sky
that brims with nothing but blue,
or a river of stars.

I used rivers as a metaphor in both poems, their confluence representing the union of the couple, then unaware that this was typical in traditional epithalamia (Jones 1930, p. 373; Tufte 1970, pp. 180, 188, 190, 245; Woodward 1962, p. 38). The poem initially raises the difficulty of offering something new in an epithalamium and rejects lazy referents in Nature—a similar quandary to the one canvassed in Shakespeare’s ‘Sonnet 18’ (‘Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day’), though I make no claims to matching the artistic quality of that line. Greeting card poems, like much of the epithalamia in various books that collect poems to be read at weddings, all too quickly embrace abstract notions of love rather than concrete illustrations, and this approach is what the second verse of ‘And Yes’ rejects. In the face of the inadequacy of language, the speaker simply calls for an affirmation from those assembled, marking their shared pleasure at the wedding of the couple.

My reference in the poem to a ‘crossing point’ was not only to a literal sense of the couple changing their social status via a rite of passage but also to take up Howard Nemerov’s use of the term to describe ‘the moment of expressiveness’ for which poets strive. Essentially, he says that we can’t really understand what goes on at that instant of poetic discovery and that fact ‘tells us that something in language is not linguistic; that something in reason is not reasonable’ (Nemerov 1972, p. 3). The term was intended to indicate something almost magical, certainly surpassing our ability to express it definitively—which is also the general thrust of the poem. Hopefully, the poem stands as well as any epithalamium would in raising love as the

paramount concern and conceding the limitations of poetry in that situation, while still sincerely rather than ironically blessing the couple.

The previous two poems work within the convention in a straightforward way. Another possible epithalamium, 'Clowns in Love', is quite different. Reading it at a real wedding would risk offense but it deals directly with a fictional couple generalised within their type; clowns.

It's a courtship with animal balloons
and a rain of glitter.
with flapping arms and Look out behind you!
until she says Yes.

The epithalamium has been capable of ironic mode since its beginnings (West 1974, p. 347). In some ways, 'Clowns in Love' adheres to what Tufte calls the anti-epithalamium (1970, p. 247), a poem that warns against being wed. Whether or not one agrees that her term is properly struck, the gist of its purpose is clear: writing to dissuade one or both members of a couple from marrying. There could be any number of reasons for such advice, though most seem to centre on the perils of a bad match rather than a prejudice against the institution of marriage. The poem is also a satirical commentary on the average wedding couple.

In any case, my purpose in this poem was to choose an unlikely situation (a circus) and allow it to be compared, implicitly, to the performance of a real courtship and wedding, which is sometimes in danger of lapsing into

overly choreographed activity. The series of highly visual acts depicted in the poem serve to underline the artificial and comic aspect of a ritualised approach to the wedding, while also keeping in mind the notion that clowns mask sadness. This last point promotes the sense of dark and light coexisting, the notion of balance.

Undertaking depiction of a sequence of actions in this poem meant adhering more closely to conventional notion of narrative than the previous poems mentioned, though the causal connections are weak because the first part concentrates on fleshing out the clowns' deviation from normal behaviour. Nonetheless, the different stages are presented in virtual comic-book mode as successive moments within a brief story leading to a conclusion. The poem is relatively self-contained, with little tension between the lyric and narrative elements. The narrative dimension did not need to be drawn out since the main aim of the poem is to underline the pervasive desire for companionship whatever the ritual underpinnings.

QUESTIONS OF LENGTH

In this section, I discuss some of my short works and then a selection of longer pieces. All would be classed as lyric poems, and none approaches the length of the traditional epithalamia, for instance, though one of the longer poems is in the form of a ballad and therefore more closely related to narrative poetry as I have previously defined it.

One of the shorter poems in *The Floating Bride*, and one that points directly to the nature of story in lyric poetry, is 'The Bride We Pass'. This is the penultimate version of the poem, a mere six lines in dot point, and with a slightly different title:

the bride we passed on the side of the road

- has popped out to the shop for some smokes
- is breaking in the dress for a friend
- has told the driver, 'Just stop here'
- is afraid of the stranger who wears the gown
- is scared of the one who will take it off

Posed rather like a multiple-choice question, this poem is about the mystery connected with an unexpected sighting of a bride. Though small, it illustrates the dynamic of storytelling. The scenario presented in the title is brief and incomplete, and meant to intrigue. It creates a gap, an expectation on the part of the reader that more information will help to solve the puzzle.

Reading is driven by desire that pulls the reader through the text towards a resolution (Brooks 1984, p. 37). That process is partly achieved by strategic omission from a text, including delayed revelation. Writer Patricia Duncker remarks about fiction that a plot hiatus creates a gap in which the reader hesitates and speculates. Its significance may not be clearly indicated at that time and what the reader does with it may be guided by clues in the text

on either side. Fiction, she adds, is driven by a succession of choices, and the story is a process of navigation (Duncker 2007). I edited this poem through different versions, expanding it as I searched for a suitable way combine the riddle of the bride's presence with a depiction that would stimulate the reader's imagination and trigger an emotional reaction.

The poem's first mystery concerns narration since the identity of the 'we' in the title of the poem and their relationship are initially unexplained. The reader might picture puzzled looks when the observers see this displaced woman in a wedding dress (rather like encountering the bride in the back of the bus in the final scene of the movie, *The Graduate*). Their discussion would produce several explanations. The word 'we' also places the narrator as a first-person speaker and, ultimately, an outsider to the question that affects the apparent central character, the observed bride figure.

The poem moves in two main sections, the first introducing the narrator and the second posing reasons for the bride's presence. The first line adds location, 'on the side of the road', and this vitally informs the rest of the poem since it places the bride outside her usual context. The tacit issue is the oddity of someone dressed as a bride being found in these circumstances; the poem simply asserts this anomaly, relying on the reader's own knowledge of customary practice to recognise its strangeness. Here we might think of Stanley Fish's argument about the importance of context in narrowing the likely interpretation of meaning of an act or situation. He says, 'we create [poetry] through interpretative strategies that are finally not our own but have their source in a publicly available system of intelligibility' (1980a, p. 332). The unanswered riddle is what I wanted to pull the reader on. The poem does

not answer this conclusively but offers a number of alternatives, some of them not very plausible. It is as if to mirror the ‘what if’ enquiry process in the observers’ heads as they try to rationalise the situation.

The first possibility offered is that the woman ‘has popped out to the shop for some smokes’, using contrast to stress how one might trivialise use of the gown and traditional respect for it. The line asks the reader to conceive of a situation in which the bride might casually walk out in her wedding dress to conduct a minor commercial transaction. At this stage, there has actually been no mention of the dress, merely of a bride. The next possibility, ‘breaking in the dress for a friend’, confirms that she is wearing a wedding gown, and adds to the idea of disrespect through someone other than the bride wearing the garment out of doors prior to the wedding. There is a layering of ‘offences’ now. The real bride has the status entitling her to wear the dress, so this would be a double breach of protocol.

Umberto Eco warns that ‘a text is a lazy machinery which forces its possible readers to do a part of its textual work’ (1981, p. 36), adding that a reader will ‘look for possible contexts capable of making the initial [textual] expression intelligible and reasonable. The very nature of signs postulates an active role on the part of their interpreter’ (1981, p. 45). In this poem, I wanted to test the tension inherent in withholding information, forcing the reader towards scenarios that would determine which would be the most plausible explanation, and thus highlight the narrative process of eliminating alternatives.

All of the explanations so far generally offer directions of thought along two tracks, a surface one that uses absurdity and light humour, and a

deeper one that links with taboos of unacceptable practice associated with the gown as a symbol of bridal status. The next three options in the poem are darker, and they might be taken collectively or individually. Why has she abandoned the bridal car, and was it before or after the wedding? If the latter, her new husband would have been beside her, adding a further dramatic element. Is she really a bride or merely dressed as one and, if so, why would that be? Is she an actor on a break? The reader is not likely to insert implausible explanations, even if attuned to the solutions proposed in whodunits.

I then revised the poem to bring the moment of reflection away from the woman and back to the witnesses, dropping the bullet points approach (plus the staccato effect they provide). It retains the central mystery of the bridal figure's presence, and with the new closing lines it adds a tension between the couple in the car. The poem remains quite skeletal. It offers no comprehensive trail of events that would minimise uncertainty. Its key feature is to highlight and exploit uncertainty so that several potential narratives are suspended, all held without the imminent prospect of crystallising any particular one. Apart from its use of heightened language, including musical qualities, lyric poetry is also often recognised for featuring an epiphany, or revelation, and that:

In its brevity, lyric poetry thrives on exclusion, leaving a good deal of context to be supplied by a reader. It thus reminds us how much reading is a creative process, to which we bring not only our knowledge of the conventional possibilities of literary form, but also all of the unique

experiences that each of us, as individuals, has undergone (Lilia Melani 2000, Online).

The poem presents the bride out of her normal context as a puzzle to be solved, but it does not offer the expected epiphany. The effect of not shutting down all paths but one by the poem's end and, instead, denying story closure, is to draw attention to both the art of narrative and to the reader's role. In this instance it also raises questions for the reader in relation to the bride, as a broad concept (including notions of the constraining power of ritual and, potentially in the realm of feminist studies, of the bride's 'right place' and behaviour) and in herself as an individual character in this poem. Overarching all of this is the bigger matter of how our attitudes to weddings affect the reader in weighing up the woman's actions. The decision to wed is a major one, and there is a lot at stake both in going through with it and turning away from it at the last minute, or just afterwards; culturally, financially and individually.

The difficulty of getting the balance right in writing this was the reason for the numerous edits. The poem as story offers a brief period in which a couple conjecture about an unexpected sight, and then we see its effect on their own relationship; a lot rests on implication rather than direct statement as far as the couple is concerned. The event-ness of the poem is low in terms of physical action (although there is a flicker of successive possibilities regarding the wearer of the dress, each with its own back-story), but it is high in terms of potential impact on the narrator's future happiness. Thus the lyric character of the poem embraces a projected narrative. The lack

of closure does not threaten the utility of the poem in that respect, and its open ending does not reduce narrative function, but rather serves to highlight it even as it turns away from traditional story structure.

Poet and academic Stephen Dobyns says that ‘clearly, a poem need not have any narrative at all, or perhaps only the smallest degree of narrative, since an element of narrative exists whenever we have two moments in time’ (2003, p. 45). That is broadly consistent with the structuralist notion of minimal narrative units, though I would like to have seen examples of what he terms a completely narrative-free poem. Dobyns adds that ‘this diminishment or absence of narrative limits the role of suspense in poetry’ (2003, p. 45). In the case of ‘The Bride We Pass’, the small amount of information available makes it more difficult for a reader to discover the ‘true’ features of a hidden story. Where there *is* no single story to be discovered, no intention of crowning one particular interpretation, the purpose of the poem can yet be served and a narrative function can still be performed. It may be that the possible story lines grow ghostly where they move into undetailed territory before or after the events disclosed on the page, and to the extent that they involve undisclosed motives. But suspense, after all, relates to deferred disclosure.

‘The Bride We Pass’ is a short and deliberately fragmented poem that relies on the reader’s knowledge of customary situations for wearing a bridal gown, so that curiosity is roused about the wearer’s displacement to an urban roadside setting, creating a desire to find an explanation. Incomplete though the different explanations remain, they directly address the nature of narrative, and especially the exercise of the reader’s talent for making sense within the

scope of their puzzle solving skills. In turn, that is based on their prior knowledge of wedding practices.

What does a reader recognise as the elements of a potential story? One way is for the reader to look at the means by which the poem's information is organised. Branigan states, 'Although the essence of a narrative is a presentation of systematic change through a cause and effect teleology, there is no reason that an actual narrative may not also contain some of these other ways of organizing data'. He then lists the methods of organisation, which I have adapted as follows:

1. A heap – random association
2. A catalogue – objects similarly related to a 'centre'
3. An episode – the consequences of a central situation
4. An unfocused chain – a series of disconnected causes and effects
5. A focused chain – a series of connected / centred causes and effects
6. A simple narrative – a series of episodes collected as a focused chain

(Branigan 1992, p. 19)

This list describes both atemporal and temporal associations of data— with increasing levels of consequentiality and, arguably, increasing levels of explicit, traditional narrative. As a continuum of ways to organise information, moving towards more tightly structured narrative forms, it also

provides an interesting scale on which we might place different types of poetry and consider whether each constitutes a narrative. This suggests that the makings of narrative arise earlier, or at a more basic (non-narrative) level, than the typical definition of narrative poetry would recognise.

Some readers will be more adept at sense making at the lower levels of organisation than other readers. Information can be presented in a deliberate and subtle way that will suggest one particular structure to a reader more than others. One way to do this is to make references to selected symbols (such as wedding motifs; garter, ring, veil, etc.); another is to use the nature of items in a list-style of poem to produce a cumulative effect on the reader, which I intended with this particular poem. As Roger Seamon comments in his critique of Aristotle's *Poetics*, 'Even a lyric poem has...an exoskeleton' (2006, p. 253), an outer world to which it relates both in style and information, and this poem relies on such a connection being made. I have played with these notions in constructing 'The Bride We Passed'.

The next poem, 'On Second Thought', is a brief lyric that appears to be relatively short on characters and action, and to have a small cast, like 'The Bride We Pass'. The latter poem had a narrator and some other witnesses plus a bride; 'On Second Thought' has a narrator who is not directly involved with the depicted events, plus a suitor, though it is arguable that the bride is also present in the form of a bridal gown. Reducing the bride to a wedding gown is a kind of metonymic representation to which Susan Stewart alludes in her 1993 book, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. While the technique is a convenient one, it has elements of control and power that provide a deliberate and unspoken

undercurrent to the way some figures are depicted in the poems. In essence, though, this is not really a poem without human beings.

on second thought

the suitor stays at home

he sends his suit instead

This satirical poem jumps straight in at a decision point but not at the traditional moment of the celebrant's question about whether one person 'takes' the other. It presents a similar decision but just before the wedding, employing metonymy to play on the symbolic value of the wedding attire as a substitute for the actual wearers. It implies that the wedding is a mechanical ritual that could continue without the bride and groom, so it constitutes a criticism, albeit humorously intended. The strange fact of newlywed clothing acting independently suggests that real newlyweds might be regarded as caricatures. The closing lines refer to where the special costumes of wedding end up, slotted in storage. There is an implied criticism of marriage in this depiction since one could (pessimistically) read into it the idea of a similarly unexciting end for human newlyweds. In also alluding to a 'coming attractions' notice made in a motion picture theatre, the conclusion of the poem indirectly connects the costumes with the empty pageantry and showiness of a world of make-believe.

As with the preceding poem, the story content is slim and it also has a small cast. As meagre as the chain of events is, it comprises a narrative since it involves meaningful acts through time; they are more than coincidental. We

automatically try to conjure reasons for the decisions of each person in turn, to impute possible motives for their actions. That we may not succeed in such an attempt does not preclude narrative performance. My intention was to strip the events in this poem back to the least, while still retaining a coherent sequence, and nudging the reader to infer something about the lives of the human counterparts 'behind' the clothing.

In the longer poem 'Crow on the Cross', I have again taken a surreal approach with first-person narration of the first stages of a wedding by a crow observing events from the church's steeple cross. As quickly becomes clear, the bird is a competitor for the affections of the bride-to-be:

from the steeple cross
I see the glossed white tin
of your bridal car approaching—
I adjust tail feathers the lustre of coal
a porcelain sheen turns on my wings
deep as black water

And ends:

leave your grieving family—
the mouth of death won't have us yet
let them look for us in skies and trees
we will look back from the little cross

we will peer through the stained glass
and sing our inelegant songs
the hymns to loss and faith
the long wet light of winter on us

The poem employs narrative's trademark paradigm of opposition to heighten reader engagement: the plot path might take one of two or more directions, and a decision must be made. The crow is an intruder, a threat to the sanctioned marriage that would otherwise be taking place. The vain bird announces his claim on the woman in a song of dedication that is half summons and half spell, as if he is hypnotising. The outcome is uncertain. Though he sees her begin to change physically, there is not enough evidence of her irrevocable commitment. She might be saved, or save herself, if indeed leaving with the crow is something from which to be saved. One might also imagine a verbal or physical response coming from the fearful and angry groom and congregation, for instance, before events are really determined—so a tension still lingers.

In terms of story, this poem exemplifies narrative function in lyric poem. The period covered is very short, and there is no introduction of background information to set a context for the reader since action begins in *media res*. In particular, there is no justification tendered for the normally impossible events in the poem—an animal vying for the affection of a human being in this manner—so we are being asked to suspend disbelief in that respect (just as with Gwen Harwood's poem discussed earlier). We are in a very different world where a very different kind of marriage is being offered

by the crow, and the possibility that the crow's persuasions might be based on a legitimate claim leaves the question of certain taboos unresolved. Is the crow what he appears to be? Is his act malicious or is it meant to set something to rights? Perhaps there is also magic at work in the situation. As with 'The Bride We Pass', the lack of closure at the end is not fatal to the narrative.

The language of the poem is not plain but stylised, adopting an almost musical voice and a delivery that is out of the ordinary, unlike, say, that in 'on Second Thought'. Writing of George Oppen's poems, Longenbach argues that they 'demonstrate the inseparability of story and song, sincerity and objectification, aural pleasure and experimental form' (2004, p. 45), and this exploration of alternative lyric modes underpins the strategy of variety within the creative component of the thesis.

In one view, 'the typical poem can be thought of...as a miniature drama in which two 'sides' meet, come into conflict and are eventually reconciled' (Bateson in Furniss & Bath 1996, p. 393), but the presumption that different philosophies or attitudes within the poem can (or should) be reconciled may inappropriately narrow the range of possible readings. The author might not have intended a neat and obvious reading, but rather have deliberately sought an openness that would allow ambiguity, as in this case where the reader is left to decide. Rather than ruining the prospect of a meaningful reading, the lack of resolution poses different interpretations between which the reader can jump, achieving an alternation of satisfying readings. Ambiguity, used in this way, provides a specific reward. The idea of an upset that delays proceedings at a wedding or even critically violates it is

consistent with principles of dramatic movement. To maintain reader interest, a story generally requires high stakes and uncertainty of outcome. Again I would mention Peter Brooks' assertion that 'narratives both tell of desire... and arouse and make use of desire as dynamic of signification' (Brooks 1984, p. 37).

Turning to a different kind of lyric poem, one that is closer to a common perception of story in verse, 'TV Weddings' is both longer than the poems discussed so far in this chapter and also structured differently. It comprises a series of four-line stanzas that use rhyme and half rhyme, clearly echoing the idea of song in the lyric form. The tone is a little different from that used in the earlier poems, but the difference is less than first appears. Other poems have been ironic and humorous too, but this one deals with the very familiar world of popular television drama, so its tone might be read as more closely identifying with the reader since he or she is likely to know the described world just as well as the narrator does.

The thrust of the poem is the shared experience, the familiarity of the wedding day as a vehicle for dramatic exposition. It is narrated with some affection and there is a large cast of characters, most of whom get up to antics that we have probably observed or seen depicted. The story elements are much more in evidence, ranging from a self-aware reference to storytelling in the very first line, to the behaviour of stock characters in their various doubts, disappointments, betrayals and indiscretions. Nearly every activity depicted is undesirable in some way but, in aggregate, somehow funny.

This poem is in the mode of Jack Hibberd's successful play, *Dimboola*. Hibberd says that from a writer's perspective the key to its success

lies in understanding the value of conflict in a story. Bringing together the two family tribes for the wedding and reception is the catalyst for their subsequent warring behaviour (Hibberd 2006, pers. comm.). That play's premise is similar to Robert Altman's 1978 film, *A Wedding*, in this respect. The latter involves an extravagant wedding and reception that do not go to plan and it paints a picture of a complex tangle of relationships that threaten to burst the cosy domesticity of outwardly happy families. But these two families definitely don't get on: there is, a pregnancy, drugs, death, a reception without guests, and dark secrets to be overcome. This is also a wedding movie where death casts its shadow (via a car crash). Some of this incident may come from Altman's own experience:

And what about his wedding day? He and his fiancée, LaVonne Elmer, were in a car crash; he was unscathed but she had her jaw mangled so badly it had to be wired up and, during the ceremony, she had to mutter her wedding vows through clenched teeth (Farndall 2002, p. 21).

That the poem turns a bit sugary at the end is deliberate. Such elegiac treatment is typical of the sentimental volta that one might also see in a Hollywood script, where things usually tend to come out right. The poem is doubly resolved. On the one hand, the broadcast story (that is, as contained within the text that is the TV show) ends with the newlyweds driving away, and the credits roll as if representing the people gathered for the reception who will continue to party. On the other hand, the newlyweds retire to their

honeymoon suite and a cosy future. And yet this is a lyric poem, a form of verse that is seldom accorded narrative status. It is a folly then to deny that there is a storytelling mode at work in a poem of this kind, or in the briefer poems that I have discussed earlier in this chapter. The narrative and lyric facets of the poem are productively interwoven rather than competing with each other.

THE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE CYCLE: GAPS, RESISTANCE AND INSIGHTS

This study has connected key parts of my own practice as a poet; creative production and intellectual enquiry. Writing the collection of poems has meant thinking about how that process meshes with the research component of this thesis. For example, producing the poems has raised questions about such things as: shaping the narratorial voice and identity; the degree of explicit narration of story; the variety of topic matter of the individual poems; and how to link that to the overarching wedding theme. It has also required planning the extent of gaps left in the poems, and thus how hard the reader would have to work to infer the larger story. These have been more conscious considerations than they would have been prior to undertaking the thesis.

While what I intended as a writing practice with *The Floating Bride* does not constitute a broader personal manifesto of a poetics (that is something to ponder in more depth at another time), I am intrigued by what

Robert Sheppard says in this regard: ‘Poetics is a paradoxical theory of practice and practice of theory. It asks not just what kind of text is this, but how do I write one like it or, more probably one not like it?’ (Sheppard 2009, p. 4). That last phrase in particular rang a bell, since one of my criteria was to produce in each poem something that I had *not* encountered in my reading of wedding poems by others. Graeme Sullivan, who researches cognitive practice in the arts and is here writing on practice-led research, says that Cezanne sought an original perspective in his work and argued, ‘once understood, conventional practice served best as a basis for what *not* to do’ (Sullivan 2009, p. 41). Though that pertains to a wider area of his artistic practice than my exercise in writing *The Floating Bride*, the principle is the same one of understanding what has gone before in order to pursue the new.

Sheppard discusses how defining a poetics varies considerably between writers, remarking, ‘I was keeping my own poetics discourse alive outside of the academy: in reviews, in my magazine *Pages*, in the editing of an anthology, in the poetry itself and in the simple keeping of a notebook, something that continues’ (Sheppard 2009, p. 5). That is to say, his poetics did not end up in one document as a neat, single, summary statement (though he says he is fond of making lots of statements). Rather, it was spread across a variety of different places, including within his own creative work.

Sheppard’s acknowledgment is directly analogous to recognising the essential interdependence of writing practice and research. In my case, my continuing research helped to refine the kind of writing that I was undertaking, allowing me to better establish what would be needed to create something that fitted my concept of novelty in wedding poems. From the

beginning of this study, I had termed that deviation from others' poems 'writing into the gaps'—well before the other aspects of that term became more apparent. Committing to the discipline of that criterion made the material original and also added to my enjoyment in writing. With rare exception (for instance, the epithalamium, 'Water'), there is something about each poem in *The Floating Bride* that is tied to this particular objective. Be it the voice or nature of the narrating character, the setting, the situation, the indicated outcome, or some other aspect, I wanted to produce something with an element of novelty in each case.

This project turns out to have been about gaps in another way as well. They also emerge as a fundamental part of the readers' contribution through their need to infer the missing parts of stories that are present only in fragment within the poems; that is a gap-filling process. This project has not just dealt with such spaces, but also about resistance, something that had informed my writing for a long time but which became more pronounced during my study. The poem may strike resistance from a reader where the gaps are too large and the reader decides that the degree of difficulty is unwarranted. On the other hand, some resistance is good since it involves the poem not offering up too easy a solution, thus prolonging the profitable journey of discovery that the reader makes. I like what James Longenbach says in this respect:

So while poems cannot help but leave things out, and while the job of interpretation is in some sense to supply what the poem has appeared to omit, we return to poems when they make our job difficult. Poems show us how it feels to like trouble (Longenbach 2004, p. 94).

I now feel more acutely how the creative and research sides of my project have been interwoven. For example, researching narrative techniques and examples of others' wedding poems, and the parallel process of writing my own wedding poems, made me more aware of how I structure my poems and the extent of exposition built into each. The thesis has reinforced my conviction that much learning comes from doing. My research and creative writing are not opposed but operate in a cyclic and reciprocal process that both varies in direction (there can be a series of back and forth effects, one contributing to the other in turn) and intensity; they are symbiotic. Graeme Sullivan says:

...practice-led research that is supported by critical reflection and reflexive action can be seen to invert the research process because it encourages working from the 'unknown to the known' and it is purposeful yet open-ended, clear-sighted yet exploratory. Practice-led research makes good use of this creative and critical process and may provide novel perspectives in reviewing existing knowledge structures...the imaginative outcomes generated consequently serve as a means to critique existing knowledge (Sullivan 2009, p. 49).

Sometimes my writing or research headed off in a new direction that was tangential to my original purpose, though it always looped back to the first concern, raising the questions: what is my practice as a writer, and what are the implications of this research for my practice? Poet and academic Paul

Magee refers to this kind of divergence in his recent survey of contemporary Australian poets, some of whom found difficulty conceiving how some acts might *not* be research if they eventually became connected with their writing (Magee 2009, Online). It does not seem strange to me that the different areas of thought should have such interplay; the relationship between research and practice is not a one-way street. A blend of research, theory and practice can operate in complex and virtually simultaneous relationships. Sullivan says ‘Practice-led researchers...move eclectically across boundaries in their imaginative and intellectual pursuits’ (Sullivan 2009, p. 49), and that ‘the artist intuitively adopts the dual roles of the researcher and the researched, and the process changes both perspectives because creative and critical enquiry is a reflexive process’ (Sullivan 2009, p. 51). Similarly, writer and teacher Cindy Nichols says:

When I’m thinking about writing, when I’m writing about writing, when I’m WRITING: I feel the need to hold multiple approaches and discourses lyric and Language, Formalist and Culturalist, constructed and lived, theoretical and scholarly and aesthetic in mind all at once (Nichols 2008, p 85)

There is no reason that our mind’s normal habit of skittering and sometimes lingering around a variety of different areas of thought should somehow stop when we are involved in creative writing. As Nichols points out above, there is every reason to suppose the opposite, that writing is dependent on such interweaving, such exploration. Kathleen Vaughan, in

outlining how she approached a research project, makes a similar comment: ‘I see the role of art as research and research as art *less* as creating new knowledge and *more* as calling forth, pulling together and arranging the multiplicities of knowledges imbedded within’ (p. 170). To isolate writing from research would be to deprive the writer of the very fuel needed to imagine, to create, and to reflect.

Together, these writer-researchers highlight the possibility and practicality of moving between process and goal orientations. Hazel Smith and Roger Dean note that: ‘While the process-driven approach obviously lends itself to emergence, in fact at any moment an emergent idea may lead the way to more goal-oriented research’ (2009, p. 23). Flicking between writing/practice and exploration/gathering is fundamental to creative production. Interestingly, Smith and Dean also speak about the artistic process in a way that parallels how reading a lyric poem links to the reader’s own past experience and enculturation:

...although we might be tempted to think of these [creative process] choices as individually motivated, they are made in response to broader social and artistic forces. So the selection process is more cultural than biological and analogous to the activity of memes – ideas, theories and artefacts which evolve through mutation... (Smith & Dean 2009, p. 22)

I am aware that there is some debate over whether artistic practice itself is a reasonable or even viable basis for research. For example, Camilla Nelson has recently rejected Paul Dawson’s argument (Dawson 2006 & 2008,

Online) that pedagogy is the better basis for research in creative writing than is praxis. She says:

...the goal of the academic writer should not be to amass 'literary authority' as Dawson (2006: 28) argues. Rather, the goal should be to enquire in a writerly kind of way into the processes of writing and reading, production and reception (Nelson 2008, Online).

It need not be a matter of mutual exclusivity, however practice is a legitimate site of research and the practitioner is ideally situated to explicate ideas of creativity that contribute to an understanding of artistic production. The benchmark statement of the National Association of Writers in Education in the UK (NAWE) describes the nature and scope of research in creative writing, giving special prominence to 'imaginative simulation of experience', drawing on 'tacit knowledge of human experience', and 'tapping internal emotional, intellectual or psychological energy' (NAWE 2008, p. 12):

Creative Writing research is an investigative and exploratory process. Of the various approaches adopted, some may be called 'situated' or action research; some reflexive; some responsive; some may result from an engagement with 'poetics'; some may adapt or adopt the investigative procedures of other disciplines, where useful (NAWE 2008, p. 12).

This quite an open description. While it is clear that practice-led research is not the only way to contribute to a body of knowledge, the argument about primacy of either practice or research only seems to muddy the water. That kind of contest is not directly related to my purpose in this thesis but it does highlight the potential for practice and research at least to complement each other.

The poems in *The Floating Bride* are illustrations of narrative at work in the lyric. Their production and my research both involve filling in gaps in knowledge and ideas, and understanding more about narrative in lyric poetry necessarily feeds back into the act of creating it. That interplay is not always systematic; there were periods of dedicated research work such as reading, noting, analysing, evaluating (and drafting comments on the readings to see what I thought), but these were interspersed with periods of my own creative writing. The latter sometimes occurred at planned opportunities and with particular goals in mind, but inevitably became acts of the moment, in which intuition and ingrained habits playing their role. Nonetheless, they were also an inevitable result of cumulative research, even without following a recipe for the individual poem at each instant. As well as being a literary work, then, *The Floating Bride* is inevitably also a locus of discourse about its purpose, its production, its achievements, and more. I cannot think of it as simply a collection of poems; there is always a merging with the associated research, and with the creative process itself as that implicated ideas of narrative function.

SUMMARY

A poem is the cultural product of a writing process that enables its ‘best’ meaning to be gleaned when it is decoded by a mind similarly well acquainted with that culture—its literary heritage, and its linguistic devices and signing systems. A logical choice for a topic to capitalise on this is a popular cultural practice for which there is widespread knowledge, such as a wedding. The use of such references more precisely directs the reader to a particular set of common associations, whether the poet intends a straightforward depiction, irony, or something more ambiguous. Anchoring the text by referring to well-known objects and events, even relatively domestic ones, permits greater concision that is especially valuable in lyric poetry. The best known of them give the written work greater durability and transportability. Reader familiarity allows the poet to reduce exposition and also allows a deal of play, such as using a deliberately discontinuous narrative flow.

In writing the poems here I have consciously embraced a range of forms and styles, and varying degrees of prominence were given to the wedding. I also made choices about length, producing poems that ranged from six lines to several pages: all of them fit the contemporary notion of lyric poetry and all of them show a narrative function. This focus on length is consistent with the interest in how brief poems, in particular, operate since the presence of a narrative function in them would be less expected than in a longer form. The poems in *The Floating Bride* represent a varied outlook on the way that wedding stories are told, prizing lyric poetry’s heightened

language and brief moments. They cover a wide range of techniques and perspectives, and narrative intensities, but they share dependence on the reader to place the poem's concerns in the larger arc of known wedding stories and, critically, in the world of human experience.

A fundamental driver in writing my own poems was to create some point of difference to the wedding poems I encountered in my research. In one poem this might manifest as a central character or a situation unlike those in the poems by others. In another poem it would be a theme or perspective not found in my reading. Elsewhere, I explored the sound quality of words, options in natural versus contrived /artistic speech in narrating voices, and different levels of narrative conspicuity (obscure or clear causality; fragmented or full story detail, etc.). This meant that the poems were sometimes straightforward and at others more demanding and open to interpretation. As Longenbach says:

If all things were alike, if meanings were always perspicuous, then poetry's endlessly variable negotiation of story and song would be superfluous. If all things were different, if a story could never be told, then the allure of sound would be lost. There would be no meeting place, no place of resistance. Error would be uninteresting rather than provocative (2004, p. 48).

And so, *The Floating Bride*, too could include the strange and unexpected, inviting reader curiosity and input as I brought together facets of the research I had undertaken with the production of new poetry. The

interplay of writing and research was a key element in producing a better understanding of how narrative works in the lyric poem.

The collection makes an original contribution, standing as a creative product in its own right. It draws consciously on a particular narrative template, the wedding story, while working within a lyric mode that prizes brevity, musicality and subjective utterance. In doing so, it meshes with research into the narrative and lyric modes, and contests the common belief that the narrative and lyric are antagonistic characteristics.

CHAPTER 5:
CONCLUSION

the pleasure of language is never completely divorced from story

Lorna Crozier 2003, p. 69

INTRODUCTION

Dramatic verse had been preferred over the lyric, treating the latter as of an inferior, even non-poetic status until about the early twentieth century. That relegation was generally on the basis that the lyric lacks a desirable narrative function. Yet the lyric has emerged as the dominant to the extent that it is equated with almost all contemporary poetry. Why has this rise not triggered greater debate about the importance of narrative in poetry? Why has it not prompted reconsideration of how we define both the lyric and the narrative poem? Despite this, critical discussion of the nature of the lyric largely ignores narrative, with continuing resort to comparatively black and white ideas of what characterises both.

The debate over what constitutes the lyric is not settled and appears unlikely to be. In considering the likely criteria that might be employed, Virginia Jackson speaks of ‘the messiness that I would like to attach to what are often purified terms’ (2005, p. 235). This ‘messiness’, which she seems to welcome, characterises lyric as a category-busting form of writing that shrugs off defining criteria otherwise requiring a near perfect fit; criteria that would narrow what it means to write in a lyric mode and get to the *true* idea of the lyric. The lyric *is* messy; it does resist classification. That is the beauty of it. And yet, we cannot resist trying to dissect it.

The question of a narrative function in the lyric is important for what it indicates about our engagement with contemporary poetry, and in the absence of such debate, a number of questions remain unanswered. If the lyric is non-

narrative, does the trend toward it signal that narrative is now less important in poetry? Or, does narrative persist in the lyric anyway, though unacknowledged? We have not fully understood the nature of the lyric and how readers engage with it. The continuing lack of agreement on how to define both lyric poetry and narrative at best obscures this issue, and at worst is wrong, for it denies the lyric poem a claim to exhibit a narrative function. That refusal overlooks a critical aspect of reading all poetry, the reader's urge to construct story as a normal extension of a fundamental use of language to build sense patterns.

Cognitive theorist Richard van Oort says that even prelingual animals tend to project an event sequence when faced with certain basic data: 'We duck when we see someone aim to throw an object at us, because we interpret the raised arm as an index of the entire sequence of throwing. But so does a monkey or a bird or a dog' (van Oort 2001, Online). In other words, the perceiving intellect infers connection between one event and a known sequence; there is a story template, something with a degree of predictability. At the other, highly linguistic extreme, acts of associative cognition operate at the symbolic level, where the connection is within a virtual system. A word (which is something not spatially or temporally connected with its referent) can reliably suggest the *idea* of something that is not actually even knowable in the real world, such as unicorns (van Oort 2001, Online). This cognitive spectrum leaves a lot of room for a poet to directly or indirectly prompt a reader to think of a particular story template by the judicious use of indexing terms. In this way, the word 'proposal' might evoke the idea of courtship and wedding, since there is a propensity for the reader to locate it in a recognised

system.

Theorist Piero Scaruffi says that memory is the critical element, providing the basis for a method of organising both experience and knowledge into concepts: ‘There is a fundamental unity of cognition, organized around the ability to categorize, to create concepts out of experience’ (Scaruffi 2001, Online). And the various categories are connected to each other: ‘It is hard to think of something without thinking also of something else. It is hard to focus on a concept and not think of related concepts’ (Scaruffi 2001, Online). The word ‘groom’ may refer to someone who attends on nobility, or on horses, but without a specific contextual link to either of these it is likely that a reader will also (or instead) think of a newly married man, and then also a wedding ceremony.

Keith Harrison neatly summarises the advantages of memory and recall processes for coping with life, indirectly indicating the value of relying on these when creating a text. We understand how the cognitive process vitally underpins the writing and reading of poetry:

If cognitive research suggests that memory often stores knowledge as scripts, then much of human understanding can be described as “a process by which people match what they see and hear to pre-stored groupings of actions that they have already experienced” (Schank and Abelson quoted in Herman 1048). This kind of matching would reduce, or maybe even avoid, the imaginative demands (and duration) inherent in repeatedly engaging the complexity of the world through fresh perceptions and new inferences. Having learned hundreds or thousands

of these scripts, each with its own Aristotelian beginning, middle, and end, and ordered by chronology and causation, humans possess a narrative representation of many aspects of their cultural world, so that, in effect, future experiences have already been largely anticipated and sorted out by past ones that the brain has stored as stereotypical process analyses involving consecutive steps leading from an expected beginning to a preconceived end. Literary narratives require familiarity with many of these scripts as part of an understanding of what is happening in a novel, and scripts perhaps act as the prototypes for such story-telling (Harrison 2003, Online).

Thus cognitive theory tells us that if a lyric poem references a wedding motif of some kind, a reader will readily identify the larger narrative to which it belongs. That potential is a powerful one, and a reason why the lyric exhibits a narrative function despite its brevity and relatively fragmented recounting of events.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NARRATIVE

If basic units of meaning operate to produce a sense of narrative structure when encountered in conversation or on the page of a short story, then logically they will do the same when framed in a lyric poem. If we accept that their function is independent of such issues of location, as we must, how

important is narrative to the process of the lyric poem? It is vital on two counts:

- it is intrinsically linked to the poet's craft, and
- it is a rudiment of the reader's interpretative actions, integrating the poem with her own schema.

Narrative function allows greater economy in the poem. It gives the poet more latitude for concision and subtlety since there is not the need to spell out so much detail of characterisation and plot. Poets reliably exploit references from a common stock of culturally understood events that are also emotionally substantial and, thus, suited to creating the suspense which deferral of decision-making offers in storytelling.

THE ROLE OF THE READER

Contemporary poets benefit from the work of others at the turn of the twentieth century whose poetry began to demand greater reader involvement in the text: 'since the 1950s poets feel they have achieved the goal of radically re-educating the audience. It is with much less sense of struggle that poets today ask the reader to participate in creating the poem' (Block 1978, p. 165). With such reader engagement seemingly commonplace and with the dominance of the lyric mode in poetry, we should expect narrative techniques

of brevity and omission to be used in contemporary lyric poetry, including the judicious use of well-known cultural motifs such as weddings.

If the true value of a poem lay only in its clarity, the best of them would read like instruction manuals. They would be unambiguous, direct and plain, incapable of more than a single, 'correct' interpretation, and altogether efficient, if unimaginative, vehicles for transmitting information. They would anticipate and answer every relevant and significant question that might otherwise arise: a bare account of how to assemble a set of bookshelves would be the pinnacle of the art. A traditional haiku could not compare despite its outward simplicity and its economic structure since there is something elusive in its statement about how things are—something unsaid, something left to be guessed at—and that would be a sign of its failure.

On the other hand, as Laurence Sterne, author of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, says:

No author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself (Sterne 1967, p. 127).

Thus, no poem can or should say everything; no poem should exhaust the possible. Kevin Brophy remarks about the fragments of information in poems that they:

...are like parts of maps across which our gaze can move, making decisions about a possible journey at each crossroad...The fragment always suggest there is more that might have been said. It declares the impossibility of saying everything (Brophy 2003, p. 91).

We expect something else from poetry and a large part of it is to leave room for our own discovery, and the prospect of epiphany, otherwise the poem is merely a catalogue. Establishing the narrative context is a reward of that reading process and, accordingly, lyric poems do not need to be densely detailed in that respect. As Hühn says:

Narrative sequences in poetry frequently lack explicit circumstantial explanations and connections which are conventionally required in novels and short stories...they can also easily dispense with making explicit, and motivating, the transition between two points in time. (2004, pp. 152-153)

In practice, lyric poetry offers the reader a journey of discovery instead. It may sometimes be the brief, meditative utterance of a state of mind with which the lyric is historically associated but it can also offer readers a narrative path, one that combines the satisfactions that normally arise in storytelling through combining significance (something that matters) with uncertainty (a lack of predictable outcomes).

Contemplating list-like words that Emily Dickinson inscribed on the back of a chocolate wrapper, Virginia Jackson decides that they are

‘inscrutable, since everything that would explain them is missing. What is missing is in turn what lyricizes the notion of the unread lines’ (2005, p.240). Bringing the fragments of such a message into close inspection is part of the natural tendency of trying to make meaning, anchored in relation to the world as the reader knows it. The seemingly difficult text is read as a code that can be unravelled if only the reader can find a match in his or her experience, in an actual or fictional life that they know. What is deliberately missing from the lyric poem is what the reader attempts to provide, and that pairing is exactly what brings a text to life.

ANALYSING THE LYRIC POEM

The poetic focus for my discussion of narrative in the lyric is the contemporary wedding poem, which demonstrates strong links to the wedding narrative that has endured for thousands of years; the sequence of courtship (a quest), ritualised bonding (the wedding ceremony), and in some cases its immediate aftermath (the reception and honeymoon). Consistent with that is the longstanding form of story that involves motivating a key character to overcome a lack or a disturbance, such as being excited to defeat an intrusive competitor or to rescue a kidnapped damsel. To maintain reader interest, storytelling employs a number of techniques (such as withheld information, conflict, uncertainty, suspense, duplicity, decision points, and setbacks) on its path to a triumphant celebration that is often a wedding. That archetypal structure is apparent in narratives worldwide.

Several hundred contemporary wedding poems were surveyed in the course of this study in order to gauge the ways in which wedding references are used in lyric poetry. A prominent feature of reading them is to discover how the reader is forced to conjecture, in the manner suggested by Roland Barthes' hermeneutic code (1971, p. 17). When a poem locates characters and events in the context of a wedding story, it reduces the extent of readers' guesswork that would otherwise be needed and provides a template to help them fill in details that may not be explicit in the poem. On the other hand, a small deferral of information is often intentional, aimed at pulling the reader into deeper engagement with the poem from the start by offering a small mystery, as also happens with narrative in other genres. It shows how the temporal aspect of a poem can be profitably exploited, in the very first steps involved with creating reader desire to construct a narrative. Collectively, the analysed poems show that the standard features of narrative structure and suspense can be used fruitfully in lyric poetry despite its brevity, and in many ways.

Poems that I wrote for this thesis deliberately present wedding references in a variety of unusual ways rather than following a simple template of celebration. They cover a wide range of interests that also reflect the kind of dynamic elements of a narrative to be found in many stories, whether in verse, in prose, or on the screen. The details in some are consistent with linear narrative; in 'Eloping', two characters keen to wed suffer a bureaucratic delay before that obstacle is overcome in a comic manner. Their situation and the events that follow are conventionally portrayed in chronological sequence, whereas, at other times, the poems play with the idea

of the ambiguous and mysterious, as is evident in ‘The Bride We Pass’ discussed earlier. There is theoretically a hidden story in this poem; a single ‘true’ narrative that might be guessed at, but which ultimately remains a secret. And since death and other threats to the wedding are notable in the surveyed poems, some of my original pieces also deal with more sinister aspects of events and characters. In ‘Paper Doll’, the bride is an unreal and menacing character, and a gun haunts a bride in ‘Wedding Present’. The darkest poems are those that directly deal with death; ‘Angel’ and ‘Death Goes Wooing’ present death as a suitor, for example.

I have had to think through what constitutes the lyric poem, and the complexity of arguments about its defining criteria. Virginia Jackson’s comments about the ascendancy of the lyric and the consequent difficulty of *not* reading texts as lyric come to mind. She says, about the closing passage of an Emily Dickinson letter: ‘Can a text not intended to be read as a lyric become one? Can a text once read as a lyric be unread? If so, then what is—or was—a lyric?’ (2005, p. 6). I decided that it would be unproductive trying to write a poem that aims to match every criteria on the various lists of what characterises a lyric. Following Wolf’s list alone would mean contending with nine different attributes (Wolf, 2005, pp. 24-31), which he acknowledges may not all be prominent in a single poem that is clearly regarded as a lyric, anyway—and that is before adding the other variations that numerous people have listed. Nor would it be profitable to take poems by others and subject them to such fine-toothed screening; other theorists have tried before with relatively unfruitful results. I have already established the extent of disagreement about these attributes, including the problems of characteristics

being shared with other genres and the difficulty of measuring them. As a poet, I have been attuned to the many faces of the lyric that vary according to the faith of the reader, and recognise that it cannot own or display all of them in every instance, and also that a more basic view of the poem relates to its musicality and intimacy. In all cases, however, the language of the poem offers at least the bones of story, and I see myself as a storyteller in even the slimmest poems. With that in mind, brevity is perhaps the most important attribute in this study because it is in the smallest poems that the narrative presence is most tested.

SUMMARY

The lyric poem is not merely the commonly claimed field for expression of an emotional state. Reader response theory, supported by elements of structuralism, highlights that the lyric poem is intimately attached to the way in which readers seek to make meaning by constructing story. As also shown by the poems analysed in this study (both my own and those written by others), lyric poems demonstrate a narrative function. They tend to use it in subtle ways, relying on links to the reader's world and on the reader's co-operative interpretation.

The lyric is dominant. Its broad set of defining characteristics means that little poetry can escape the label. The argument that a narrative function lies in the lyric inevitably then becomes one that it applies to some degree in all contemporary poetry. As I have shown, the narrative gaps in lyric poetry are where the reader works to fill in story detail; this function must be no less

relevant to other verse. That tendency is even more pronounced when the poems are very short and fragmented, since the information withheld from the reader forces them to flesh out the story more. The reader may also imagine the kind of narrative arc that precedes and follows the given text when they guess at motivation for character action inside the text or what may ensue beyond it.

It may seem banal to reduce this complex issue to a simple statement that lyric poems employ narrative because it is universal and, thus, that they tell stories—despite Roland Barthes’ claim that narrative is ‘simply there, like life itself’ (Barthes 1977, p. 79). However, it is true, that they do just that, whether by design or default. The poems may be stories in a fragmented, discontinuous form. They may be cryptic; distillations of fuller and more detailed accounts of events. Regardless of the method, they exploit the reader’s basic expectation of narrative and a tendency to fill in gaps in order to create causal sequences.

As a writer, I have found this illuminating. An important result has been that I treat the elements of a poem in progress with greater awareness about the potential of language to amplify and resonate, and especially with attention to how it might be pared back to its most effective parts when such editing is required. That means more than making a dehydrated poem—or a Zipped file, to use a contemporary computer reference. The poem is never merely a miniature or condensed version of a larger one but the catalyst for the reader’s creation of a personal text based on their own knowledge. Judging the right references to employ is still an art, but it is valuable knowing that a

brief lyrical poem can open out into a large and intricate work that transcends its more obvious signs.

I think about the notions of wonder and spaces that came to inform my investigation into the way narrative works in the lyric poem. In that respect, I also contemplate what James Longenbach says about the gaps in which the reader must work, the way that poetry must resist divulging all, and how textual resistance serves us as readers:

The very things that resist wonder must also be the things on which wonder depends, or else we could never feel it. Wonder contingent on inexperience and firstness can be easy to feel, and the challenge is to be wounded by “composed wonder”—wonder produced by poetry’s mechanisms of self-resistance: syntax, line, figurative language, disjunction, spokenness. Without these mechanisms, poems would be vehicles for knowledge, explanations of experience that would threaten to dispel its wonder. They would be useful, then disposable (2004, p. 97).

Is my poetry better for having thought about the nature of the lyric and the narrative function underlying it? Am I more capable as a poet through being better informed in this regard? One might as well ask whether there is a better form of prayer to be found, something that we can say empirically has a greater chance of being heard by God. No one knows or will ever be able to tell, but in the case of the poetry I can say that writing is still a holy place for me, even as I ponder the technical aspects of story that live within it. Such

reflection on the practice of writing does not intrude on my creative work;
rather, it is an intrinsic part of it.

CHAPTER 6:
CREATIVE COMPONENT
THE FLOATING BRIDE

THE FLOATING BRIDE



Rosemary Laing 'Flight Research'

**Poems by
Steve Evans**

LIST OF POEMS

CROW ON THE CROSS	206
CROW ON THE CROSS	207
BRIDAL WALTZ	209
AND YES	211
WHITE (1).....	213
DEATH GOES WOOING	215
WATER	216
POSTMODERN	217
WHITE (2).....	219
AN AUDIENCE WITH JULIE.....	221
ALWAYS	223
CLOWNS IN LOVE	225
HAUTE COUTURE	227
MIXED MARRIAGE	229
WEDDING PRESENT	231
THE ROSE GARDEN	236
REALITY TV	238
GATHERING UP.....	240
THE BURNING RIVER.....	242
MAKESHIFT	243
A MODERN VOW	245
SOCIETY WEDDINGS	247
HACK.....	249
SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW: A MASS WEDDING.....	250
ON SECOND THOUGHT	252
EATING THE GROOM.....	253
IMMACULATE RECEPTION	255
DRESS SENSE.....	257
DACHAU	259
THE BURNING RIVER.....	261
FAQ	266
THE LOVE SONGS OF LAWYERS	267
MY LANGUAGE	269
GET ME TO THE CHURCH ON TIME	271
ELOPING IN CANADA	273
NEWLYWEDS	275
IN THE ALBUM.....	277
TV WEDDINGS	279
LITTLE MURDERS	285
VOWS	286
THE RELUCTANT BRIDE	288
ANGEL	291
THE GROOM	293
BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN.....	294
THE BRIDE WE PASS	295
UNPRETTY	296
THE WARRIOR BRIDE.....	298
THE JESSIE DAYS.....	300
LITTLE MURDERS	303
COMA	305
PAPER DOLL	306

MRS. DEATH.....	307
A WEDDING STORY.....	309
THE HAPPY COUPLE.....	311

CROW ON THE CROSS

Crow on the Cross

from the steeple cross

I see the glossed white tin

of your bridal car approaching—

I adjust tail feathers the lustre of coal

a porcelain sheen turns on my wings

deep as black water

I alight from the spire in a lazy arc

step into church with my coat ablaze—

was there ever as sleek a groom?

was there ever a sharper foil for a bride

than this lit darkness

this brilliance I am?

my beak is full of spells

a gush of wedding song

I will sing the fractured axis

I will sing the ghost of longing

I will sing the wild tilt of unearthed things

and pour us back into the sky—

we will fly
bird and bride
and all the angled winds
a riff on the bible of flight

see
your plumage already begins to grow
come with me
leave your long white car
leave your grieving family—
the mouth of death won't have us yet
let them look for us in skies and trees
we will look back from the little cross
we will peer through the stained glass
and sing our inelegant songs
the hymns to loss and faith
the long wet light of winter on us

Bridal Waltz

for Kate

I am up late

marking students' papers

when you enter the room

in your wedding gown

it is beautiful on you still

a bit snug now

but you are under sail

all grace and cleavage

maybe enchanted

or maybe under the

humour of its elegant

and regal presence

you decide to wear it

all the next day—

on the train to work

and interviewing clients

on your lunch-time walk

and shopping for lunch

you carve a path of calm

in the frenzy of the city

by the time you get home

I am feeling foolish

in my suit and flowers

waiting on bended knee

the choir of neighbourhood kids

seems a bit redundant

and my little speech silly

especially when you say

you've received three

proposals that day

finally in the house alone

we hang up the suit and gown

like ghostly chaperones

and begin the dance

of the newlyweds

naked, blessed

And Yes

for Sue and Rob

What can one say to newlyweds
that doesn't involve a sweet retreat
to ancient pleasures?

Here are the inevitable lines
alluding to the beauty of a sky
that brims with nothing but blue,
or a river of stars.

There is the conjured gaze of love,
a painted portrait of the serene couple.

Always this temptation to resort to poor replicas.

We could wheel out the box of familiar parts,
reaching into drawers named Trust and Devotion
but they are always empty.

That work's an illusion.

No-one has seen such insubstantial objects.

They do not live in boxes.

What can one say?

Let's not wave old flags

but share the joy of the inexpressible,

and think of these two

standing in a space beyond words

where they have joined hands,

together at the crossing point.

What can one ever say to newlyweds

after this

but Yes

and Yes?

White (1)

in the National Gallery of Victoria

that itch of white
starts at me when I first walk in
a tablecloth in McCubbin's 'Sketch for After Breakfast'
then dirty washing over there
its afternoon glare
and a cloud blowing overhead
is blown twice
once in the sky
its twin on the water is sunlit too
bright as sand arcing at the edge
of the next picture's lake
a saucer's rim
where bleached shells tipped onto the beach
are broken china
ground into flakes of meringue
stark as a wedding dress
a starched apron hung on the line
beneath a white moon in a white sky—
the tablecloth gave it to the clouds

that flung it back

the lake washed it clean and threw its milky

light into buckling shifts of sky

I'm pulled from frame to frame by all these

snatches of white until I have to

shade my eyes and duck my head—

everything one

and blinding

Death Goes Wooing

I slick back an unruly lock of hair,
scuff my shoes on the trouser cuff
of my borrowed suit,
and enter the room smiling.
That first look is still a thrill.

Sometimes I'm rushed by circumstance
but I prefer a leisured approach,
wooing by degrees,
persuading with persistence
and natural charm.

My devotion is legendary.
I've lost count of my loves,
but it was never about numbers.
No, it's always been the chase,
despite the fact that
they all say yes in the end.

Water

an epithalamium

Even dry, a creek bed knows
the fluid heart beneath all things;
the constant river underground.

The world is an endless pour
between this place and that.

Love, like water, can't be held.
It is the vapour we breathe,
our food and drink;
and patient love's a welcome rain,
our souls' replenishment.

They say we're nine-tenths water,
so place your hand in mine
and we'll be that constant river,
changing and the same.

We will flow together,
two streams joined as one.

Postmodern

the bride wanted horses and coach
but inside the church
already an uproar of pipe-organ
and Uncle Henry tweaking the bridesmaids
vows made never to resort
to innuendo and smutty
jokes in drunken speeches
before confetti flickers on the aisle
with Dad's relief that finally
the gowned one has arrived
he's sent out to get the groom
whose crooked tie from the slap he copped
when one last feel tickled no fancy
and you a nearly married man
have you no shame
now get in there and do the
right thing before someone discovers
an alcoholic accordion and
club-footed piano cranking out
the waltz to announce

a honeymoon suitcase parked
by the door of the graffiti'd car
that's already gone—
we won't be trying this again soon

White (2)

the cool surface of scalded cream

left under lace

on the verandah

the curtain dazzling

as daylight's slow tide

fills the room

the stilled wheels of dinner plates

a row of white port holes

standing on the shelf

finding you in the hallway

wearing your wedding dress

and a fold of afternoon sun

the ivory of wax

in the hive

long before the wick is lit

the candle stuttering in our room

trying over and over

to describe you

An Audience with Julie

he took a day off driving trucks came down to where she worked
having borrowed his best friend's bike and his older brother's suit
wedged a posy against the bars that arrived almost intact and he
had to tell the gateman or they wouldn't let him in to Preston's
clothing factory even with his flowers and suit

his heart was light with joy and fear too nervous for rehearsals
he'd have to wait to hear them said the words that he would offer
when he found her there and as he passed the rows of girls all their
machines fell silent a wash of murmurs pushed him on

he saw someone had just told her from the way she turned her
head as chafe-necked and suit-awkward he approached her sewing
team who looked at her not him as he said his weeks were sixty
hours with the overtime and all and next year he'd make foreman
if one more shift came on and they'd rent a flat the first year while
they saved for their own place

and could she, that is, if he, maybe, would she, anyway...? and the
knock-off whistle screamed so when her hands went to her face he
couldn't hear her say a thing and in the quiet that came next a

hundred women watched her and Julie did not speak though all
Preston's held its breath

he left the flowers on the roadside hung his brother's suit to air
drove the trucks and slept between shifts as if he didn't care
though he'd turn that puzzle over in his mind for years and years
the terrible beauty of a late afternoon in the western suburbs his
bicycle clips still shining and a hundred lookers-on and how a red-
haired girl who loved him could say no without a sound

Always

a woman in a wedding dress
takes tickets on the tram
her hem is scuffed and dirty
mouth fixed as a post-box slot—
another one cutting ham
in the corner shop
throws back her fly-wire veil
—next order please!

others scrunched in car seats
sitting at red lights
bustle in a mass of tulle
tap unringed fingers on their wheels
the mechanics and plumbers
the clerks and sales assistants
in a froth of silk
the dentists and cleaners
in hand-stitched satin trains—
the army of them waiting
in their vast white uniforms

ready at a moment's notice

but always the bridesmaid

never the bride

Clowns in Love

Behind the pratfalls and the bright red nose,
you'd like to think, there is someone like us
when they're off duty,
as ordinary as an executioner eating dinner,
but the truth is that
even in bed there's still that lunatic smile,
the slapstick and tears
where the make-up smears
and the body's awkward language of sex
flicks between pictures of cartoon excess.

They prank to hide grief;
Romeo with rubber knife and a fizzing mug,
Othello with outsize hankie
playing tragedy for laughs,
and no passion is too big for mime.
Even if their big feet get in the way,
their fat hearts still beat on their sleeves.

It's a courtship with animal balloons
and a rain of glitter.
with flapping arms and Look out behind you!
until she says Yes.
Then nothing is done by halves—
the wedding ring's really a water pistol,
the bouquet explodes into scarves,
the in-laws are drowned in confetti
as the couple departs in a pedal car,
throwing custard pies at each other.
Ah, true love they know is no joke.

Haute Couture

the salesman's scowl says it all—
billowing falls of creamy silk are nothing now
they're so last season, pure pastiche—
instead he opens a display book where
a scarecrow in a man's waistcoat stares back
her thin arm propped at the hip
above a long skirt of torn paper strips—
the new theme is The Bible, he says, Old Testament
hand-printed, hand-shredded, only the best

for just a few thousand more, ten or so
he'll knock you up a ripper—
no one forgets a wedding when
the bride's gown is made of fish
their long bodies slung like blades around her waist
or if the dress is a shimmer of condom packets
that rustles like cellophane—
their edible contents saved for dessert
(surprise your guests)

you're thinking it would be cheaper
and more stylish
to cover yourself in masses of glue
and roll in the money you've scrimped
but then he shows you the next picture
and you see that's already been done too

now what's this at the back—
simple, sheer, and utterly you?
how much?

he frowns
fifty dollars, Madam
it's a dry-cleaning bag

Mixed Marriage

her parents did not approve
mine made their point by moving to France—
these were minor problems
one of us had too few tentacles
one of us breathed too much oxygen
but we worked our way through that

I wore my best outfit
she polished her antennae
and swung her hips in four dimensions
I struggled with English syntax
she spoke twelve languages
simultaneously

the priest was reluctant
it was a mixed faith wedding
the reception was held in Dimboola
we honeymooned on the moon
while I held my breath
after all, love is about compromise

we're hopeful for the future
there's more tolerance these days
our kids will be multi-skilled
bi-pedal, blue and many-gilled
but if the neighbours are cruel
I know we'll survive because
she'll eat them alive

Wedding Present

it lies at the back of a drawer
the third drawer of the chest
of drawers in the corner of the room
that catches the late afternoon light
in a soft diagonal of ivory
from the high window

in there
in the third drawer
behind the silk camisole
and the lace edge of some underwear
she's worn just twice
it lies cool and matter of fact

when her Uncle Guy was seventeen
he bought it from a pawnbroker
nudged the shop door and its small bell aside
to claim the shining form
that had winked at him from the window
that had called him from across the street

to pull every coin and note he had
from his pockets

perhaps he fancied himself
a river-boat gambler
holding it snug in his palm
the small but powerful part
of an equation he waited to see
spelt out before him
somewhere in the future
real or imagined
either way possible

her father hated it
said that it went to his head
Uncle Guy's head
though his main complaint was
that it went to *his* head
her father's
because of Uncle Guy's habit
when drunk
of waking her father
while holding the gun

to the curve of bone behind his ear
and talking about death
for an hour or three
about its pleasure and its inevitability
her father knew the circle of its barrel
firmly
intimately
against his skin
and the drunken whirl of logic that kept it there

now in the back of the drawer
a small nickel plated revolver
nestles against her underwear
a gun neat as a baby's fist
shiny as a champagne flute
its handle intricately carved from
mother of pearl
shows Lazarus rising

her father stole it from her uncle
when he was out drinking
and kept it in a sack in the garden shed
wrapped in hessian and laid next

to the new season's iris bulbs
until Uncle Guy began to forget
and her father began to grow as strange
as Uncle Guy had ever been
and one day
her wedding day
he presented it to her
as if a bunch of flowers
smiling

on its handle the figure is still looming
in subtle rainbow tints from its grave
the gun is waiting
cold and metallic
and its purpose
instilled in those long nights
at her father's ear
is not forgotten

in three weeks
she will pull out the drawer and
reach in there blind
her hand swimming around for a bra

will connect for long enough
and the gun will finally fire
through the left cup of the bra
through the back of the chest of drawers
through the wall of the bedroom
and through the picture of her late father
and her late uncle
hanging in the next room

one of them will suffer a flesh wound
at last

The Rose Garden

after the Spring rain
flamenco ruffles blossom on their racks
the arbour erupts into soft chandeliers
and the rose garden's simply haute couture—
all the blooms toss up their skirts
in Folies Bergère
their tousled heads a mad coiffure
of devil may care
such flim and flam
such flounce and show
such glam and sheer excess
their blowsy curves and pointed buds
stir the scented air

except in the corner of the yard
where the mother of the bride
is too uptight to stir
in her awful petalled hat
disapproving perhaps
or simply lonely by herself—

while the rest shower pathways
with coloured scraps
slippery as painted lips
she's prim and proper
as reserved as the Queen of Sleep

the others laze in afternoon's watery light
when we snip and clip
bringing them in to vases and bowls
placed by drowsing windows—
such opulence spoils us
their satin turbans shine like potentates'
sumptuous satraps from eastern realms
royalty who visit in our own home
where we're unsure of protocol—
should we curtsy or bow
or dance for pleasure
for the sheer hell of it?

Reality TV

a film of a log-fire crackles on the other set
to warm a winter's night
while the celebrity chef drizzles melted chocolate
into her wide open mouth
the perfect show for food voyeurs
who can't even boil water—
at eight o'clock it's the wedding channel
a clatter of churches and confetti
limousines and drunken receptions
kisses and brawls
that aren't ours, thank God—
and logically next
the 24 hour showing of public executions
the hapless figures shuffling down
long corridors in prison grey
or still in street clothes
lined up on Chinese sports fields with heads bowed
for half-time display and dispatch

but his master stroke was the premium channel
a non-stop random assortment of the lot

monsters of our own curiosity

he knew we would always want
the whole comedy of sex, food, hope, death—
we rushed to subscribe
to the reality of ourselves
watching ourselves watching
the rows of brides on death row
cooking as if their lives depended on it

Gathering Up

dipping his fingers into her skull

he ripples the water

finds a spoonful of honey

a bundle of sticks

grated lemon peel

a pinch of dirt

a splinter in her finger

a stalk of lavender

a ball of string—

here are the unread letters

and the wedding ring she lays

on her bedside table every night

a tin-cup and whistle

the puzzle, the bits—

the world unravelling

in a jitterbug

St. Elmo's Fire

but the angel at

the foot of her bed

is bored now—
watching the clock
scratching his head
under a reggae hat
he stubs out his butt
and clicking his fingers
gathers her up

THE BURNING RIVER

Makeshift

courting her

I came to the used cereal packet that was her step

and carefully knocked twice

my knuckles denting the cardboard door

houses there were made of fruit boxes

old tins rolled flat and riveted for a roof

bad work that let in sun and rain

but the colours were stupidly pretty

she called me inside

I set my weeds in a jar on the milk-carton table

and glanced around the single room

what sort of bed is that I asked

and with three people already in it?

be thankful she said

her thin arms threw the newspaper blanket open to me

fake pearls glistened on her breast—

come in quick, while they're still pretending to sleep

A Modern Vow

Repeat after me:

Will you, my beloved Patricia

[the party of the first part]

knowing my great passion for you

[subject to the codicil of the attached agreement]

consider me, your loving Patrick

[the party of the second part]

to be your husband

[as defined in sub-paragraph 3(g)]

sharing life's ups and downs

[seasonally adjusted]

and forsaking all others

[as far as clause 8 requires]

so long as we both shall live *

[according to Statute 12 of

the Medical Assistance Act of 2003]?

If so

please click in the box

enter credit card details

and hit Send #

** no warranty, expressed or implied, is given*

the security of this transaction is not guaranteed

Society Weddings

in that dress

she was a cake of thin

white chocolate plates

melting onto the grass—

she'd never been more edible

he was equally trendy

a designer suit in fire-engine red

the newspaper said—

though the printed colour

looked more like mud or shit

their cake's wild architecture

like stacks of discarded hats

offered tiered little palaces

ziggurats of bleached roses

that would break your teeth

but that was at least a year ago

the cameras' flash is long faded

the carnival's back in its box

the dress and the suit went to charity

the wedding is on the rocks

Hack

insult the editor, they said
and you'll be on obituaries
scribbling around with the dead
or worse
sent off to write up weddings
the snobby daughters of your employers
and their feckless beaux
gloating by the Roller
at the honeymoon chateaux

the dead are kind of charming
and cannot answer back
while a bride described off-kilter
may just get you the sack
so each one is a princess, right?
(ignore the gossip writer's laughter)
with a blissful future to live in
always happily ever after

Something Old, Something New:

A Mass Wedding

Do you:

Aubrey Basil Crispin Desmond Elliot

Fishburne Godfrey Horace Ignatius

Jerome Kelvin Leonard Maximilian

Neville Oswald Percival Quentin

Reginald Spencer Theodore Ulysses

Vernon William Xavier Yester and Zero

take:

Azzure Brianna Chelsey Destini E*star

Faylene Gabr'elle Hevenlee Innasentia

Jakayla Krystel Litisha Maddyson Nyeesha

Odalys Paige Q'ellee ReeAnnon Shyanne Tarlia

Ursuluh Valkeiree Willowe Xynthia Yazsmine and Zzoey

to be your lawful wedded wives?

The crowded chapel is hushed.

The ancient, trembling millionaires

and their former beneficiaries

await an answer from the youthful brides

Outside, a solitary bird begins to sing
and mobile phones begin to ring
in the rows of lawyers' black limousines

On Second Thought

On second thought
the suitor stays at home.
He sends his suit instead.
A hundred dollar hire,
it knows the haunts
of doubts and vows,
arrives in time
to meet the gown
that is fashionably late.
A perfect match
 brideless
 groomless
they
honeymoon in
a wardrobe near you.

Eating the Groom

with the groom there is no question
one must start with the head
you could leave it to last but begin at the top
with his tiny hat and skull instead
then the smart little jacket
that dinky cravat and striped pants
an upper class groom
is gone in a crunch or two
like a dainty *hors d'oeuvre*
then the bride
who's pure dessert
all that swish and cream
a soft-centred meringue
and lingering nibble
to sweeten the mouth

so give in to temptation
when no one is looking your way
block their view of the cake
the newlyweds won't notice

they're about to go missing
it's all yours to take
and the little figurines
in their smart gloss of icing
want you to do it
far better a bite and a lick
than twenty years stuck in a tin—
not to eat would be the sin

Immaculate Reception

every vol-au-vent is perfect
crisp as the groom's shirt-front

each speech a model of decorum
its humour not too blunt

no-one propositions the bridesmaids
to the bridesmaids' slight regret

the cake's a wonder of confection
that's not been bettered yet

the bridal dance is fluid
a dream of sublimated sex

she could have so many men
but now she's made her pick

the music's sweet and edgy

just the very latest thing

the happy couple circulates

showing off the wedding ring

no snide remarks to spoil things

nor fights between courses

and no-one will find the best man

till the sprinklers start at four

Dress Sense

1.

afterwards the gown

is hung in a wardrobe

a member of royalty

among the rustling lower class

all those jealous silent commuters

where it's standing room only—

or else it's wrapped in tissue paper

folded into a stiff lined box

and kept under the bed

sleeping beneath the carnal river

the tears of joy and last breaths

a daughter may wear it

and a grand-daughter

in a palimpsest of brides

but eventually it will be consigned

to the old clothes basket

from which it may one day rise

to go princessing
or to disguise a son in the costume
of a high ranking official of the orient—
lesser ones first float limply into op-shops
to be hauled out for fancy-dress
or scarecrow duty

2.

I am this odd one
slung on a twist of wire
in the chook-house
queen of the muttering clutch
that settles to the night—
some eye saw in me a perfect curtain
to fox and otherworld
now only the gully breeze fills me
and I will never be stepped from again
never slump in a honeymoon sigh
of ivory silk and lace
I am the reliquary past holiness
garment of an exotic land
sister to the brood
dusty and white as my hens

Dachau

you'll rise when ready

dust off the years

collect your clothing from the heap

and dress without embarrassment

among the naked crowd

you'll find your watch easily among

the thousands sprawled on the tables

and your ring will be an obvious circle

in the first wooden box you choose

from all those stacked against the wall

pick up the brown suitcase

from the corner where it was thrown

your tag still on the broken handle

then consult the list on the desk

to uncross your name

all that will be left

will be to walk the yard

to board the train home

the sun will be shining
as you wait by the track
the grass swooning in the wind
and conversations will begin
of trivial things—
which curtains to put in the kitchen
what dress to wear to a cousin's wedding
where to plant the roses

The Burning River

on my last New Year's Eve in the town
after the parties all died down
Cowley's mob stole a petrol drum
to set the water alight
and where we had earlier swum
tipping our mouths back wide
in that soft confluence of river and summer rain
was a wild rag of blue flame
that I watched from the jetty
the burning river a signal to the stars
and those about to leave this place
but now my feet leave no prints on that soft shore
the lights of town squint to a blur
and I sweep from here to anywhere
as easy as flicking stations
on the Falcon's radio—
invisible

I slide past the open shed at the corner mill
the stacked sap-wet ends of new timber
are raw 45s with the years' slow music in their rings
blonde stalagmites of dust lie under the bench
where Tom Wright lost a finger
to a second's dreaming
and when asked how he did it
showed them with another one

at town's edge
cattle like scattered handbags
still graze the hillside above Baxter's dump
where heaped papers in constant migration
turn through summer air
and accidental sculptures of cast-out wire
lie tangled as my old homework excuses
a broken pram on its side
is a billy-cart in waiting
and the gold and orange
of nasturtiums along the road
will work their mysteries of light
in morning's glare

I pass the paddock's charred circle
where we jumped at Guy Fawkes' crackers
rattling ladders of red and green
the strings of squibs thrashing underfoot
and where the tang of soursobs in spring
was as bitter as old torch batteries
tested on the tongue
now thistles' cardboard crowns crowd along the fence
and the flat ground has been graded into squares
a dusty map for new houses
that are still a long time coming

in Newland Road
in that house with worn shutters
I am nine years old
sprawled across a soft-sprung bed
dreaming of the fastest bicycle in the world
half-peddalling it already
my mother by the kitchen radio
re-stitching the collars on my father's shirts
and he two days away
on a sales round through

other towns just like this one

at Pattersons' place down our street

the dog's dish is an old hub-cap

their side-gate's an iron bedstead

their chooks in the doorless fridge out back

are tucked into crooning sleep

quieter than the Patterson twins

who snore on the cool of the verandah floor

Mick Junior chasing sparrows

with a pinch of salt

can't even catch them in his dreams

Heather Timms

Heather Timms

what became of Heather Timms?

the newspaper said she left a note

that she eloped at seventeen—

she fell into the dark

I wondered about weddings

and missed her

her absence hung about us

her mother left town

her father would not speak
though I knocked on her door for weeks

the streets I ran
are quiet now in night's held breath
but all of yesterday's scraps revolve
the brash colours and faces flashing their instant
like summer slide-shows in the garden
images floating on a hung white sheet
every time I step out
dreaming my old town

FAQ

it could be with a thousand roses

a lurking choir and a violin

a proposal on prime-time radio

or a billboard that poses the question

a sky-written query will do it

or the query drawn in wet sand

cheaper is the suddenly stuttered

will you, you know, like, maybe...?

perhaps a letter from his lawyers to hers

suggesting a merger without romance

but none worse than that just left hanging

the uttered but unanswered one

the frequently given answer

when she simply affects not to hear

The Love Songs of Lawyers

the love songs of lawyers are like their dancing
slow as cows walking home
a cumbersome grace
romance is a contract in draft
they court each other with lyrics
wherein the party of the first part
woos the party of the second
though beyond the codicils clauses and heretofores
I can still hear the faint sound of a charmed language

when I hear their heartfelt ballads
I think of whales calling across the sea floor—
even retuned to my frequency
they make no sense
it's a language we hear but will never know
aching with lugubrious majesty

out there in the moonlight
their strange calls linger
terms pitched above my ears' normal range

hang in the thin air
like the mating cries of bats—
a para-legal calling for a mate
a barrister cooing
the shy courtships sound
down the miles of cases held over
for adjournments of the heart

My Language

She said, 'Your language is fucked',

but it wasn't

yet.

We were still courting;

it would be weeks until

I slipped off her vowels

and tangled clumsily with notions

of prefix and tense.

She spat on puns and wordplay

but her tongue was a sweet song

of dialects unknown to me,

shaping phrases for a slippery

new translation of sex.

And then it was over;

a scattering of letters

like papery ashes

gusting into summer wind.

No calls,
and language left
without a sound—
the awkward syntax
that, however you turned it round,
spelt jilted.

Get Me to the Church on Time

it wasn't me—

the alarm clock failed

I dropped my lucky charm

my shirt was stained

the car wouldn't start

there were two flat tyres

I took a wrong turn

and lost my way

I misplaced the ring

I wore odd socks

I had a murderous migraine

and where were you, Miss Perfect?

swishing about in a bridal gown

tapping your feet at the steps like royalty?

no—

whiling your time in a pub nearby

hustling cigarettes

and telling awful stories

about less than glorious sex

taking bets on whether

I'd turn up drunk

or skip the whole affair

well, here I am, my darling

a little worse for wear

I'm sure that I'll be right as rain

after a pint or two

then we can stroll up to the registry

say those words

take snaps out on the landing

and duck back here for smokes

Eloping in Canada

for Bob Hefner

we fled our homes in the late afternoon
drove out of my county and then hers
the licence crisp in the glove box
the ring like a new coin in my pocket

the celebrant slowly finished his meal
while we sat in his parlour holding hands
and played names with the family portraits
solemnly ranged across the walls

taking up his hat he said
we'd have to marry in the county
where the licence came from
for the wedding to be valid

so we drove the twenty miles back
and stepped onto the roadside
stood in the dirt of the verge
in the fading winter sun

who's going to be your witness, he asked

and we realised we had none

until he waved down an interstate bus

and we stood with its driver

in an aisle of passing headlights

to the hymn of passing trucks

and the cheers of forty bus-passengers

as we became husband and wife

it was three years before you left

then a Greyhound ticket appeared on our credit card

and the names of other towns on each monthly bill

as you eloped again and again

Newlyweds

On the second day,
making love in the rented flat,
they break the shower's curtain-rail
and nearly break their backs.

No room is spared their antics,
kitchen floor or hall;
no piece of furniture unexplored
for their avid communion.

They've a nuzzled password for
this cubby-house they live in
that means Let's go home,
early to bed and sleepless.

She's his radio and TV,
his conversation and discovery,
his simple meditation on
the looming moon.

He's the wide night sky
outside their window,
the rush of self un-selfing
held close so far away.

In the Album

These figures in the old album
seem heroic and quaint
stiff mannequins in black and white
posing for matinee posters—
a handful of shots meant
their premiere performance was half over
a prickling state of unreality
and first-night jitters ahead

These days it's a thousand
charmless arty snaps—
everyone's an actor
the groom framed sleekly
in the mirror of the Jag
the bride caught hitching her garter
(the V of her gown a perfect tease—
just lean this way, lower please)
flower-girls cute as puppies
and no-one out of character

Until the last shutter click
until the last stranger
has ghosted into the gallery of replicas
when the actors resembling you and me
have unzipped their masks
and gone home
to await the official record
of themselves

TV Weddings

the narrative is readymade

no need to roll your own

the plot's been writ, the cast's been hired

roles set for bride and groom

three acts at each recital

(he'll hunt, she'll catch, they'll play)

the bridesmaids flirt but no-one's hurt

and the bride is given away

now, say you want to alter

the basics of this lay

the bride might do a runner

or the groom declare he's gay

well, it hardly even matters

if the whole thing goes quite strange

we'll be happy ever after

the last commercial fades

although the service is funereal
and the priest has lost his place
and the groom is feeling bilious
and the bride is on his case

though the poor girl's drowned in tulle
and the bridesmaids look like yachts
and the groom's eyes just roll upward
when he's meant to tie the knot

though the reception is no better
'cause his mother acts the fool
and her brother screws a bridesmaid
in the annexe of the hall

though the bride's dear greying father
turns cantankerous and drunk
when his ex, the poor bride's mother
arrives with some slick hunk

if the great and groaning trestle
is pavlova'd to the hilt
and a bridesmaid's dancing knickerless
with Daddy in a kilt

if the best man slurs his way to hell
his humour just a hunch
each indiscretion listed
names named and punchlines punched

if his speech is rough as flintstone
as cruel as the worst wit
and by the time he's finished
the groom's the fan the shit has hit

if noisy tribes of children
loop through doorways at a pace
throw up in the garden
then scoop more food from the trays

if the uncles are obnoxious
and three sheets to the wind
and dance as if they're funny
though the hired band's still grim

if there's angry words and shambling
and a fistfight by the cars
and the groom comes in all lipsticked
and bearing two new scars

well that's normal for screen weddings
it's life lived for our sakes
with one word from our sponsor
we can take a toilet break

and return to see from on high
the hall's roof and spilling lights
the sprawl of ancient music
the peace after the fights

a spud jammed up the tailpipe
by some wacky new in-law
streamers, cans and petals tossed
whipped cream sprayed on doors

the couple then are jettisoned
to find their own way home
night swallows them like water
as the wedding ship sails on

the credits slide across the screen
and there are all the names
like real guests on a wedding list
joined by hope or shame

off-screen the couple ponders
'faithful only unto you'
and cuddled in their marriage bed
he does, she does, they do

one wedding's like another

variations on a theme

same tune, though different instruments

the music of our dreams

LITTLE MURDERS

Vows

for richer, for poorer

for need and desire

for her dry dry wit

for her obvious punch-lines

for her independence

for her vulnerability

for her forward manner

for her foul temper

for her, naked in pearls

for her, wintered in wool

for her tenderness

for her hard hard heart

for her drinking each word

for her forgetting

for her

for her

for the short broken edges
of sweet laughter in a tossed bed
for silences bitter as a ruined house
the dry pen, the laryngitic song
the fabulous nonsense
strung between pride and lies
the vows we made
and nothing left but words now
like cellophane crackling its complaint

but listen, she says
it's not too late
to elope all over again
just next time with somebody else

The Reluctant Bride

I was promised, custom said
but when they came
I found an attic box
just big enough to hide me
until they had all left,
then I fled over rooftops
clambered down a walnut tree—
the back-fences, roads, fields,
the next town, a train, a ship.
Days and breathless days
I ran and ran.

I slept in cellars and under stars.
I slept in frosted orchards
by the glow of smudge-pots.
I changed my name and dyed my hair.
I learnt a new language.
I dressed as a boy.
I wore a tattoo.
I worked on road-gangs.

I traded skins
that made me three fortunes I lost,
then I set out beyond the camps and houses,
beyond the world of man.

There I ate wild fruit and small lizards.
I fought with lions and a mad moon;
then, where skies turn a roiling mass of blue,
where birds live underground and fish in air,
I stopped running.

I built a house from mud and sticks,
bred honey bees,
grew pears
and stayed.

Six years safe
and here he comes again,
his step less sure
and without his clamouring entourage
but I know that grin.

I'll stand at the doorway
in my own rough finery to greet him
and this time

maybe

I will

just say No.

Angel

Death haunts the street
in her wedding dress
searching for a suitor—
no rags or scythe
she's all gorgeous light
though blurry at the edges

will you?
will you take her?
or let her take you?
her kiss as sweet as any wine
you'd drink from a late harvest
but with an aftertaste to chill

she's earthy and transcendent
physical yet fey
Mae West or Mother Teresa
visceral as a fistfight
dreamy as a haiku high—
and if you're part of her harem

well, she's faithful in her way
and though the ceremony's brief
the marriage will be stellar

waiting between houses
in the ordinary streets
she patiently rehearses
her serene proposal
sure that you'll look in her milky eye
grateful to say
I will

The Groom

the groom is
made of twigs
sticks and bits
of dry leaves

voodoo doll
black-cat bone
ju-ju
dead wood

but a little spit
a bead of blood
wets the tiny
pulsing heart

dark berry eyes open
twiggy fingers twitch
a bride is out there somewhere
he feels that needy itch

Bride of Frankenstein

I'm a simple mosaic
but not simple
a patchwork of borrow and steal

I would give my heart
if it were mine to give
if you asked it of me

what should I wear
naked as the air
but this scrawl of stitches?

they're the finest threads
but I don't care
the crudest work would do

I'm your betrothed
the shadowed one
who wants the want in you

The Bride We Pass

the bride we pass on the side of the street

that white figure

walking the footpath with her head erect

and long train trailing in the dirt

has popped out to the shop for some smokes, I say

or is breaking in the dress for a friend

as she dwindles in our mirrors

you pause at my joke, then say

no, she has told the driver of the wedding car

‘Just stop here’

suddenly afraid of the stranger who wears the gown

and the other one who will take it off

and though your hand still rests on my leg

as I drive, we don’t talk

the whole way home

Unpretty

sings with a bird in her heart
knows a lie before it starts
looks into your eyes and sees
the sky looking back
empty as usual

unpretty is
skinny in a floral dress
says wait on the corner
she'll be there at six
with a bottle and a wish

oh, tell me a story
with a girl who dishes it out
to those in white gowns
lined up at altars
like swans for the slaughter

she knows the lyrics
and she knows the exits
and she knows what you really
mean when you say
there's no-one else quite like her

that unpretty one
knows the stars in the sky
and none in her eyes
will get in the way
when she finds that dear someone

The Warrior Bride

she bails him up at the edge of the path
and in language he can barely understand
she makes him an offer he can't refuse
she tells him she wants a man

she scratches a map in the dirt at her feet
with the sharpened edge of a bone
shows the safe way past the fathoms of dark
in the forest between there and home

she's practical with shelter
and herbs to heal all wounds
she fishes for dinner in a chilling stream
bleeds in time with the moon

she needs a husband to cook and sweep
and make a bed of flowers
to wait while she dances the spell of the hunt
and to sing her down the hours

leather is nice for a bridal gown

a knife or two at her waist

small creatures bound by their feet and hung

at her neck for just in case

he turns to look at his village

its smoke and its tidy roofs

then he laughs at her mad and blue blue eyes

and he holds out his hand as his troth

The Jessie Days

the radio knows where we live

it says we're special

and this could be our lucky day

I tell Jessie, don't worry

I sent in the coupon last week

and our fortune's on its way

she flickers naked through the room

ribs like a greyhound's

waist like a wasp's

she sits beside me

and balances a knife

on the back of her hand

Jessie stubs out a cigarette

dangles legs from the edge of the sofa

edge of the cliff

down there somewhere is

the irresistible pull

of the machine that wants us all

she jumps off

and gets me another drink

I say we're doing fine

and it's only a bit of a lie

Jessie bites her nail

gives me a micro-second smile

now we sit around swatting angels

calico scraps that scribble like moths

around the light

she says she wants to burn every letter

I wrote her

and I don't tell her she's too late

the cat seeps through the room like

rain in a gutter

I say do we have a cat?

but Jessie's putting on her blue dress

and I want to take the question back

she just narrows her eyes and meows

she gave me this scar
on our wedding night
it was a back-seat romance
and a midnight flit
now we're just skeletons
drinking in the moonlight

I'll take off her dress
we'll light a fire on the roof
and watch for satellites
I've got photos of her eating
I've got photos of her sleeping
because someday this will end

Little Murders

when she walks the aisle
she's sexless and pure sex
in a crown of lavender and cloves
unwanting and wanted
saint and seductress
her veil's made of spun-sugar
a glistening confection
a light snack for someone
already licking his lips

she floats toward the altar
like a fairy princess
her bridal gown of bees' wings
took a million little murders
more or less—
not seeing in the future
half a life and miles away
a house in weeds and rust
the smell of sulphur in the air
before the days of rain

the raw spines of nettles on the sink

a slack-string guitar

and a wire-door closing

Coma

I was tinder
for that first pulse,
the flick and flicker
when a match's hiss whispers:
sleep through this.

You thought
flame could lift me;
vapours blue as kerosene
and clouds passing like wishes—
the shimmer and mirage
of suttee.

No-one knows who's inside
the face I wear.
I'll be the bride,
true to my vow.
That cruel husband is waiting;
his cool hunger calls me now.
I'll throw my bouquet to you.

Paper Doll

in this starchy light
intense as wedding sheets' glare
the bride is her own invention
see her blooming
she rises slowly
unfolds as elegantly as a Japanese fan
but she is colourless fruit
the husk of a scalded white wasp
and her voice is no voice
just the crackle of her own stiff fabrics
like spikes of radio waves flung into space—
the fierce static of absence

now she waits to kiss the one
who courted her under a paper moon
her bleached lips as dry as her dress
and here he comes—
in her thin hands she holds tight
a bright bouquet of scissors

Mrs. Death

I'm growing really tired of him
being out all hours,
returning with excuses
and a bunch of wilting flowers.

When I dust the wedding snaps
on the long black shelf,
two grim faces leer at me,
the reaper and myself.

Time was when we courted,
he asked me for a date.
I said I had to wash my hair.
He said that he would wait.

He had a kind of charm then,
fresh as a holiday;
quiet but attentive
in a dark, persistent way .

He said there would be others;

he never hid the fact.

I know it's in his nature

and that I can't go back.

Mum said to wed that doctor

but he'd have been on call

and 'Mrs. Death' had a ring to it—

now dull as a broken bell.

But his long nights out are over;

he'll settle down, poor sod.

When he learns that I'm expecting,

he'll change his tune, by God.

A Wedding Story

I could try little scraps of dialogue

let the characters speak

(instructions to florists

and confessions overheard)

she (does this)

he (did that)

fill in all the gaps later

I could insert iconic objects

dresses rings and veils

and furious family arguments

(can you believe these prices?)

(who does he think he is?)

I could write doubts and blind hope

a hens' night ending in tears

rumours of secret lovers

accusations shouted down telephones

letters thrown into the rain

I could put a bridesmaid in temptation's way

(too traditional)

or give the bride a limp

make the groom a right bastard

who doesn't deserve this saint—

too easy and clichéd

maybe I'll just drop them at the church

and marry them right away

The Happy Couple

after Imogen's painting

The sky began blue and clear
of everything but itself
then slowly filled with clouds and rainbows
and a crowd of singing bees.
He slowed and lay in the grasses
waiting for her,
letting it all revolve above him,
sinking his feet into the earth.

Once my hair was spiky short;
a jagged fiery crown
with a faint halo behind it.
Now it's wild and coloured
and tied with wiry bows
as it falls down to the ground
like a ravelling cape behind me.
There may be birds in it too.

Both of them forced to stare forwards
for their wedding portrait here
though he still senses her next to him
when he strains his eyes to the side,
this bride of his he can't quite face.
Her hands are the twigs of two branches;
her hair a river of wheat.
He hopes she's smiling like him.

Somewhere to our left
there was a house with a chimney
and a tree in the yard
where a swing was hanging.
Perhaps I have just stepped from that house.
Perhaps it is where we will stay,
but for now it is just out of reach
and we live where we both stand,
unmoving,
basking in this yellow wash of light—
before night comes quickly,
sudden as the closing of a book.

**APPENDIX 1:
THE WEDDING PLAN — Aidan Coleman**

[This poem is referred to in Chapter 3]

The Wedding Plan

Your family has seen the film,
some read the book –

they cried buckets –
but apparently love is no argument.

We've tried 'happy', but it's not on their grid.
Your sister's done the maths

for liberation:
fifteen lovers before you're thirty,

you can maybe marry then.
Your mother, desperate to find a clause,

offers washer and dryer, a TV, if only
we'll wait

the length of a warranty.
Your father finds, in me, a mine

of talkback gold.
But still they'll choose the cake

and eat it –
run the wedding,

try to talk you out of it.
This is why I could just about

marry out of spite.
They've planned a holding operation:

hired ushers,
an actor for the 'speak now

or forever...?
and a car outside

with the motor running,
tickets to anywhere.

Aidan Coleman 2005, pp. 31-32

**APPENDIX 2:
POEM NOT TO BE READ AT YOUR WEDDING — Beth Ann Fennelly**

[This poem is referred to in Chapter 3]

Poem Not To Be Read At Your Wedding

You ask me for a poem about love
in place of a wedding present, trying to save me
money. For three nights I've lain
under glow-in-the-dark-stars I've stuck to the ceiling
over my bed. I've listened to the songs
of the galaxy. Well, Carmen, I would rather
give you your third set of steak knives
than tell you what I know. Let me find you
some other, store-bought present. Don't
make me warn you of stars, how they see us
from that distance as miniature and breakable
from the bride who tops the wedding cake
to the Mary on Pinto dashboards
holding her ripe, red heart in her hands.

Beth Ann Fennelly 2003, Online

**APPENDIX 3:
THE BRIDAL SUITE — Matthew Sweeney**

[This poem is referred to in Chapter 3]

The Bridal Suite

For Nuala Ní Dhomnaill

On the third night in the bridal suite
without the bride, he panicked.
He couldn't handle another dream like that,
not wet, like he'd expected,
but not dry either — men digging holes
that they'd fill with water, donkeys
crossing valleys that suddenly flooded.
The alarm-call had a job to wake him,
to send him out from the huge bed,
past the corner kissing-sofa, up two steps
to the shower he hardly needed,
where he'd scrub himself clean as the baby
he'd hoped to start that night,
under the canopy like a wimple,
in that room of pinks and greens.
Naked and dripping, he'd rung Reception
to see if she'd rung, then he'd stood
looking out at the new marina,
as if he'd glimpse her on a yacht.
On the third night he could take no more —
he dressed, to the smell of her perfume,
and leaving her clothes there,
the wedding dress in a pile in the wardrobe,
he walked past the deaf night porter,
out to his car. He had no idea
where she was headed, only that she,
if she ever came back, could sample
the bridal suite on her own,
could toss in that canopied bed
and tell him about her dreams.

Matthew Sweeney 1997, p. 5

APPENDIX 4:
THE LION'S BRIDE — Gwen Harwood

[This poem is referred to in Chapter 3]

The Lion's Bride

I loved her softness, her warm human smell,
her dark mane flowing loose. Sometimes stirred by
rank longing laid my muzzle on her thigh.
Her father, faithful keeper, fed me well,
but she came daily with our special bowl
barefoot into my cage, and set it down:
our love feast. We became the talk of the town,
brute king and tender woman, soul to soul.

Until today: an icy spectre sheathed
in silk minced to my side on pointed feet.
I ripped the scented veil from its unreal
head and engorged the painted lips that breathed
our secret names. A ghost has bones, and meat!
Come soon my love, my bride, and share this meal.

Gwen Harwood 2003, p. 44

APPENDIX 5:
MARRYING THE HANGMAN — Margaret Atwood

[This poem is referred to in Chapter 3]

Marrying the Hangman

She has been condemned to death by hanging. A man may escape this death by becoming the hangman, a woman by marrying the hangman. But at the present time there is no hangman; thus there is no escape. There is only a death, indefinitely postponed. This is not fantasy, it is history.

*

To live in prison is to live without mirrors. To live without mirrors is to live without the self. She is living selflessly, she finds a hole in the stone wall and on the other side of the wall, a voice. The voice comes through darkness and has no face. This voice becomes her mirror.

*

In order to avoid her death, her particular death, with wrung neck and swollen tongue, she must marry the hangman. But there is no hangman, first she must create him, she must persuade this man at the end of the voice, this voice she has never seen and which has never seen her, this darkness, she must persuade him to renounce his face, exchange it for the impersonal mask of death, of official death which has eyes but no mouth, this mask of a dark leper. She must transform his hands so they will be willing to twist the rope around throats that have been singled out as hers was, throats other than hers. She must marry the hangman or no one, but that is not so bad. Who else is there to marry?

*

You wonder about her crime. She was condemned to death for stealing clothes from her employer, from the wife of her employer. She wished to make herself more beautiful. This desire in servants was not legal.

*

She uses her voice like a hand, her voice reaches through the wall, stroking and touching. What could she possibly have said that would have convinced him? He was not condemned to death, freedom awaited him. What was the temptation, the one that worked? Perhaps he wanted to live with a woman whose life he had saved, who had seen down into the earth but had nevertheless followed him back up to life. It was his only chance to be a hero, to one person at least, for if he became the hangman the others would despise him. He was in prison for wounding another man, on one finger of the right hand, with a sword. This too is history.

*

My friends, who are both women, tell me their stories, which cannot be believed and which are true. They are horror stories and they have not happened to me, they have not yet happened to me, they have happened to me but we are detached, we watch our unbelief with horror. Such things cannot happen to us, it is afternoon and these things do not happen in the afternoon. The trouble was, she said, I didn't have time to put my glasses on and without them I'm blind as a bat, I couldn't even see who it was. These things happen and we sit at a table and tell stories about them so we can finally believe. This is not fantasy, it is history, there is more than one hangman and because of this some of them are unemployed.

*

He said: the end of walls, the end of ropes, the opening of doors, a field, the wind, a house, the sun, a table, an apple.

She said: nipple, arms, lips, wine, belly, hair, bread,
thighs, eyes, eyes.

They both kept their promises.

*

The hangman is not such a bad fellow. Afterwards he goes to the refrigerator and cleans up the leftovers, though he does not wipe up what he accidentally spills. He wants only the simple things: a chair, someone to pull off his shoes, someone to watch him while he talks, with admiration and fear, gratitude if possible, someone in whom to plunge himself for rest and renewal. These things can best be had by marrying a woman who has been condemned to death by other men for wishing to be beautiful. There is a wide choice.

*

Everyone said he was a fool.
Everyone said she was a clever woman.
They used the word *ensnare*.

*

What did they say the first time they were alone together in the same room? What did he say when she had removed her veil and he could see that she was not a voice but a body and therefore finite? What did she say when she discovered that she had left one locked room for another? They talked of love, naturally, though that did not keep them busy forever.

*

The fact is there are no stories I can tell my friends that will make them feel better. History cannot be erased, although we can soothe ourselves by speculating about it. At that time there were no female hangmen. Perhaps there have never been any, and thus no man could save his life by marriage.

Though a woman could, according to the law.

*

He said: foot, boot, order, city, fist, roads, time,
knife.

She said: water, night, willow, rope hair, earth belly,
cave, meat, shroud, open, blood.

They both kept their promises.

NOTES: Jean Cololère, a drummer in the colonial troops at Québec, was imprisoned for duelling in 1751. In the cell next to his was Françoise Laurent, who had been sentenced to hang for stealing. Except for letters of pardon, the only way at the time for someone under sentence of death to escape hanging was, for a man, to become a hangman, or, for a woman, to marry one. Françoise persuaded Cololère to apply for the vacant (and undesirable) post of executioner, and also to marry her.

—Condensed from the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Volume III, 1741-1770

Note on Sources

This poem was first published in 1978 in *Two-Headed Poems* (Oxford University Press, Toronto, pp. 48-51). The version above is taken from *Selected Poems 1976-1986* (1987, Houghton & Mifflin) and was downloaded on 8th December 2006 from the Poetry Foundation's archive website at:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=177287>

The print version available to me at the time of completing this exegesis is in another volume of selected poems, *Eating Fire: Selected Poetry 1965-1995* (Virago Press, London, pp. 209-211). This last was used for page references in the exegesis.

APPENDIX 6: WEDDING POEMS

Listed below are poems containing wedding references that were encountered in reading for this thesis.

- Adès, David 2008, 'Amphitheatre in Pamukkale', *Mapping the World*, Friendly Street Poets, Adelaide, p. 18.
- Agard, John 1996, 'Old Man's Proposal', *Blue light clear atoms: poetry for senior students*, eds. Peter McFarlane & Lisa Temple, Macmillan Education Australia, South Melbourne, p. 172.
- 1996, 'Young Woman's Reply', *Blue light clear atoms: poetry for senior students*, eds. Peter McFarlane & Lisa Temple, Macmillan Education Australia, South Melbourne, pp. 172-173.
- Aitken, Adam 2000, 'Sonnets for '58', *Romeo and Juliet in Subtitles*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, pp. 52-54.
- 2000, 'To a Runner Dressed in Black', *Romeo and Juliet in Subtitles*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, pp. 55-59.
- 2000, 'Washing the Flag', *Romeo and Juliet in Subtitles*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, pp. 37-38.
- Albiston, Jordie 1998, 'Letter Home (Margaret Catchpole)', *Australian Verse: An Oxford Anthology*, ed. John Leonard, Oxford University Press, Sydney, pp. 11-12.
- Allan, J. Alex 1994, 'The Bride Wakes', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 53-54.
- Allnutt, Gillian 2007, 'Advice to Thomas in Mid-Life', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/poem.php?date=13741>
[accessed 15th August 2007]
- Aquilina, Jude 2000, 'Con Nubial', *Knifing the Ice*, Friendly Street Poets in association with Wakefield Press, Adelaide, p. 54.
- 2000, 'Magnetizing', *Knifing the Ice*, Friendly Street Poets in association with Wakefield Press, Adelaide, p. 86.
- 2000, 'Mrs Doom', *Knifing the Ice*, Friendly Street Poets in association with Wakefield Press, Adelaide, pp. 52-53.
- Anon. 2004, 'On Your Wedding Day', *Poems and Readings for Weddings*, Penguin Books, London, p. 105.
- Apthorp, Deborah 1990, 'The Wedding', *Number 14 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Neil Paech & Ann Timoney Jenkin, Wakefield Press in association with Friendly Street Poets, p. 2.
- Armitage, Simon 1992, 'Robinson's Statement', *Kid*, Faber and Faber, London, pp. 75-77.
- Ashley-Brown, Henry 2003, 'Suicide Bomber', [unpublished], submission for *Friendly Street Reader #28*, Adelaide.
- Atwood, Margaret 1970, 'Charivari', *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, Oxford University Press Canada, Don Mills, p. 37.
- 1971, 'Hesitations outside the door', *Power Politics*, House of Anansi Press, Toronto, pp. 48-51.

- 1966, 'A Messenger', *The Circle Game*, House of Anansi Press, Toronto, pp. 13-14.
- 1970, 'Midwinter, Presolstice', *Procedures for Underground*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, p. 20.
- 1978, 'Marrying the Hangman', *Two-Headed Poems*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, pp. 48-51.
- 1978, 'A Red Shirt', *Two-Headed Poems*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, pp. 102-105.
- 1978, 'Two-Headed Poems', *Two-Headed Poems*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, pp. 59-75.
- 1978, 'The Woman Makes Peace with Her Faulty Heart', *Two-Headed Poems*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, pp. 86-87.
- 1987, 'Marrying the Hangman', *Poetry Foundation*. Taken from *Selected Poems 1976-1986*, Houghton & Mifflin. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=177287> [accessed 8th December 2006]
- 1998, 'Down', *Eating Fire: Selected Poetry 1965-1995*, Virago Press, London, pp. 334-336.
- 1998, 'Marrying the Hangman', *Eating Fire: Selected Poetry 1965-1995*, Virago Press, London, pp. 209-211.
- 1998, 'The Robber Bridegroom', *Eating Fire: Selected Poetry 1965-1995*, Virago Press, London, p. 280.
- Ayres, Pam 2006, 'Yes, I'll Marry You', *Poetry on Marriage*. http://www.wedding-references.com/poetry_on_marriage.htm [accessed 21st April 2006]
- Baker, Aaron 2003, 'Chimbu Wedding', *Poetry Daily*. <http://www.poems.com/chimbbak.htm> [accessed 18th March 2003]
- Bakowski, Peter 2002, 'The Hiroshima Maidens Project', *Days that We Couldn't Rehearse*, Hale & Iremonger, Maryborough, pp. 66-68.
- Bang, Mary Jo 2001, 'Crossed-Over, Fiend-Snitched, X-ed Out', *The Best American Poetry 2001*, eds. Robert Hass & David Lehman, Scribner Poetry, New York, pp. 37-38.
- Banus, Maria 1990, 'The Wedding', *The Virago Book of Love Poetry*, ed. Wendy Mulford, Virago Press, London, pp. 44-45.
- Becker, Robin 2003, 'Why We Fear the Amish', *Overheard on a Saltmarsh: Poets' Favourite Poems*, ed. Carol Ann Duffy, MacMillan, London, pp. 3-4.
- Betjeman, John 2006, 'A Subaltern's Love-song', *Poetry Daily*. <http://www.poems.com/today.htm> [accessed 5th December 2006]
- Bierds, Linda 2003, 'The Lacemaker's Condenser', *Overheard on a Saltmarsh: Poets' Favourite Poems*, ed. Carol Ann Duffy, MacMillan, London, pp. 17-18.
- Blanco, Richard 2007, 'Taking My Cousin's Photo at the Statue of Liberty', *Poetry Daily*. <http://www.poems.com/poem.php?date=13842> [accessed 24th November 2007]
- Blase, Marty 2008, 'Dr. Seuss performs a wedding', *Rec.Humor.Funny*. <http://www.netfunny.com/rhf/jokes/00/Oct/seussvow.html> [accessed 20th April 2008]

- Boland, Eavan 1984, 'Degas's Laundresses', *Night Feed*, Arlen House, Dublin, pp. 37-38.
- 1995, 'Domestic Interior', *Penguin Modern Poets 2*, Penguin Books, London, p. 101.
- Borson, Roo 1996, 'Margaret Livingston', *Water Memory*, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto.
- Boruch, Marianne 2003, 'Smoking', *Overheard on a Saltmarsh: Poets' Favourite Poems*, ed. Carol Ann Duffy, MacMillan, London, pp. 22-23.
- Bostok, Janice 2003, 'at the touch of mimosa', *Amongst the Graffiti*, Post Pressed, Flaxton, p. 73.
- 2003, 'so long ago', *Amongst the Graffiti*, Post Pressed, Flaxton, p. 40.
- Bottoms, David 2009, 'Montana Wedding Day', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://poems.com/poem.php?date=14506>
 [accessed 22nd October 2009]
- Bowman, Catherine 2001, 'Demographics', *Nerve.com*.
<http://www.nerve.com/Poetry/ExtraordinaryTide/extraordinaryTide/extraordinaryTide3.asp/>
 [accessed 2nd May 2001]
- Boyle, Peter 2001, 'Jottings', *What the painter saw in our faces*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 75-79.
- 2001, 'Missing words', *What the painter saw in our faces*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 49.
- 2001, 'What the painter saw in our faces', *What the painter saw in our faces*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 87-109.
- Bradstock, Margaret 2000, 'The lesbian silk-spinners of Shunde County', *The Pomelo Tree*, Ginninderra Press, Canberra, pp. 19-24.
- Bray, John 1977, 'Ballade', *The Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, ed. Richard Tipping, Adelaide University Union Press, Adelaide, p. 13.
- 1978, 'Death at the Wedding', *No. 2 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Ian Reid and Andrew Taylor, Adelaide University Union Press, Adelaide, p. 41.
- 1979, 'To Sappho', *Number Three Friendly Street*, eds. Larry Buttrose & Peter Goldsworthy, Adelaide University Union Press, Adelaide, pp. 12-13.
- 1982, 'To Petale Who Died on her Wedding Night', *Friendly Street Poetry Reader Number 6*, eds. Anne Brewster & Rob Johnson, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, p. 7.
- Brock, Geoffrey 2004, 'And Day Brought Back My Night', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/twop2bro.htm>
 [accessed 14th February 2006]
- Brook, Heather 1988, 'Rain for Weddings, Sunshine for Funerals, Wind for my Clinging to Smoke-Rings', *Number 12 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Jeff Guess & Donna McSkimming, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, pp. 6-7.
- Brophy, Kevin 2003, 'The Art of Moving', *Portrait in Skin*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 52-53.
- Brown, Susannah 2003, 'Moments of Friendship', *Shadows on Glass*, buffs, p. 51.
- Burke, Andrew 2003, 'Cats and Crabs', *Knock on Wood*, Picaro Press, Warners Bay, p. 4.
- 'The Suit', *Knock on Wood*, Picaro Press, Warners Bay, pp. 10-11.
- Butkin Roth, Jane 1998, 'The Wedding Proofs', *Redoubt 26*, University of Canberra Imprint, Canberra, pp. 72-73.

- Buttrose, Larry 1986, 'The Brides of Christ', *Learning Italian*, Foreign Books, Sydney, p. 15.
- 1986, 'Married Woman', *Learning Italian*, Foreign Books, Sydney, p. 42.
- Byro, Laurie 2007, 'White Wedding', *About Poetry*.
<http://poetry.about.com/library/bl1007ibpcentries.htm>
 [12th October 2007]
- Byron, Catherine 1990, 'Wedding at Aughrim, Galway 1900', *The Virago Book of Love Poetry*, ed. Wendy Mulford, Virago Press, London, pp. 142-143.
- Caddy, Caroline 1997, 'Streetwise', *Working Temple*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, South Fremantle, pp. 12-13.
- Caesar, Adrian 2001, 'Nest Builders', *The June Fireworks*, Molonglo Press, Canberra, p. 76.
- Carbis, Gaylene 2003, 'The Bride Who Became Frightened When She Saw Life Opened', *Muse*, No. 225, Canberra, February, p. 19.
- Carson, Anne 2009, 'Epithalamium NYC', *The New Yorker*.
http://www.newyorker.com/fiction/poetry/2009/08/24/090824po_poem_cars
 on
 [accessed 12th November 2009]
- Carson, Ciaran 2008, 'Through', *The New Yorker*, 28th January.
http://www.newyorker.com/fiction/poetry/2008/01/28/080128po_poem_cars
 on
 [accessed 12th February 2008]
- Cartwright, Bec 2005, 'Wedding Poem', *Ivan Rubinstein*.
 [originally in *Daily Telegraph*, 25th July]
<http://www.ivanrubinstein.com/?p=530>
 [accessed 17th April 2006]
- Chang, Leslie 2006, 'Watermelons', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/today.htm>
 [accessed 20th October 2006]
- Churches, Christine 1986, 'Catering for the Wedding', *The Orange Tree: South Australian poetry to the present day*, eds. K.F. Pearson and Christine Churches, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, p. 163.
- Clanchy, Kate 2004, 'For a Wedding', *Poems and Readings for Weddings*, ed. Julia Watson, Penguin Books, London, p. 104.
- Clarke, John 1994, 'Another Subaltern's Wedding', *The Even More Complete Book of Australian Verse*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards. p.50.
- Clarke, John Cooper 2006, 'I Wanna Be Yours', *Wedding References.com*.
http://www.wedding-references.com/romantic_love_poems.htm
 [accessed 21st April 2006]
- Clover, Joshua 'Ceriserie', *The Best American Poetry 2001*, eds. Robert Hass & David Lehman, Scribner Poetry, New York, pp. 59-60.
- Coleman, Aidan 2005, 'Looking for a Car Seat', *Avenues & Runways*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Melbourne, pp. 51-52.
- 2005, 'The Wedding Plan', *Avenues & Runways*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Melbourne, pp. 31-32.
- Collins, Billy 1988, 'Personal History', *The Apple that Astonished Paris*, University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, pp. 46-47.
- 2001, 'Scotland', *Sailing Alone Around the Room*, Random House, New York, pp. 166-167.

- 1995, 'Thesaurus', *The Art of Drowning*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Bloomington. p. 44.
- Compton, Jennifer 2003, 'My Sisters Are Literally Killing Themselves', *Brick*, Picaro Press, Warners Bay, p. 8.
- Cook, Stanley 1999, 'Second Marriage', *Short and Sweet; 101 Very Short Poems*, ed. Simon Armitage, Faber and Faber, London, p. 13.
- Coombe, Valerie 1984, 'As Witness I Ingest the Deed -', *Number 8 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Robert Clark & Jeri Kroll, Friendly Street Poets, pp. 24-25.
- Copello, Beatriz 2001, 'Red Hands Cave', *Meditations at the Edge of a Dream*, Glass House Books, Brisbane, pp. 25-26.
- Cornish, Mary 2007, 'Lotus Feet', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/today.htm>
 [accessed 10th January 2007]
- Corso, Gregory 1963, 'Marriage', *Penguin Modern Poets 5*, Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, pp. 15-19.
- Croggon, Alison 2002, 'Arthur', *Attempts at Being*, Salt, Applecross, pp. 151-159.
- 2002, 'The Breach', *Attempts at Being*, Salt, Applecross, pp. 13-19.
- Croft, Julian 2004, 'Two Oceans', *Voices in a Café*, Kardoorair Press, Armidale, pp. 16-17.
- Cronin, MTC 1998, 'But This', *The World Beyond the Fig*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 69.
- 1998, 'Your Heart', *The World Beyond the Fig*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 16.
- 2002, 'Introduction', *My Lover's Back*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p.102.
- 2002, 'The Confetti Stone', *The Confetti Stone*, Picaro Press, Warners Bay, pp. 1-3.
- Crozier, Lorna 1999, 'The Mother: Without Blessing', *What the Living Won't Let Go*, McLelland & Stewart, Toronto, pp. 59-60.
- 1999, 'Visit', *What the Living Won't Let Go*, McLelland & Stewart, Toronto, pp. 18-19.
- 2002, 'At the Bottom of the Well', *Apocrypha of Light*, McLelland & Stewart, Toronto, p. 38.
- 2005, 'Drought', *Apocrypha of Light*, McLelland & Stewart, Toronto, p. 42.
- Cummings, E.E. 2003, 'anyone lived in a pretty how town...', *Overheard on a Saltmarsh: Poets' Favourite Poems*, ed. Carol Ann Duffy, MacMillan, London, pp. 19-20.
- Daniels, Jim 2003, 'Skywriting', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/skywrdan.htm>
 [accessed 21st June 2003]
- Day, Sarah 1987, 'Brides', *A Hunger to be Less Serious*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, pp. 63-64.
- 1987, 'The Landlord', *A Hunger to be Less Serious*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, p. 7.
- 2002, 'Bride', *New and Selected*, Arc Publications, Todmorden, p. 17.
- 2002, 'Goldstein's Drapery', *New and Selected*, Arc Publications, Todmorden, pp. 26-27.

- Dawson, Paul 2006, 'Lunatic Brothel', *Imagining Winter*, Interactive Press, Carindale, pp. 34-37.
- 2006, 'Thanks For The Poems, Pauline Hanson', *Imagining Winter*, Interactive Press, Carindale, pp. 21-24.
- 2006, 'A Wedding Kiss' *Imagining Winter*, Interactive Press, Carindale, pp. 76-77.
- Delanty, Greg 2003, 'The Bindi Mirror', *Overheard on a Saltmarsh: Poets' Favourite Poems*, ed. Carol Ann Duffy, MacMillan, London, pp. 52-53.
- Deller-Evans, Kate 2004, 'Tea Strainer: from the bridal register', *Pulling Shadows Apart*, eds. Bel Schenk & Eva Zawistowski, City of Onkaparinga, Adelaide, p. 72.
- de Pisan, Christine 1990, 'A Sweet Thing is Marriage', *The Virago Book of Love Poetry*, ed. Wendy Mulford, Virago Press, London, pp. 82-83.
- Deutch, Richard 2000, 'Purple Stone on a White Stone', *Heart with Piano Wire*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Sydney, pp. 75-78.
- Dickey, James 1992, 'The Wedding', *The Whole Motion: Collected Poems 1945-1992*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, pp. 59-60.
- Dickinson, Elizabeth 2003, 'Turning Four', *Beyond the Shimmering: A Gawler Literary Fund Anthology of Poetry*, ed. Cathy Young, Gawler Literary Fund, Gawler, p. 54.
- Diesendorf, Margaret 1994, 'Selections from *Holding the Golden Apple*', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 85-86.
- Digges, Deborah 2003, 'Two of the Lost Five Foolish Virgins', *Overheard on a Saltmarsh: Poets' Favourite Poems*, ed. Carol Ann Duffy, MacMillan, London, pp. 63-64.
- Dionysius, B.R. 2002, 'A Brief History of Sperm', *Bacchanalia*, Interactive Press, Carindale, pp. 45-46.
- 2002, 'Why Did the Chicken Strangle Itself?', *Bacchanalia*, Interactive Press, Carindale, p. 25.
- Dobson, Rosemary 2000, 'Chekhov's Sister', *Untold Lives & Later Poems*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Sydney, p. 18.
- 2000, 'Elena', *Untold Lives & Later Poems*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Sydney, p. 32.
- Donaghy, Michael 1997, 'The brother', *Penguin Modern Poets 11*, Penguin Books, London, p. 5.
- Driver, Tess 2002, 'Bride with a Broom', *artstate*, No. 23, Spring, Arts SA, Adelaide, p. 15.
- 2005, 'Water Iris', *The Best Australian Poems 2005*, ed. Les Murray, Black Inc., Melbourne, p. 31.
- Duffy, Carol Ann 1995, 'Adultery', *Penguin Modern Poets 2*, Penguin Books, London, p.41.
- 1995, 'Litany', *Penguin Modern Poets 2*, Penguin Books, London, p.8.
- Dunmore, Helen 1990, 'The Bride's Nights in a Strange Village', *The Virago Book of Love Poetry*, ed. Wendy Mulford, Virago Press, London, pp. 134-135.
- Durcan, Paul 1985, 'The Berlin-Wall Café', *The Berlin Wall Café*, The Blackstaff Press Limited, Belfast, p. 61.
- 1985, 'Hymn to a Broken Marriage', *The Berlin Wall Café*, The Blackstaff Press Limited, Belfast, p. 39.

- 1985, 'The Jewish Bride', *The Berlin Wall Café*, The Blackstaff Press Limited, Belfast, p. 40.
- 1985, 'The Man who Thought he was Miss Havisham', *The Berlin Wall Café*, The Blackstaff Press Limited, Belfast, pp. 18-19.
- 1985, 'Le Poète Allongé', *The Berlin Wall Café*, The Blackstaff Press Limited, Belfast, pp. 10-11.
- 1985, 'The Turkish Carpet', *The Berlin Wall Café*, The Blackstaff Press Limited, Belfast, p. 58.
- 1985, 'Windfall', 8 Parnell Hill, Cork', *The Berlin Wall Café*, The Blackstaff Press Limited, Belfast, pp 45-49.
- 1994, 'Honeymoon Postcard', *The Oxford Book of Comic Verse*, ed. John Gross, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 464.
- Direen, Junice 1999, 'Greek Wedding', *Beating Time in Gothic Space*, eds. Deb Matthews & Stephen Lawrence, Friendly Street Poets in association with Wakefield Press, Kent Town, p. 34.
- Dutton, Geoffrey 1982, 'Fish Shop Windows', *Friendly Street Poetry Reader Number 6*, eds. Anne Brewster & Rob Johnson, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, p. 17.
- Eberhard, Adrienne 2003, 'The Wedding Dress', *Agamemnon's Poppies*, Black Pepper, North Fitzroy, pp. 68-69.
- Edgar, Stephen 2005, 'Pictures of Love', *The Best Australian Poetry 2005*, eds. Bronwyn Lea & Martin Duwell, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, pp. 13-17.
- Edwards, Rebecca 2000, 'Always the Mother', *Scar Country*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, pp. 5-6.
- 2002, '20 At the Leichhardt Hotel', *Holiday Coast Medusa*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 63.
- 2002, '21 Brisbane', *Holiday Coast Medusa*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 66-67.
- Elder, Anne 1978, 'The Bachelor', *Crazy Woman and Other Poems*, Angus & Robertson Publishers, Sydney, pp. 34-37.
- 1978, 'Spinsters', *Crazy Woman and Other Poems*, Angus & Robertson Publishers, Sydney, pp. 47-48.
- Elder, Karl 2003, 'Nocturnes', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/noctued.htm>
 [accessed 14th February 2003]
- Ellis, Thomas Sayers 1997, 'Atomic Bride', *The Best American Poetry 1997*, ed. James Tate, Scribner, New York, pp. 64-67.
- Emanuel, Lynn 2001, 'The White Dress', *Poets of the New Century*, eds. Roger Weingarten & Richard Higginson, David R. Godine, New York, p. 94.
- Emery, Brook 2000, 'My Father's Eyes', *and dug my fingers in the sand*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 35-36.
- 2003, 'And asked her how she was', *Misplaced Heart*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 88-89.
- Erwin, Russell 2000, 'Because it Rained Today', *Taken by the Enemy*, Molonglo Press, Canberra, p. 2.
- 2001, 'Edith Trist', *From Here*, Indigo, Canberra, pp. 21-22.
- Ezekiel, Nissim 1994, 'from Poems in the Greek Anthology Mode', *The Oxford Book of Comic Verse*, ed. John Gross, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 413.

- Fahey, Diane 2001, 'Ashputtle', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 24-28.
- Fargnoli, Pat 2003, 'Wedding Pantoum', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/weddifar.htm>
 [accessed 1st May 2003]
- Fahey, Diane 2001, 'All Fur', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 52-56.
- 2001, 'Bearskin', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 82-83.
- 2001, 'Bluebeard's Bride', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 45-51.
- 2001, 'The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 93-95.
- 2001, 'The Golden Bird', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 86-90.
- 2001, 'The Goose Girl', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 20-23.
- 2001, 'Iron Hans', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 78-81.
- 2001, 'The Master Thief', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 96-97.
- 2001, 'The Prince (and the Princess)', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 91-92.
- 2001, 'The Robber Bridegroom', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 44-45.
- 2001, 'The Three Snake Leaves', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 84-85.
- 2001, 'The Twelve Dancing Princesses', *The Sixth Swan*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 11-12.
- Feaver, Vicki 1995, 'Marigolds', *Penguin Modern Poets 2*, Penguin Books, London, p.50.
- Fennelly, Beth Ann 2003, 'Poem Not to Be Read at Your Wedding', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/twopofen.htm>
 [accessed 29th April 2003]
- 2003, 'Yield', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/twopofen.htm>
 [accessed 29th April 2003]
- Fenton Keane, Jayne 2000, 'Preacher', *Torn*, Plateau Press, Runcorn, p. 14.
- 2002, 'Zoom into Concert / Rockhampton 1996', *Ophelia's Codpiece*, Post Pressed, Flaxton, pp. 22-25.
- Fisher, Barbara 2001, 'Beetroot', *Archival Footwork*, Indigo, Canberra, p. 63.
- 2001, 'The Dressmaker', *Archival Footwork*, Indigo, Canberra, p. 74.
- Foulcher, John 1996, 'After the Stars', *The Honeymoon Snaps*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, pp. 91-92.
- 2000, 'Atmospheres', *Convertible*, Indigo, Canberra, pp. 11-15.
- 2000, 'Blood Wedding: the Student Rehearsal', *Convertible*, Indigo, Canberra, p. 21.
- 2002, 'Blood Wedding: the Student Rehearsal', *The Learning Curve*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Blackheath, p. 24.

- 1996, 'The Honeymoon Snaps', *The Honeymoon Snaps*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, pp. 16-17.
- 1996, 'The Picture of David Bowie', *The Honeymoon Snaps*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, pp. 21-22.
- 2007, 'Postnuptial', *The Best Australian Poems 2007*, ed. Peter Rose, Black Inc., Melbourne, p. 30.
- 2007, 'Prenuptials', *The Best Australian Poems 2007*, ed. Peter Rose, Black Inc., Melbourne, pp. 27-29.
- Foust, Graham 2002, 'On the evening of a wedding', *Jacket 19*.
<http://www.jacketmagazine.com/19/foul.html>
 [accessed 30th July 2007]
- Fulton, Alice 1996, 'My Second Marriage to My First Husband', *Emergency Kit: Poems for strange times*, eds. Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney, Faber and Faber Ltd, London, pp. 232-233.
- Fromberg Schaeffer, Susan 1975, 'Leaving', *College English*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (November), pp. 314-316.
- Gerstler, Amy 1999, 'The Bride Goes Wild', *The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*, Thunder's Head Press, New York, pp. 172-173.
- Gewanter, David 2009, 'Pediment', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://poems.com/poem.php?date=14575>
 [accessed 27th November 2009]
- Gibian, Jane 2007, 'Parts of the tongue', *Ardent: New Poems*, Giramondo Poets, Artamon, pp. 18-19.
- Ginsberg, Allen 1997, 'Wichita Vortex Sutra', *Collected Poems 1947-1997*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, pp. 402-420.
- Gladding, Jody 1995, 'Asparagus', *The Best American Poetry 1995*, eds. Richard Howard & David Lehman, Touchstone, New York, pp. 75-76.
- Goldbarth, Albert 2009, 'Sentimental', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poetryoutloud.org/poems/poem.html?id=171481>
 [accessed 28th September 2009]
- Goodfellow, Geoff 2002, 'A Mirror to my Childhood', *Poems for a Dead Father*, The Vulgar Press, Carlton North, pp. 67-71.
- 2002, 'A Report to the Captain', *Poems for a Dead Father*, The Vulgar Press, Carlton North, pp. 49-53.
- Gordon, Nancy 1979, 'To Anne Elder – A Letter Into the Air', *Number 5 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Nancy Gordon & K.F. Pearson, Friendly Street Poets, Unley,
- 1982, 'Not in Front of the Children', *Friendly Street Poetry Reader Number 6*, eds. Anne Brewster & Rob Johnson, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, pp. 30-32.
- 1984, 'Settler's Cottage', *Number 8 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Robert Clark & Jeri Kroll, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, p. 42
- Gould, Alan 1994, 'The Burying', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 232.
- 2004, 'South Coast Mechanic', *Tightrope Walker*, Picaro Press, Warners Bay, pp. 4-5.
- 2005, 'A Masque for the Wedding', *The Past Completes Me*, UQP, St. Lucia, pp. 79-82.
- Grant, Jamie 1996, 'Skywriting', *Emergency Kit: Poems for strange times*, eds. Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, pp. 92-93.

- Griffin, John 1979, 'The Squatter's Wife', *Number Three Friendly Street*, eds. Larry Buttrose & Peter Goldsworthy, Adelaide University Union Press, Adelaide, pp. 49-50.
- 1987, 'A Lump of Wedding Cake', *No. 11 Friendly Street Reader*, eds. Elaine Golding & Peter McFarlane, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, p. 53.
- Guilar, Liam 2003, 'Night Passage', *I'll Howl Before You Bury Me*, Interactive Publications, Carindale, p. 35.
- 2003, 'Rapunzel', *I'll Howl Before You Bury Me*, Interactive Publications, Carindale, pp. 35-41.
- Hamburger, Michael 1969, 'Bird Watcher', *Poems from Poetry and Jazz in Concert*, ed. Jeremy Robson, Souvenir Press, London, p. 47.
- Hamby, Barbara 1995, 'Ode to My 1977 Toyota', *Good Poems for Hard Times*, ed. Garrison Keillor, Viking, New York, pp. 81-82.
- Hammial, Philip 2001, 'Mountain Marriage', *Bread*, Black Pepper, Melbourne, p. 51.
- 2002, 'At The Movies', *SideWaLK*, Issue 10 (December), p. 59.
- Hannaford, Kristin 2003, 'Honeymoon', *Swelter*, Interactive Press, Carindale, p. 65.
- Hannah, Sophie 2000, 'Darling Sweatheart', *Love Me Slender: poems about love*, Duffy & Snellgrove, Potts Point, p. 40.
- Hardacre, Paul 2003, 'Hotel Room, Scara Brae', *The Year Nothing*, HeadworX Publishers, Wellington, p. 13.
- Harrison, Tony 1996, 'Timer', *Emergency Kit: Poems for strange times*, eds. Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, pp. 177-178.
- Hart, Kevin 1987, 'The Members of the Orchestra', ed. Les Murray, *The New Oxford Book of Australian Verse*, Melbourne, p. 400.
- Hartman, Charles O. 2009, 'Too far – he said', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://poems.com/poem.php?date=14275>
 [accessed 30th January 2009]
- Harwood, Gwen 1996, 'Cups', *Emergency Kit: Poems for strange times*, eds. Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney, Faber and Faber Ltd, London, p. 246.
- Heaney, Seamus 1972, 'Mother of the Groom', *Wintering Out*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, p. 46.
- 1972, 'Wedding Day', *Wintering Out*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, p. 45.
- 1975, 'The Betrothal of Cavehill', *North*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, p. 45.
- 1975, 'Kinship', *North*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 33-39.
- 1991, 'Honeymoon Flight', *Death of a Naturalist*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, p. 36.
- 1991, 'A Pillowed Head', *Seeing Things*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 38-39.
- 2001, 'Out of the Bag', *Electric Light*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 6-10.
- 2004, *Burial at Thebes* (extract), *The Guardian*, 21 February.
<http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/poetry/story/0,6000,1152649,00.html>
 [accessed 15th March 2004]
- 2008, 'Now the oil-fired heating boiler comes to life', *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, Vol. 30 Issues 1-2, pp. 75-78

- <http://www.parnassuspoetry.com/excerpts.htm>
[accessed 19th November 2009]
- Hecht, Anthony 1996, 'Sestina d'Inverno', *Reading Poetry: an introduction*, eds. Tom Furniss & Michael Bath, Prentice Hall, London, pp. 406-7.
- Heffernan, Michael 1985, 'Jim's Cafe', *College English*, Vol. 47, No. 7 (November), p. 717.
- Henckels, J.A. 2008, 'Silverware', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/poem.php?date=14136>
[accessed 15th September 2008]
- Herliany, Dorothea Rose 2000, 'Wedding Diary', *The Age*, 21 October, p. E8.
- Hetherington, Graeme 2002, 'West Coast, Tasmania (5)', *Life Given*, Indigo, Canberra, pp. 31-33.
- Hetherington, Paul 2003, 'Six: Cecilia', *Blood and Old Belief*, Pandanus Books, Canberra, p. 10.
- Hewett, Dorothy 2001, 'The Alluring Bride', *Halfway up the Mountain*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, pp. 85-87.
- 2001, 'The Crab', *Halfway up the Mountain*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, pp. 40-42.
- Hill, Barry 2001, 'Found', *The Inland Sea*, Salt, Applecross, pp. 53-55.
- 2001, 'Yapalpa', *The Inland Sea*, Salt, Applecross, pp. 3-4.
- Hill, Douglas 1969, 'Jewish Wedding Ceremony', *Poems from Poetry and Jazz in Concert*, ed. Jeremy Robson, Souvenir Press, London, p. 54.
- Hill, Geoffrey 1996, 'Mercian Hymns IX', *Emergency Kit: Poems for strange times*, eds. Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney, Faber and Faber Ltd, London, pp. 33-34.
- Hisui 2003, 'The first night', *Haiku for Lovers*, ed. Manu Bazzano, MQ Publications, London, p. 92.
- Hitomara 1964, 'Three Naga Uta: CIII', *One Hundred Poems from the Japanese*, ed. Kenneth Rexroth, A New Directions Book, New York, pp. 105-7.
- Hoch, James 2009, 'Wedding Piñata', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://poems.com/poem.php?date=14570>
[accessed 21st November 2009]
- Holcroft, Thomas 2001, 'The Seasons', *Heaven on Earth: 101 Happy Poems*, ed. Wendy Cope, Faber and Faber, London.
- Holm, Bill 1995, 'Wedding Poem For Schele and Phil', *Good Poems for Hard Times*, ed. Garrison Keillor, Viking, New York, pp. 97-98.
- Hope, A.D. 1998, 'The Brides', *Australian Verse: An Oxford Anthology*, ed. John Leonard, Oxford University Press, Sydney, p. 244.
- 1998, 'Crossing the Frontier', *Australian Verse: An Oxford Anthology*, ed. John Leonard, Oxford University Press, Sydney, pp. 246-247.
- Hudson, Flexmore 1984, 'Birds in the Dawn', *Number 8 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Robert Clark & Jeri Kroll, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, pp. 58-59
- Hughes, Ted 1999, 'Daffodils', *Verses of the Poets Laureate*, ed. Hilary Laurie, Orion, London, pp. 193-195.
- 1999, 'A March Calf', *Verses of the Poets Laureate*, ed. Hilary Laurie, Orion, London, pp. 190-192.
- Huntington, Cynthia 2002, 'Untitled', *Poetry Daily*.
www.poems.com/untithun.html

- [accessed 30th September 2002]
- Ignatow, David, 'Listening', *Poetry*, Poetry Foundation Inc. (February).
[originally in 1996, *I Have a Name*, Wesleyan University Press]
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=25861>
[accessed 13th March 2008]
- James, Clive 2003, 'Flashback on Fast Forward', *The Book of My Enemy: Collected Verse 1958-2003*, Picador, London, pp. 104-105.
- 2003, 'In Praise of Marjorie Jackson', *The Book of My Enemy: Collected Verse 1958-2003*, Picador, London, pp. 72-73.
- 2003, 'One Man to Another', *The Book of My Enemy: Collected Verse 1958-2003*, Picador, London, pp. 86-87.
- Jarman, Mark 2005, 'Auden', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/audenjar.htm>
[accessed 28th December 2005]
- Jeffs, Sandy 2000, 'On Looking at a Wedding Photo of Max and Mavis', *Blood Relations*, Spinifex Press, North Melbourne, p. 16.
- 2000, 'Wedding Day Smiles', *Blood Relations*, Spinifex Press, North Melbourne, pp. 14-15.
- Jennings, Kate 1977, 'Couples', *The Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, ed. Richard Tipping, Adelaide University Union Press, Adelaide, p. 54.
- Johnson, Judy 2002, 'My Dressmaking Aunt', *Light & Skin*, Picaro Press, Warners Bay, p. 4.
- Johnson, Rob 1996, 'A photograph', *Friendly Street Reader Number Twenty*, eds. Judy Dally & Geoff Kemp, Wakefield Press in association with Friendly Street Poets, Kent Town, p. 55.
- Johnston, Fiona 2005, 'Tapa', *The Best Australian Poems 2005*, ed. Les Murray, Black Inc., Melbourne, p. 77.
- Jones, Evan 1994, 'Nursery Rhyme', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 158.
- Jones, Jill 2002, 'The night of the marriage', *Screen Jets Heaven*, Salt, Applecross. pp. 98-99.
- Joseph, Beate 1979, 'Honeymoon', *Number 5 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Nancy Gordon & K.F. Pearson, Friendly Street Poets, Unley.
- Joudah, Fady 2008, 'The Tea and Sage Poem', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/poem.php?date=13978>
[8th April 2008]
- Jong, Erica 1991, 'The Eggplant Epithalamion', *Becoming Light: Poems New and Selected*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, pp. 156-158.
- 1991, 'Love Spell: Against Endings', *Becoming Light: Poems New and Selected*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, pp. 52-55B.
- Kaminsky, Ilya 2009, 'Praise', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://poetrymagazine.com/archives/2002/May2002/kaminsky.htm>
[accessed 22nd October 2009]
- Keesing, Nancy 1994, 'Sailor and Lady', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 137.
- Kelen, S.K. 2000, 'The Garden in the Oval Office', *Shimmerings*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 68-69.
- 2000, 'Mid-West 2', *Shimmerings*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 49-50.

- 2000, 'The Wedding', *Shimmerings*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 22.
- 2002, 'Attitude: Don Juan in the Shopping Mall', *Goddess of Mercy*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Blackheath, pp. 46-59.
- 2002, 'Ballad of the Texas Ranger', *Goddess of Mercy*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Blackheath, pp. 36-37.
- 2002, 'Cymru: Motoring in Wales', *Goddess of Mercy*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Blackheath, p. 47.
- 2002, 'Weekend Magazine', *Goddess of Mercy*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Blackheath, p. 21.
- 2007, 'Imperium Suite: All-American' (unpublished)
- Kemp, Geoff 1996, 'Alfa at midnight', *Friendly Street Reader Number Twenty*, eds. Judy Dally & Geoff Kemp, Wakefield Press in association with Friendly Street Poets, Kent Town, pp. 59-62.
- Kenneally, Cath 1999, 'And the winner is...', *Around Here*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, pp. 24-26.
- 1999, 'Around Here', *Around Here*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, pp. 98-104.
- Kerouac, Jack 2003, 'The falling snow', *Book of Haikus*, ed. Regina Weinreich, Penguin Poets, New York, p. 163.
- Kilcher, Jewel 1998, 'Tai Pei 2', *A Night Without Armor*, HarperCollins, New York, p. 33.
- 1998, 'Underage', *A Night Without Armor*, HarperCollins, New York, p. 65.
- Kinnell, Galway 1982, 'The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World', *Selected Poems*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, p. 35.
- Kissane, Andy 2000, 'The Barmaid', *Every night they dance*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 15.
- 2000, 'Raking the Powder, 1943', *Every night they dance*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 25-26.
- 2000, 'The Separation Sonnets: The Wedding', *Every night they dance*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 89-94.
- 2000, 'The Separation Sonnets: In the Fez Manner', *Every night they dance*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 89-94.
- 2000, 'Tristan and Isolde', *Every night they dance*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 46-57.
- 2001, 'Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window', *Glass Dreams*, Picaro Press, Warners Bay, pp. 4-5.
- Knowles, Lee 1994, 'Boomerang Gorge', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 192-193.
- Knox, Caroline 2005, 'Prothalamium', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/prothkno.htm>
 [accessed 20th March 2005]
- Koch, Jules Leigh 2002, 'Broken Hill', *Each Goldfish is Hand Painted*, Friendly Street Poets in association with Wakefield Press, Kent Town, pp. 78-79.
- Komunyakaa, Yusef 1993, '1984', *Neon Vernacular*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, pp. 109-112.
- 1993, 'Changes; or, Reveries at a Window Overlooking a Country Road with Two Women Talking Blues in the Kitchen', *Neon Vernacular*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, pp. 8-10.

- 1993, 'A Good Memory', *Neon Vernacular*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, pp. 14-22.
- Kroll, Jeri 1984, 'The Reluctant Bride', *Indian Movies*, Hyland House Publishing, Melbourne, p. 67.
- 1984, 'Shawar', *Indian Movies*, Hyland House Publishing, Melbourne, p. 69.
- Kumin, Maxine 2002, 'Last Days', *Poetry*.
http://www.poetrymagazine.org/featured_poet_101602.html
 [accessed 22nd October 2002]
- Ladd, Mike 1984, 'Hot Wind', *The Crack in the Crib*, Friendly Street Poets, Adelaide, p. 19.
- 1984, 'Song for tape, hiss, junk, drums and sirens', *The Crack in the Crib*, Friendly Street Poets, Adelaide, pp. 65-69.
- 2000, 'Poems from Water', *Close to Home*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 54.
- 2003, 'Anakhronismos 7', *Rooms and Sequences*, Salt, Applecross, p. 12.
- Larkin, Philip 1964, 'Afternoons', *The Whitsun Weddings*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, p. 44.
- 1964, 'The Whitsun Weddings', *The Whitsun Weddings*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 21-23.
- 1974, 'Annus Mirabilis', *High Windows*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, p. 28.
- 1974, 'The Old Fools', *High Windows*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 13-14.
- Laskey, Michael 1999, 'The Tightrope Wedding', *The Tightrope Wedding*, Smith/Doorstop Books, Westgate, p. 68.
- Lawrence, Anthony 1996, 'Blackheath Cemetery', *The Viewfinder*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 68.
- 1996, 'The Dark Ship', *The Viewfinder*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 27.
- 1996, 'Sherwood Forest, 1925', *The Viewfinder*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 15.
- Lazic, Radmila 2002, 'A Woman's Letter', trans. Charles Simic, *Jacket 19*.
<http://www.jacketmagazine.com/19/lazl.html>
 [accessed 30th July 2007]
- Lea, Bronwyn 2001, 'The Indian Foot', *Flight animals*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, p. 9.
- Lee, Joyce 1994, 'Double Wedding', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 92.
- Leggott, Michele 2005, 'domingo', *Jacket 27*.
<http://www.jacketmagazine.com/27/legg.html>
 [accessed 30th July 2007]
- Le Guin, Ursula 1999, '12. Jean', *Sixty Odd*, Shambahla Publications, Boston, pp. 80-82.
- Leitch, Cathy 2003, 'The Farmer's Ex-Wife' [unpublished], submission for *Friendly Street Reader #28*, Adelaide.
- Levertov, Denise 1962, 'To the Muse', *O Taste and See*, New Directions Publishing, New York, pp. 25-27.
- 1979, 'Sunday Afternoon', *Collected Earlier Poems 1940-1960*, New Directions Books, New York, p. 78.

- 2005, 'Wedding-Ring', *About Marriage*
http://www.arlindo-correia.com/160305.html#About_Marriage_
 [accessed 25th May 2007]
- Levine, Mark 2001, 'Wedding Day', *The Best American Poetry 2001*, eds. Robert Hass and David Lehman, Scribner Poetry, New York, pp. 150-152.
- Lew, Emma 2002, 'Prey', *Anything the landlord touches*, Giromondo Publishing Company, Newcastle, p. 85
- 2002, 'Rose Constructions', *Anything the landlord touches*, Giromondo Publishing Company, Newcastle, pp. 22-23
- Lilley, Kate 2002, 'Quality Control', *Versary*, Salt Publishing, Applecross, p. 8.
- Liu, Timothy 2001, 'Western Wars Mitigated by the Confucian Analects', *Poets of the New Century*, eds. Roger Weingarten & Richard Higginson, David R. Godine, New York, pp. 212-213.
- Liversidge, Ray 2003, 'The bowl', *Obeying the Call*, Ginninderra Press, Charnwood, p. 53.
- Llewellyn, Kate 1979, 'Eve', *Number 7 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. John Bray & Jan Owen, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, p. 61.
- Loden, Rachel 2002, 'The Bride of Frankenstein', *Jacket 16*.
<http://www.jacketmagazine.com/16/ov-lode.html>
 [accessed 30th July 2007]
- Lomas, Adrian 2004, 'Wedding Day', *Poems and Readings for Weddings*, ed. Julia Watson, Penguin Books, London, p. 14.
- Lomer, Kathryn 2003, 'Extraction of Arrows', *Extraction of Arrows*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, pp. 39-40.
- 2003, 'I Was Once Wood', *Extraction of Arrows*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 25.
- 2003, 'A Little Extra Money', *Extraction of Arrows*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, pp. 17-18.
- 2003, 'Squid Fisher', *Extraction of Arrows*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 5.
- Lyon, George Ella 1981, 'Rings', *College English*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (April), p. 373.
- MacBeth, George 1964, 'Mother Superior', *Penguin Modern Poets 6*, Penguin Books, London, p. 91.
- 1988, 'Aconite', *Anatomy of a Divorce*, Hutchinson Ltd., London, p. 9.
- 1988, 'Dame's Violet', *Anatomy of a Divorce*, Hutchinson Ltd., London, p. 14.
- 1988, 'The Pigeon', *Anatomy of a Divorce*, Hutchinson Ltd., London, p. 15.
- McFarlane, Peter 1979, 'Honeymoon', *Number 5 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Nancy Gordon & K.F. Pearson, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, p. 65.
- McGough, Roger 1996, 'The Railings', *Blue light clear atoms: poetry for senior students*, eds. Peter McFarlane & Lisa Temple, Macmillan Education Australia, South Melbourne, pp. 139-140.
- McGowan, Susan 1987, 'Magnolia', *No. 11 Friendly Street Reader*, eds. Elaine Golding & Peter McFarlane, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, p. 80.
- McInerney, Stephen 2002, 'The Professor at His Desk', *In Your Absence: Poems 1994-2002*, Indigo, Canberra, p. 27.
- 2002, 'Retired Captain Writes his Wife From The Still And The West, Portsmouth', *In Your Absence: Poems 1994-2002*, Indigo, Canberra, pp. 45-46.

- McPherson, Sandra 2004, 'Officer and Gentleman and a Small Heroic Order', *The Paris Review*, Issue 170 (Summer).
<http://www.parisreview.com/tpr170/mcpherson.html>
 [accessed 20th September 2004]
- Mackenzie, Kenneth 1998, 'Two Trinities', *Australian Verse: An Oxford Anthology*, ed. John Leonard, Oxford University Press, Sydney, p. 227.
- Macià, Xavier 2006, 'Women Dressed in Black', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/today.htm>
 [accessed 23rd August 2006]
- Mackey, Mary 1987, 'Bag Lady', *The Dear Dance of Eros*, Fjord Press, Seattle, pp. 110-113.
- 1987, 'Don't Put Me in Your Toaster Oven, Honey. I'm Not a Patty Melt Man', *The Dear Dance of Eros*, Fjord Press, Seattle, pp. 33-36.
- 1987, 'For the Duration', *The Dear Dance of Eros*, Fjord Press, Seattle, pp. 99-105.
- 1987, 'Juliet', *The Dear Dance of Eros*, Fjord Press, Seattle, p. 45.
- 1987, 'Wild Woman', *The Dear Dance of Eros*, Fjord Press, Seattle, pp. 116-118.
- Macklin, Elizabeth 2004, 'From Scenes From a Courtship During Wartime', *The Women's Review of Books*.
<http://www.wellesley.edu/WomensReview/>
 [accessed 20th September 2004]
- Mansell, Chris 2004, 'Appealing the Sentence', *Voices in a Café*, Kardoorair Press, Armidale, p. 19.
- Manthorpe, Peter 2004, 'Not a Poem', *Another Universe: Friendly Street Poets 28*, eds. Kate Deller-Evans and Steve Evans, Friendly Street Poets in association with Wakefield Press, Adelaide, pp. 66-67.
- 2005, 'Wedding Poem' (unpublished).
- McPherson, Sandra 2004, 'Officer and Gentleman and a Small Heroic Order', *The Paris Review*, Issue 170 (Summer).
<http://www.parisreview.com/tpr170/mcpherson.html>
 [accessed 20th September 2004]
- Maegraith, Donna 1979, 'The Garden Wedding', *Number 7 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. John Bray & Jan Owen, Friendly Street Poets, Adelaide, p. 73.
- Mansell, Chris 2004, 'appealing the sentence', *Voices in a Café*, Kardoorair Press, Armidale, p. 19.
- Mariani, Paul 2006, 'P.S.', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/psmarian.htm>
 [accessed 2nd January 2006]
- Markham, Edward 2002, 'The Invisible Bride', *The Little Book of Modern Verse: A Selection from the work of contemporaneous American poets*, [ed. Jessie B. Rittenhouse, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1917] Bartleby.Com, New York.
<http://www.infoplease.com/t/poetry/modern-verse/invisible-bride.html>
 [accessed 5th October 2007]
- Marson, Una 2004, 'To Wed or Not to Wed', *Poems and Readings for Weddings*, ed. Julia Watson, Penguin Books, London, p. 69.
- Mateer, John 2002, 'Four Images: 2. The Dream', *Loanwords*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, North Fremantle, pp. 57-58.
- 2007, 'Cemitério Da Ajuda', *The Best Australian Poems 2007*, ed. Peter Rose, Black Inc., Melbourne, p. 69.

- Mayhall, Jane 2004, 'Notes for a Sixtieth Wedding Anniversary', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/notesmay.htm>
 [accessed 1st March 2004]
- Meehan, Paula 1996, 'Child Burial', *Emergency Kit: Poems for strange times*, eds. Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney, Faber and Faber Ltd, London, pp. 69-70.
- Metcalf, Tim 2002, 'Surgeon and bride', *Cut to the Word*, Ginninderra Press, Canberra, p. 60.
- Millett, John 1994, 'From *Tail Arse Charlie*', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 121-122.
- 2002, 'Disembarkation Leave', *Last Draft*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 4.
- Milosz, Czeslaw 2001, 'II Diary of a Naturalist', *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*, Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, London, pp. 281-290.
- Moore, Emily 2006, 'Tale', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/talemoor.htm>
 [accessed 21st April 2006]
- Morgan, Mal 2001, 'I'll Leave a Poem or Two', *Ma Non Troppo*, Picaro Press, Warners Bay, p. 16.
- Motion, Andrew 1997, 'A dream of peace', *Penguin Modern Poets 11*, Penguin Books, London, pp. 86-93.
- 1997, 'In the attic', *Penguin Modern Poets 11*, Penguin Books, London, p. 43.
- Murdoch, Nina 1994, 'Warbride', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 56-57.
- Murphy, Lizz 2001, 'Turning the Other Cheek', *Muse* No. 210, p. 20.
- Murphy, Peter 1994, 'Jane Eyre Extensions', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 209.
- Murray, Les 1999, 'Oasis City', *Conscious and Verbal*, Duffy & Snellgrove, Potts Point, p. 50.
- 1999, 'Rodd Island Wedding', *Conscious and Verbal*, Duffy & Snellgrove, Potts Point, p. 22.
- 1999, 'The Rotterdam Flight Cage', *Conscious and Verbal*, Duffy & Snellgrove, Potts Point, pp. 69-70.
- Murrell, Phillip 2003, 'we should have known it', *Haiku for Lovers*, ed. Manu Bazzano, MQ Publications, London, p. 153.
- Muske, Carol 1992, 'Red Trousseau', *The Best American Poetry 1992*, eds. Charles Simic & David Lehman, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, p. 145.
- Mutsuo, Takahashi 1978, 'Portrait of Myself as an Ancient Goddess', *Modern Japanese Poetry*, ed. AR Davis, trans. James Kirkup, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, p. 269.
- Nadge, Ann 2003, 'Wedding', *Corrugations*, Ginninderra Press, Canberra, p. 57.
- Nash, Ogden 1956, 'Here Usually Comes the Bride', *Versus*, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London, p. 146.
- Newsom, Vera 2000, 'The Gown', *High Tide*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 55.
- 2000, 'Two Poems: 2. Winter Thoughts', *High Tide*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 65-66.

- Nicholas, Louise 2003, 'Mislaid', *The Mammogram*, Nicholas, Glenelg South, [no page no.].
- Nichols, Grace 1996, 'The Fat Black Woman's Instructions to a Suitor', *Blue light clear atoms: poetry for senior students*, eds. Peter McFarlane & Lisa Temple, Macmillan Education Australia, South Melbourne, pp. 64-65.
- Nicholson, Peter 1991, 'A Wedding', *A Temporary Grace*, Wellington Lane Press, McMahons Point, p. 30.
- Neilson, John Shaw 1998, 'The Moon Was Seven Days Down', *Australian Verse: An Oxford Anthology*, ed. John Leonard, Oxford University Press, Sydney, pp. 283-284.
- O'Driscoll, Dennis 2006, 'All Over Ireland', *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, Vol. 29 Issues 1-2, pp. 201-205
<http://www.parnassuspoetry.com/excerpts.htm>
 [accessed 19th November 2009]
- Olds, Sharon 1996, 'I Go Back to May 1937', *Emergency Kit: Poems for strange times*, eds. Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney, Faber and Faber Ltd, London, pp. 223-224.
- 1999, '19', *Blood, Tin, Straw*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, pp. 38-39.
- 1999, 'After Punishment Was Done with Me', *Blood, Tin, Straw*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, pp. 44-45.
- 1999, 'The Elopement', *Blood, Tin, Straw*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, pp. 36-37.
- 1999, 'To My Husband', *Blood, Tin, Straw*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, p. 92.
- 1999, 'When It Comes', *Blood, Tin, Straw*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, p. 14..
- 2002, 'Psalm', *The Unswept Room*, Alfred Knopf, New York, pp. 121-122.
- 2002, 'The Wedding Vow', *The Unswept Room*, Alfred Knopf, New York, pp. 30-31.
- Ostriker, Alicia 1980, 'One Marries', *The Mother/Child Papers*, Beacon Press, Massachusetts, pp. 59-60.
- 1989, 'The Bride', *Green Age*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, pp. 43-45.
- 1989, 'A Meditation in Seven Days', *Green Age*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, pp. 46-56.
- 1996, 'Extraterrestrial: A Wedding Poem for Nina and John, January 2, 1989', *The Crack in Everything*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, pp. 74-76.
- Oswald, Alice 2004, 'Wedding', *Poems and Readings for Weddings*, ed. Julia Watson, Penguin Books, London, p. 41.
- Owen, Jan 1979, 'Hiraeth', *Number 7 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. John Bray & Jan Owen, Friendly Street Poets, Unley, p. 83.
- 1994, 'This Marriage', *Night Rainbows*, William Heinemann Australia, Port Melbourne, pp. 60-63.
- 2001, 'South', *The Colonial Athens*, ed. Martin R. Johnson, Gawler Centenary of Federation Committee, Gawler, p. 97.
- 2002a, 'The Return', *Timedancing*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 80-83.
- 2002a, 'Santa Cecilia in Trastevere', *Timedancing*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 92-93.

- 2002b, 'Summer', *Quadrant*, No. 390, Vol XLVI, No. 10, October, p. 60.
- Ozaki, Hosai 1993, 'Carrying a child on my back', *Right under the big sky, I don't wear a hat: the haiku and prose of Hosai Ozaki*, trans. Hiroaki Sato, Stone Bridge Press, Berkeley, p. 68.
- Page, Geoff 1992, 'December Weddings', *Gravel Corners*, Angus & Robertson, Pymble, p. 49.
- 1997, 'Ashes', *The Secret*, William Heinemann Australia, Kew, Victoria, p. 51.
- 1999, 'Two Signatures', *Collateral Damage*, Ginninderra Press, Charnwood, pp. 26-27.
- 2001, 'The Analogues', *Darker and Lighter*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 75.
- 2001, 'Starting Over', *Darker and Lighter*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 17-18.
- 2002, 'My Mothers' God', *My Mother's God*, Picaro Press, Warners Bay, pp. 6-7.
- Paterson, Don 1996, 'A Private Bottling', *Emergency Kit: Poems for strange times*, eds. Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, pp. 187-190.
- Pattinson, Jillian 2007, 'In the Tongue of the Tokay Gecko', *The Best Australian Poems 2007*, ed. Peter Rose, Black Inc., Melbourne, pp. 79-80.
- Plath, Sylvia 1965, 'Daddy', *Ariel*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 54-56.
- 1965, 'Lady Lazarus', *Ariel*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 16-19.
- 1996, 'The Applicant', *Emergency Kit: Poems for strange times*, eds. Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, pp. 111-113.
- Polain, Marcella 2000, 'an astronomer speaks to his wife', *Each Clear Night*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 10-11.
- Porter, Dorothy 2002, 'Flames', *Wild Surmise*, Picador, Sydney, p. 56.
- 2005, 'On Reading E.M. Forster's Guide to Alexandria', *The Best Australian Poems 2005*, ed. Les Murray, Black Inc., Melbourne, pp. 136-137.
- Porter, Peter 1969, 'Made in Heaven', *Poems from Poetry and Jazz in Concert*, ed. Jeremy Robson, Souvenir Press. London, pp. 98-99.
- 1969, 'Metamorphosis', *Poems from Poetry and Jazz in Concert*, ed. Jeremy Robson, Souvenir Press. London, p. 94.
- 1994, 'A Chagall Postcard', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p.154.
- 1994, 'Old-Fashioned Wedding', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp.152-153.
- Powell, Craig 2002, 'Wollongong Harbour', *Music and Women's Bodies*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 62-63.
- Raine, Craig 1978, 'Epithalamion', *The Onion, Memory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 35.
- 1978, 'Reading Her Old Letter About a Wedding', *The Onion, Memory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 31-32.
- 1979, 'Flying to Belfast, 1977', *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 32.
- 1979, 'The Meteorological Lighthouse at O-', *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 34-35.

- 1984, 'The Gift', *Rich*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 95-97.
- 1984, 'Placebo', *Rich*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 31-33.
- 1984, 'Purge', *Rich*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 102-104.
- Raphael, Dan 2002, 'down by the river', *5-Trope*, Vol. 14, July.
http://webdelisol.com/5_trope/14/raphael.htm
 [accessed 11th October 2002]
- Reece, Spencer 2009, 'My Great-Grandmother's Bible', *The New Yorker*, 2nd November.
http://www.newyorker.com/fiction/poetry/2009/11/02/091102po_poem_reece
 [accessed 12th November 2009]
- Reeves, Lyn 2002, 'Tryst', *Speaking with Ghosts*, Ginninderra Press, Canberra, p. 63.
- Rekdal, Paisley 2002, 'race: a medley', *Boston Review, 1993–2003*.
<http://www.people.memphis.edu/%7Erivercity/rekdal.html>
 [accessed 18th October 2002]
- Rich, Adrienne 1999, 'Rusted Legacy', *Poetry Daily: 366 Poems from the World's Most Popular Poetry Website*, eds. Diane Boller, Don Selby & Chrissy Yost, Sourcebooks, Inc., Naperville, p. 115.
- Rivard, David 2003, 'Message to the Bride', *Boston Review, 1993–2003*.
<http://bostonreview.net/BR20.4/Rivard.html>
 [accessed 21st December 2003]
- Roberts, Kevin 2004, 'New Australian', *Another Universe: Friendly Street Poets 28*, eds. Kate Deller-Evans & Steve Evans, Friendly Street Poets in association with Wakefield Press, Adelaide, p. 82.
- Roberts, Michelle 1995, 'A harvest journey', *All the selves I was*, Virago Press, London, pp. 63-64.
- 1995, 'New Year's Eve at Lavarone', *All the selves I was*, Virago Press, London, pp. 38-39.
- 1995, 'the oyster woman', *All the selves I was*, Virago Press, London, pp. 29-31.
- 1995, 'The return', *All the selves I was*, Virago Press, London, pp. 61-62.
- 1995, 'Train journey Shrewesbury-Aberstwyth', *All the selves I was*, Virago Press, London, p. 40.
- 1995, 'the wedding party', *All the selves I was*, Virago Press, London, pp. 101-102.
- Rosenberg, Jacob G. 2000, 'How Life Went On', *Behind the Moon*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 28.
- 2000, 'Jacob in Love', *Behind the Moon*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 65.
- 2000, 'Wedding Anniversary', *Behind the Moon*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 17.
- Ross, Zan 2003, 'Chapel, 1996', *en passant*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, North Fremantle, pp. 46-47.
- Rowbottom, David 2002, 'The Wishbone of the Albatross', *Poems for America*, Interactive Press, Carindale, pp. 36-37.
- Ryan, Gig 1994, 'She Gives Reason', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 261.
- 1998, 'The Cross/The Bay', *Australian Verse: An Oxford Anthology*, ed. John Leonard, Oxford University Press, Sydney, p. 28.

- 2001, 'Crinkled dawn', *Heroic Money*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, pp. 33-35.
- 2001, 'Electra to Clytemnestra', *Heroic Money*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, p. 64.
- 2001, 'Heroic Money', *Heroic Money*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, p. 9.
- 2001, 'Paganini', *Heroic Money*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, p. 44.
- 2001, 'Rameses', *Heroic Money*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, p. 12.
- 2001, 'The second form of boredom', *Heroic Money*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, p. 26.
- 2001, 'You tore into the world', *Heroic Money*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, p. 41.
- Sant, Andrew 1989, 'Ghosts of Glebe', *Brushing the Dark*, William Heinemann, Richmond, pp. 24-28.
- 1989, 'A Vineyard Quartet', *Brushing the Dark*, William Heinemann, Richmond, pp. 70-71.
- 2001, 'A Shower Medley,' *Russian Ink*, Black Pepper, Melbourne, pp. 60-62.
- 2001, 'Summertime: A Holiday Chronicle,' *Russian Ink*, Black Pepper, Melbourne, pp. 65-89.
- 2002, 'A Fireworks Forecast', *The Islanders*, Shoestring Press, Nottingham, p. 41.
- Sayers Ellis, Thomas 1997, 'Atomic Bride', *The Best American Poetry 1997*, eds. James Tate & David Lehman, pp. 64-67.
- Schiff, Robyn 2008, 'Colt Rapid Fire Revolver', *Colt Rapid Fire Revolver*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, pp. 1-4
- 2008, 'H5N1', *Colt Rapid Fire Revolver*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, pp. 50-52.
- 2008, 'Silverware', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/poem.php?date=14136>
 [accessed 13th September 2008]
- Schulz, Ros 2003, 'Wedding Photos in Sepia', [unpublished], submission for *Friendly Street Reader #28*, Adelaide.
- Schultz, Philip 2001, 'The Extra', *Poets of the New Century*, eds. Roger Weingarten & Richard Higgerson, David R. Godine, New York, p. 325.
- 2001, 'In Medias Res', *Poets of the New Century*, eds. Roger Weingarten & Richard Higgerson, David R. Godine, New York, p. 326.
- Senryu 2003, Hisui 2003, 'the engaged couple', *Haiku for Lovers*, ed. Manu Bazzano, MQ Publications, London. p. 229.
- 2003, Hisui 2003, 'how beautiful', *Haiku for Lovers*, ed. Manu Bazzano, MQ Publications, London. p. 92.
- Sexton, Anne 1962, 'All My Pretty Ones', *All My Pretty Ones*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, pp. 4-5.
- 1962, 'The Black Art', *All My Pretty Ones*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, p. 65.
- 1962, 'Wallflower', *All My Pretty Ones*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, p. 47.
- 1964, 'The Division of Parts', *Selected Poems*, Oxford University Press, London, pp. 38-43.

- 1964, 'The Double Image', *Selected Poems*, Oxford University Press, London, pp. 29-37.
- 1967, 'Crossing the Atlantic', *Live or Die*, Oxford University Press, London, pp. 47-48.
- 1967, 'Sylvia's Death', *Live or Die*, Oxford University Press, London, pp. 38-40.
- 1967, 'Two Sons', *Live or Die*, Oxford University Press, London, pp. 33-34.
- 1967, 'The Wedding Night', *Live or Die*, Oxford University Press, London, pp. 60-61.
- 1969, 'The Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator', *Love Poems*, Oxford University Press, London, pp. 33-34.
- 1969, 'The Interrogation of the Man of Many Hearts', *Love Poems*, Oxford University Press, London, pp. 6-9.
- 1969, 'The Papa and Mama Dance', *Love Poems*, Oxford University Press, London, pp. 37-38.
- 2004, 'The Wedding Ring Dance', *American Poems*.
[Originally in 1976, *45 Mercy Street*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston]
<http://www.americanpoems.com/poets/annesexton/9337>
[accessed 19th April 2004]
- Sharkey, Michael 2001, 'Get Age', *Poems 2001*, Kardoorair Press, Armidale, pp. 31-32.
- 2001, 'More Characters of Jokes', *Poems 2001*, Kardoorair Press, Armidale, pp. 10-12.
- 2001, 'Past', *Poems 2001*, Kardoorair Press, Armidale, pp. 22-23.
- 2001, 'War Comics', *Poems 2001*, Kardoorair Press, Armidale, pp. 56-59.
- Shapcott, Tom 2000, 'the old window', *Chekhov's Mongoose*, Salt Publishing, Applecross, p. 3.
- 2000, 'Smile', *Chekhov's Mongoose*, Salt Publishing, Applecross, p. 12.
- Shore, Jane 2001, 'I Dream About My Dead', *Poets of the New Century*, eds. Roger Weingarten & Richard Higgerson, David R. Godine, New York, pp. 341-343.
- Simic, Charles 1995, 'A Place in the Country', *Frightening Toys*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, p. 13.
- 1995, 'Marina's Epic', *Frightening Toys*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 91-93.
- 1999, 'Ambiguity's Wedding', *Jackstraws*, Harcourt Brace, Orlando, p. 52.
- 1999, 'The Blizzard of Love', *Jackstraws*, Harcourt Brace, Orlando, p. 44.
- 1999, 'The Famous No-Shows', *Jackstraws*, Harcourt Brace, Orlando, pp. 22-23.
- 1999, 'In the Street', *Jackstraws*, Harcourt Brace, Orlando, p. 39.
- 1999, 'Live at Club Revolution', *Jackstraws*, Harcourt Brace, Orlando, p. 12.
- 1999, 'Midnight Freight', *Jackstraws*, Harcourt Brace, Orlando, p. 15.
- 1999, 'The Soul Has Many Brides', *Jackstraws*, Harcourt Brace, Orlando, p. 5.
- Simmons Oles, Carole 2006, 'Hatty to Posterity: On Friendship, Flirtation, and the Fury to Wed', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/today.htm>
[accessed 26th November 2006]

- Simms, Martha 2004, 'No Mistake', *Poems and Readings for Weddings*, ed. Julia Watson, Penguin Books, London, p. 89.
- Skrzynecki, Peter 2001, 'Death Mask Sculpture of James Joyce', *Time's Revenge*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, pp. 90-92.
- Sladdin, Alice 2007, 'The Third Wife' (unpublished).
- Slesinger, Warren 2003, 'Match', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/twoposle.htm>
 [accessed 26th September 2003]
- Smith, R.T. 2003, 'Confession in a Booth at the Hollow Log Lounge', *Poetry Daily*.
[\http://www.poems.com/threesmi.htm
 [accessed 10th September 2003]
- Smith, Stevie 1969, 'I Remember', *Poems from Poetry and Jazz in Concert*, ed. Jeremy Robson, Souvenir Press. London, p. 128.
- Sparr, Lisa Russ 2004, 'Dawn', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/dawnspaa.htm>
 [accessed 1st November 2004]
- Spears, Britney 2006, 'Honeymoon Poem', *Stereogum*.
<http://www.stereogum.com/archives/001018.html>
 [accessed 17th April 2006]
- Spires, Elizabeth 2004, 'Sims: The Game', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/simstspi.htm>
 [accessed 16th April 2004]
- Srubas, Rachel 1992, 'I Want to Marry You', *The Best American Poetry 1992*, eds. Charles Simic & David Lehman, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, pp. 180-181.
- Stasko, Nicolette 2003, 'Days', *The Weight of Irises*, Back Pepper Press, Fitzroy. pp. 43-50 .
- 2003, 'The Sea Horse', *The Weight of Irises*, Back Pepper Press, Fitzroy. pp. 37-40 .
- Stewart, Kathleen 2005, 'Mr Hydes', *The Best Australian Poems 2005*, ed. Les Murray, Black Inc., Melbourne, p. 160.
- Stuart, Ray 2001, 'At 88 My Father', *To Fly Again*, Ginninderra Press, Canberra, p. 22.
- 2001, 'Black on White', *To Fly Again*, Ginninderra Press, Canberra, p. 28.
- Sutton, Dorothy 1996, 'On Our Way to a Wedding', *College English*, Vol. 58, No. 8 (December), pp. 955-956.
- Swann, Brian 2006, 'The Whistler and His Dog', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/whistswa.htm>
 [accessed 14th January 2006]
- Sweeney, Matthew 1997, 'The Bridal Suite', *The Bridal Suite*, Cape Poetry, London, p. 5.
- 2000, 'Weddings and Funerals', *A Smell of Fish*, Cape Poetry, London, p. 4.
- Szyborska, Wislawa 1996, 'Golden Anniversary', *Poems New and Collected 1957-1997*, trans. Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh, Harcourt Inc., Orlando, p. 41.
- 1996, 'Hitler's First Photograph', *Poems New and Collected 1957-1997*, trans. Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh, Harcourt Inc., Orlando, pp. 196-197.
- 1996, 'Museum', *Poems New and Collected 1957-1997*, trans. Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh, Harcourt Inc., Orlando, p. 30.

- 1996, 'Wrong Number', *Poems New and Collected 1957-1997*, trans. Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh, Harcourt Inc., Orlando, p. 113.
- Talbot, Norman 2003, 'VII Women & Waves', *Every Sonnet Tells a Story*, Koel Koel Publications, Hamilton, p. 21.
- Tarn, Nathaniel 1969, 'The Wedding', *Poems from Poetry and Jazz in Concert*, ed. Jeremy Robson, Souvenir Press. London, p. 134.
- Tate, James 2008, 'A Wedding', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=177317>
 [30th April 2008]
- Taylor, Andrew 1971, 'my two Sicilian statues', *the cool change*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, pp. 26-27.
- 1979, 'Story', *Number Three Friendly Street*, eds. Larry Buttrose & Peter Goldsworthy, Adelaide University Union Press, Adelaide, pp. 102-103.
- Taylor, Ken 2002, 'Epithalamium', *Poems for All Occasions*, ed. Ron Pretty, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 36.
- Terris, Susan 2006, 'Gypsy Bride', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/twopotter.htm>
 [accessed 12th October 2006]
- Thurley, Geoffrey 1978, 'Petite Suite', *Number Two Friendly Street*, eds. Andrew Taylor & Ian Reid, Adelaide University Union Press, Adelaide, pp. 105-106.
- Thurston, Robin 1994, 'Gifts', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 173-174.
- Timoney Jenkin, Ann 1990, 'Diamond Wedding', *Number 14 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Neil Paech & Ann Timoney Jenkin, Wakefield Press in association with Friendly Street Poets, Kent Town, p. 108.
- Tracey, Mary-Ann 2004, 'Changes', *Poems and Readings for Weddings*, ed. Julia Watson, Penguin Books, London, p. 12.
- Turner, Brian 2007, 'What Every Soldier Should Know', *The Best American Poetry 2007*, eds. David Lehman & Heather McHugh, Scribner Press, New York, pp. 104-105.
- Ulman, Abby 2005, 'Jerusalem Has No Subconscious', *The Best Australian Poems 2005*, ed. Les Murray, Black Inc., Melbourne, p. 169-170.
- Updike, John 1994, 'The Newlyweds', *The Oxford Book of Comic Verse*, ed. John Gross, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 431.
- van den Heuvel, Cor (ed.) 1999, *The Haiku Anthology*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York.
- Vella, Maria 2005, 'The Old Bastard', *The Best Australian Poems 2005*, ed. Les Murray, Black Inc., Melbourne, p. 171.
- Wakeling, Louise 2002, 'tide wrack: 1. la Figlia della Morte', *Medium Security*, Ginninderra Press, Canberra, pp. 85-86
- Wallace-Crabbe, Chris 2001, 'The Yes in Phenomena', *By and Large*, Brandl & Schlesinger Poetry, Rose Bay, p. 86.
- Walker, Lyndon 2000, '47th Birthday', *So Many Rivers, So Much to Learn*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 86.
- 2000, 'The Amulet', *So Many Rivers, So Much to Learn*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 94-96.
- 2000, 'Cherry Picking with a Nihilist', *So Many Rivers, So Much to Learn*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 84-85.

- 2000, 'Two Poems after John Berger: 1. What the Trees Say', *So Many Rivers, So Much to Learn*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 15.
- Walter, Lesley 2000, 'Hats, Too', *Watermelon Baby*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 38-39.
- 2000, 'Nothing out of the Ordinary', *Watermelon Baby*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 59.
- 2000, 'The Possessive Case', *Watermelon Baby*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 61.
- Wattison, Meredith 2001, 'Electra', *Fishwife*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 37.
- 2001, 'Horse', *Fishwife*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 60.
- 2001, 'With Give Gold', *Fishwife*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 45.
- Wearne, Alan 2001, 'Part 5: Barb at Dot's Wedding', *The Lovemakers: Book One: Saying all the great sexy things*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, pp. 168-182.
- 2001, 'Part 5: Auntie Wynne at Barb's Wedding', *The Lovemakers: Book One: Saying all the great sexy things*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, pp. 183-186.
- Webb, Phyllis 1971, 'The Effigy', *Selected Poems 1954-1965*, Talonbooks, Vancouver, p. 68.
- Wieseltier, Meir 2004, 'The Secret of Authority', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/secrewie.htm>
 [accessed 24th February 2004]
- Wild, Margaret 2003, 'mermaid', *One Night*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, pp. 12-13.
- Williams, Lauren 1993, 'On Hearing of the Forthcoming Marriage of Two Poets', *the Sad Anthropologist*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 41.
- 1993, 'The Three Sisters', *the Sad Anthropologist*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 51.
- Wilson, Edwin 2002, '53 Orange Blues', *Anthology*, Kardoorair Press, Armidale, p. 52.
- Woodhouse, Jena 1994, 'The Bride of Byfield', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 241.
- Wright, Carolyne 2001, 'The Conjure Woman', *Poets of the New Century*, eds. Roger Weingarten & Richard Higgerson, David R. Godine, New York, pp. 420-421.
- Wright, Judith 1994, 'Dove-Love', *The Oxford Book of Australian Love Poems*, ed. Jennifer Strauss, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 108-109.
- Yasuo, Irizawa 1978 'Newlyweds', *Modern Japanese Poetry*, ed. A.R. Davis, trans. James Kirkup, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, p. 224.
- Young, Cathy 2004, 'Live-In Domestic', *Another Universe: Friendly Street Poets 28*, eds. Kate Deller-Evans and Steve Evans, Friendly Street Poets in association with Wakefield Press, Adelaide, p. 104.
- Zwicky, Fay 2005, 'Makassar, 1956', *The Best Australian Poetry 2005*, eds. Bronwyn Lea & Martin Duwell, University of Queensland Press, pp. 125-130.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M.H. 2005, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Thomson Wadsworth, Boston.
- Altieri, Charles 1991, 'Review: Responsiveness to Lyric and the Critic's Responsibilities', *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Winter, 1991), pp. 580-587.
- 2001, 'Taking Lyrics Literally: Teaching Poetry in a Prose Culture', *New Literary History*, Vol. 32, No. 2, Reexamining Critical Processing (Spring, 2001), pp. 259-281.
- Aristotle 1987, *The Poetics*, trans. Stephen Halliwell, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.
- Armitage, Simon (ed.) 2002, *101 Very Short Poems*, Faber and Faber, London.
- Atwood, Margaret 1970a, 'Midwinter, Presolstice', *Procedures for Underground*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, p. 20.
- 1970b, 'Charivari', *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, Oxford University Press Canada, Don Mills, p. 37.
- 1978, 'Marrying the Hangman', *Two-Headed Poems*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, pp. 48-51.
- 1987, 'Marrying the Hangman', *Poetry Foundation*. Taken from *Selected Poems 1976-1986*, Houghton & Mifflin. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=177287> [accessed 8th December 2006]
- 1998, 'Marrying the Hangman', *Eating Fire: Selected Poetry 1965-1995*, Virago Press, London, pp. 209-211.
- 1995, 'On Writing Poetry', *Waterstone's Poetry Lecture*, O.W. Toad – Margaret Atwood Reference Site. <http://www.owtoad.com> [accessed 8th December 2006]
- Axmaker, Sean 2008, "'Dr. Strangelove' - a screwball satire of mutually assured destruction", *Seanax.com*. <http://www.seanax.com/2008/03/26/dr-strangelove-a-screwball-satire-of-mutually-assured-destruction/> [accessed 13th November 2008]
- Baker, Aaron 2003, 'Chimbu Wedding', *Poetry Daily*. <http://www.poems.com/chimbbak.htm> [accessed 18th March 2003]
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1986, 'The problem of the text in linguistics, philology, and the human sciences: An experiment in philosophical analysis', *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W McGee, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Barthes, Roland 1971, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Howard, Hill and Wang, New York
- 1977, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, Collins, Glasgow.
- Bazzano, Manu (ed.) 2003, *Haiku for Lovers*, MQ Publications, London.
- Block, Ed Jr. 1978, 'Lyric Voice and Reader Response: One View of the Transition to Modern Poetics', *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Summer), pp. 154-168.

- Bordwell, David 1988, 'ApPropriations and ImProprieties: Problems in the Morphology of Film Narrative', *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Spring, pp. 5-20.
- Branigan, Edward 1992, 'Narrative Schema', *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, Routledge, London.
- Bray, John 1978, 'Death at the Wedding', *No. 2 Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, eds. Ian Reid and Andrew Taylor, Adelaide University Union Press, Adelaide, p. 41.
- Brennan, Michael & Minter, Peter (eds.), *Calyx*, Paper Bark Press, Sydney.
- Brooks, Peter 1984, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Brooks, Cleanth 1966, 'The Language of Paradox', *John Donne's Poetry*, ed. A.L. Clements, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, New York, pp. 177-186.
- Brophy, Kevin 2003, *Explorations in Creative Writing*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- Brown, Stephen J. 1966, *The World of Imagery*, Russell & Russell, New York.
- Cameron, Sharon 1979, *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Campbell, Joseph, 1968, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2nd edn, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Cartwright, Bec 2005, 'Wedding Poem', *Ivan Rubinstein*.
[originally in *Daily Telegraph*, 25th July 2005]
<http://www.ivanrubinstein.com/?p=530>
[accessed 17th April 2006]
- Chambers, Aidan 1985, *Booktalk: occasional writing on literature & children*, The Bodely Head, London.
- Chatfield, Hale 2002, 'Poetry as a Haywire Technology', *The Daily Revolution*.
<http://dailyrevolution.com/saturday/poetry.html>
[accessed 19th June 2002]
- Cirillo, A.R. 1968, 'Spenser's Epithalamion: The Harmonious Universe of Love', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 8, No. 1, The English Renaissance (Winter), pp. 19-34.
- Coleman, Aidan 2005, 'The Wedding Plan', *Avenues & Runways*, Brandl & Schlesinger, Melbourne, pp. 31-32.
- Collins, V.H. 1930, *A Book of Narrative Verse*, Oxford University Press, London.
- Croggon, Alison 2002, 'On lyric', *Attempts at Being*, Salt Publishing, Applecross, pp. 49-57.
- Crosman, Inge 1983, 'Reference and the Reader', *Poetics Today*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 89-97.
- Crozier, Lorna 2003, *Bones in their Wings*, Hagios Press, Regina.
- Culler, Jonathan 2008, 'Why lyric?', *PMLA*, Vol. 123, Issue 1, pp. 201-206.
- Dankoff, Arthur 1984, 'The Lyric in the Romance: The Use of Ghazals in Persian and Turkish Masnavis', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 9-25.
- Danto, Arthur C. 1985, *Narration and Knowledge*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Davis, A.R. (ed.) 1978, *Modern Japanese Poetry*, trans. James Kirkup, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia.

- Day, Sarah 1987, 'Brides', *A Hunger to be Less Serious*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, pp. 63-64.
- Dawson, P. 2006, 'Writers, critics and literary authority,' in Nigel Krauth and Tess Brady (eds.), *Creative writing: theory beyond practice*, Post Pressed, Teneriffe, pp. 21-32.
- 2008, 'Creative writing and postmodern interdisciplinarity', *TEXT* 12.1. www.textjournal.com.au/april08/dawson.htm [accessed 20th November 2009]
- de Man, Paul 1970, 'Lyric and Modernity', *Forms of Lyric*, ed. Reuben A. Brower, Columbia University Press, New York.
- 1971, *Blindness and Insight*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- DeMaria, Robert Jr. 1978, 'The Ideal Reader: A Critical Fiction', *PMLA*, Vol. 93, No. 3, May, pp. 463-474.
- Dennis, C.J. 1957, *The Sentimental Bloke*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- Dobyns, Stephen 2003, *Best Words, Best Order*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York.
- Donne, John 1994, 'The Canonization,' *The Works of John Donne*, Wordsworth Editions, Ware, pp. 6-7.
- 1994, 'Farewell to Love', *The Works of John Donne*, Wordsworth Editions, Ware, pp. 48-49.
- 1994, 'The First Anniversary', *The Works of John Donne*, Wordsworth Editions, Ware, pp. 172-184.
- Dowlin, Cornell March 1941, 'Plot as an Essential in Poetry', *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 66 (April), pp. 166-183.
- Dr. Strangelove, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* 1964 (motion picture), dir. Stanley Kubrick, Hawk Films. Ltd.
- Drury, John 1991, *Creating Poetry*, Writer's Digest Books, Cincinnati.
- Duncker, Patricia 2007, 'Fiction vs Autobiography', Keynote Speech, *...and is...12th Annual Conference of Australian Association of Writing Programs*, Canberra, 21st November 2007.
- Eagleton, Terry 1998, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Eco, Umberto 1979, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- 1981, 'The Theory of Signs and the Role of the Reader', *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, Vol. 14, No. 1, (Spring), pp.35-45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1314865> [accessed 8th April 2008]
- 1990, *The Limits of Interpretation*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis.
- 2006, *On Literature*, Secker & Warburg, London.
- Elfenbein, Andrew 2006, 'Cognitive Science and the History of Reading' *PMLA*, Vol. 121, No. 2, pp. 484-502.
- Evans, Steve 2003, 'Something Old, Something New: How recent poetry employs metaphor and narrative in wedding references', *Counterpoints: The Flinders University Journal of Interdisciplinary Conference Papers 2002*, Vol. 2 No. 1, Flinders University, Adelaide, pp. 27-35.
- 2004, 'Inescapable Stories: The infiltration of narrative into non-narrative poetry', *Counterpoints: The Flinders University Journal of Interdisciplinary Conference Papers 2003*, Vol. 3 No. 1, Flinders University, Adelaide, pp. 29-41.

- Farndall, Nigel 2002, 'Robert Altman: a gambling man', *The Sunday Age Magazine*, 17th February, p. 21
- Farrell, Michael 2002, *ode ode*, Salt Publishing, Applecross.
- Fennelly, Beth Ann 2003, 'Poem Not to Be Read at Your Wedding', *Poetry Daily*.
<http://www.poems.com/twopofen.htm>
 [accessed 29th April 2003]
- Filreis, Al & Walker, Shawn 2008, 'Aspects of "language poetry" and contemporary avant-garde writing', *Modern and Contemporary American Poetry*, University of Pennsylvania.
<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/chap900a.html>
 [accessed 20th November 2008]
- Fish, Stanley 1980a, 'How To Recognize a Poem When You See One', *Is There a Text in This Class?*, Harvard University Press, London, pp. 322-337.
- 1980b, 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics', *Reader-Response Criticism: from formalism to post-structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, pp. 70-100.
- Flinker, Noam 1999, 'John Donne and the "Anthropomorphic Map" Tradition', *Applied Semiotics / Sémiotique appliquée*, Vol. 3 No. 8, pp. 207-215.
- Folsom, Eric 1995, 'Commentary on Ghazals', *AHA!Poetry*, ed. Jane Reichhold.
<http://www.ahapoetry.com/ghazal.htm>
 [accessed 25th June 2008]
- Freund, Elizabeth 1987, *The Return of the Reader: reader-response criticism*, Methuen, London.
- Frye, Northrop 1966, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Atheneum, New York.
- Furniss, Tom & Bath, Michael 1996, *Reading Poetry: an introduction*, Prentice Hall, London.
- Genette, Gérard 1976, 'Boundaries of Narrative', *New Literary History*, trans. Ann Levonas, Vol. 8 No. 1, Readers and Spectators: Some Views and Reviews, Autumn, pp. 1-13.
- Gillam, Kevin 2004, 'ode ode', *five bells: Lyric Poetry Winter*, p. 51.
- Gioia, Dana 1991, 'Can Poetry Matter?', *Dana Gioia Online*.
 [First published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1991.]
<http://www.danagioia.net/essays/ecpm.htm>
 [accessed 17th July 2003]
- 1995, 'Robert McDowell's *Diviners*', *Dana Gioia Online*.
 [First published as the introduction to *The Diviners* by Robert McDowell (Peterloo Poets 1995)]
<http://www.danagioia.net/essays/emcdowell.htm>
 [accessed 17th July 2003]
- 2003, 'Disappearing Ink: Poetry at the End of Print Culture', *The Hudson Review*, Vol. LVI, Number 1 (Spring).
<http://www.hudsonreview.com/gioiaSp03.pdf>
 [accessed 23rd February 2008]
- Greene, Thomas M. 1957, 'Spenser and the Epithalamic Convention', *Comparative Literature*, University of Oregon, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Summer), pp. 215-228.
- Griggs, Earl Leslie (ed.) 1932, *Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. II*, Constable and Company Ltd., London, p. 128.
- Hardy, Jackie (ed.) 2002, *Haiku: Poetry Ancient & Modern*, MQ Publications, London.

- Harrison, Keith 2003, 'Narrative Theory / Creative Acts?', *TEXT*, Vol. 7 No. 1.
<http://www.gu.edu/school/art/text/apr03/harrison.htm>
 [accessed 25th June 2003]
- Hartle, Paul 2002, 'Fruition was the Question in Debate': *Pro and Contra the Renaissance Orgasm*, *The Seventeenth Century*, Volume XVII Issue 1, April, Manchester University Press, pp. 78-96.
<http://journals.mup.man.ac.uk/cgi-bin/pdfdisp//MUPpdf/SVC/V17I1/170078.pdf>
 [accessed 11th November 2008]
- Hartley, George 1989, *Textual Politics and the Language Poets*, (excerpts), Indiana University Press, Bloomington: in *Modern and Contemporary American Poetry 2008*, University of Pennsylvania.
<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/hartley.html>
 [accessed 20th November 2008]
- Harwood, Gwen 2003, 'The Lion's Bride', *The Indigo Book of Modern Australian Sonnets*, ed. Geoff Page, Ginninderra Press, Charnwood, p. 44.
- Heaney, Seamus 1988, *The Government of the Tongue*, Faber and Faber, London.
- 2004, *Burial at Thebes* (extract), in *The Guardian*, 21st February.
<http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/poetry/story/0,6000,1152649,00.html>
 [accessed 15th March 2004]
- Hibberd, Jack 2006, pers. comm., 7th March.
- Hieatt, A. Kent 1960, *Short Time's Endless Monuments*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Hiraga, Masako K. 1999, "'Blending" and an Interpretation of Haiku: A Cognitive Approach', *Poetics Today*, Vol. 20, No. 3, Metaphor and Beyond: New Cognitive Developments (Autumn), pp. 461-481.
- Hirsch, Edward 1999, *How to Read a Poem: and fall in love with poetry*, Harvest Book, New York.
- 2002, 'How To Read These Poems', *Double Take*, Vol. 6.
<http://www.duke.edu/doubletake/issues/06/Hirsch.html>
 [accessed 22nd October 2002]
- Holm, Bill 1995, 'Wedding Poem For Schele and Phil', *Good Poems for Hard Times*, ed. Garrison Keillor, Viking, New York, pp. 97-98.
- Houlihan, Joan 2003, 'How Contemporary American Poets Are Denaturing the Poem', *The Boston Comment*, Boston.
<http://webdelsol.com/f-bostoncomment.htm>
 [accessed 15th October 2003]
- Hühn, Peter 2004, 'Transgeneric Narratology: Applications to Lyric Poetry', *The Dynamics of Narrative Form*, ed. John Pier, Walter de Gruyter, New York.
- 2005a, 'Conclusion: The Results of the Analyses and Their Implications for Narratology and the Theory and Analysis of Lyric Poetry', *The Narratological Analysis of Lyric Poetry*, eds. Peter Hühn & Jens Kiefer, trans. Alastair Matthews, Walter de Gruyter, New York, pp. 233-259.
- 2005b, 'Plotting the Lyric: Forms of Narration in Poetry', *Theory into Poetry: New Approaches to the Lyric*, Eva Muller-Zetzelman & Margarete Rubik, (eds.), Rodopi, New York, pp. 147-172.
- & Schönert, Jörg 2005, 'Introduction: The Theory and Methodology of the Narratological Analysis of Lyric Poetry', *The Narratological Analysis of Lyric Poetry*, eds. Peter Hühn & Jens Kiefer, trans. Alastair Matthews, Walter de Gruyter, New York, pp. 1-13.

- Hunt, Kathy 2005, 'Love Bites', *The Weekend Australian*, 26-27 February, p. R15.
- Iser, Wolfgang 1974, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- 1978, *The Act of Reading*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- 1980, 'The Reading Process: a Phenomenological Approach', *Reader-Response Criticism: from formalism to post-structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, pp. 50-69.
- 1989, *Prospecting: from reader response to literary anthropology*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Jack, Ian 1984, *The Poet & his Audience*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Jackson, Virginia 2005, *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- 2008 'Who Reads Poetry?', *PMLA*, Vol. 123, Issue 1, pp. 201-206.
- Jeffreys, Mark 1995, 'A Problem of Genre in Contemporary Anglophone Poetics', *PMLA*, Vol. 110, No. 2 (March), pp. 196-205.
- Jennings, Kate 1977, 'Couples', *The Friendly Street Poetry Reader*, ed. Richard Tipping, Adelaide University Union Press, p. 54.
- Jones, H.S.V. 1930, *A Spenser Handbook*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc, New York.
- Jones, Peter (ed.) 1972, *Imagist Poetry*, Penguin Books, London.
- Kermode, Frank 1981, 'Secrets and Narrative Sequence' in *On Narrative*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- (ed.) 1990, 'New Ways with Bible Stories', *Poetry, Narrative, History*, Basil Blackwell Ltd., Cambridge.
- Kelen, Steve K. 2000, *Shimmerings*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong.
- Kertzer, John 2004, 'The course of a particular: on the ethics of literary singularity', *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Fall), pp. 207-239.
- Kimmelman, Michael 2004, 'Henri Cartier-Bresson, Artist Who Used Lens, Dies at 95', *The New York Times*, 4th August.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/04/arts/04CND-CARTIER.html?ei=5070&en=be50453bf40db211&ex=1150430400>
 [accessed 14th June 2006]
- Kinney, Clare Regan 1992, *Strategies of Poetic Narrative*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Kinsella, John (n.d), 'C-o-m-m-u-n-i-c-a-t-i-n-g an ad-hoc introduction to american language poetry, de-fiAntly not "idle babbling": any queries(?) please. Outside the manifesto'.
<http://www.johnkinsella.org/essays/communicating.html>
 [accessed 20th November 2008]
- Kissane, Andy 2000, 'Tristan and Isolde', *Every night they dance*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 46-57.
- Koethe, John 1991, 'Contrary Impulses: The Tension between Poetry and Theory', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Autumn), pp. 64-75.
- Labov, William 1997, 'Some Further Steps in Narrative Analysis', University of Pennsylvania (unpublished).
<http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~wlabov/sfs.html>
 [accessed 22nd July 2002]
- Ladd, Mike 2000, 'Poems from Water', *Close to Home*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, p. 54.
- 2003, 'Anakhronismos 7', *Rooms and Sequences*, Salt, Applecross, p. 12.

- Le Guin, Ursula K. 1989, 'Some Thoughts on Narrative', *Dancing at the Edge of the World*, Victor Gollancz, London.
- Lever, J. W. 1968, 'The Amoretti', *Edmund Spenser's Poetry*, ed. Hugh MacLean, W.W. Norton and Company, New York.
- Lilley, Kate 2002, *Versary*, Salt Publishing, Applecross.
- Lomas, Adrian 2004, 'Wedding Day', *Poems and Readings for Weddings*, ed. Judith Watson, Penguin, London, p. 14.
- Longenbach, James 2004, *The Resistance to Poetry*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- McCooley, David 2005, 'Surviving Australian Poetry: The New Lyricism', *Blue Dog*, Poetry Australia Foundation, Vol. 4, no. 7 (June), pp. 62-70.
- McHale, Brian 2009, 'Beginning to think about narrative in poetry', *Narrative*. 17.1 (Jan. 2009): p11. Literature Resource Center. Gale. Flinders University Library. 14 May 2009
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/start.do?p=LitRC&u=flinders>.
- Magee, Paul 2009, 'Is Poetry Research?', *TEXT*, Vol. 13, No. 2.
<http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct09/magee.htm>
 [accessed 10th November 2009]
- Matterson, Stephen & Jones, Darryl 2005, *Studying Poetry*, Hodder Arnold, London, p. 46.
- Mayne, Judith 1976, 'S/Z and film criticism', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* No. 12/13, pp. 41-45.
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/jc12-13folder/mayne.sz.html>
 [accessed 9th October 2007]
- Motion, Andrew 1997, 'A dream of peace', *Penguin Modern Poets 11*, Penguin Books, London, pp. 86-93.
- Melani, Lilia 2000, 'Lyric Epiphanies and Speakers', Brooklyn College, Brooklyn.
<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/epiphany.html>
 [accessed 24th July 2003]
- Müller-Zetzelman, Eva & Rubik, Margarete (eds.) 2005, *Theory into Poetry: New Approaches to the Lyric*, Rodopi, New York.
- National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) 2008, *Creative Writing Research Benchmark Statement*, Higher Education Committee, York.
- Nemerov, Howard 1972, *Reflexions on Poetry & Poetics*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.
- 1978, *Figures of Thought: speculations on the meaning of poetry and other essays*, David R. Godine, Boston.
- Neuse, Richard 1968, 'The Triumph Over Hasty Accidents: A Note on the Symbolic Mode of the *Epithalamium*', *Spenser: a collection of critical essays*, ed. Harry Berger Jr., Prentice-Hall, Inc, Englewood Cliffs.
- Nichols, Cindy 2008, 'Dear Students of Amy: Creative Writing, Writing Studies and the Department of Anguish - with Mumbblings Here and There on the Post-Theory Lyric', *New Writing*, 5: 2, pp. 80-88.
- Norton, Jody & Snyder, Gary 1987, 'The Importance of Nothingness: Absence and Its Origins in the Poetry of Gary Snyder', *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Spring), pp. 41-66.
- Oliver, Mary 1994, *A Poetry Handbook: A prose guide to understanding and writing poetry*, Harvest Books, New York.

- Olson, Elder 1969, 'The Lyric', *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, Vol. 2, Papers of the Midwest Modern Language Association, No. 1 Poetic Theory/Poetic Practice, pp. 59-66.
- Opie, Ioan & Peter (eds.) 1983, *The Oxford Book of Narrative Verse*, Oxford University Press, London.
- Owen, Jan 2002, 'Santa Cecilia in Trastevere', *Timedancing*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, pp. 92-93.
- Ozaki, Hosai 1993, *Right under the big sky, I don't wear a hat: the haiku and prose of Hosai Ozaki*, trans. by Hiroaki Sato, Stone Bridge Press, Berkeley.
- Packard, William 1992, *The Art of Writing Poetry*, St. Martin's Press, New York.
- Perelman, Bob 1994, 'Write the Power', *American Literary History*, Vol. 6 no. 2 (Summer), pp. 306-324.
- Perloff, Marjorie & Dworkin, Craig 2008, 'The Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound: The 2006 MLA Presidential Forum', *PMLA*, Vol. 123, Issue 3, pp. 749-761.
- Perlstone, Phyllis 2004, 'The Lyric', *five bells*, Lyric Poetry, Vol. 11 No. 3 (Winter), pp. 5-8.
- Perrson, Sheryl 2004, 'The Lyric Eye', *five bells*, Lyric Poetry, Vol. 11 No. 3 (Winter), pp. 9-12.
- Pinsky, Robert 1988, *Poetry and the World*, Ecco Press, New York.
- 2005, 'Poet's Choice', *Washington Post*, 2nd October, p. BW12.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/29/AR2005092901777.html?referrer=emailarticle>
 [accessed 13th February 2006]
- Polano, H. 2003 (orig. 1876) 'Part Fourth. Proverbs and Sayings of The Rabbis, Legends, &c.', *The Talmud: Selections*, Book Tree, San Diego, p. 287.
- Pound, Ezra [1914, 'Vorticism', *Fortnightly Review*, XCVI, n.s. (September 1st), p. 469] in Pratt, 1963, *The Imagist Poem*, E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., New York.
- Pratt, William (ed.) 1963, *The Imagist Poem*, E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., New York.
- Precosky, Don 1987, 'Of Poets And Hackers: Notes on Canadian Post-Modern Poets', *Studies in Canadian Literature*, Vol. 12 No. 1.
http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/SCL/bin/get.cgi?directory=vol12_1/&filename=Precosky.htm
 [accessed 1st July 2008]
- Preminger, Alex (ed.) 1965, *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Pretty, Ron (ed.) 2002, *Poems for All Occasions*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong.
- Pritchett, Frances W. 1994, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Propp, Vladimir 1968, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd edn, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Rankin, Jenny 2002, 'What is Narrative?: Ricoeur, Bakhtin, and Process Approaches', *Conrescence: The Australasian Journal of Process Thought*, Vol.3 No. 3, pp.1-12.
http://www.conrescence.org/ajpt_papers/vol03/03_rankin.doc
 [accessed 23rd August 2007]
- Riffaterre, Michael 1978, *Semiotics of Poetry*, Methuen, London.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith 2002, *Narrative Fiction*, 2nd edn, Routledge, New York.

- Rowland, Robyn 2005, 'De-lyricising the lyric?', *Blue Dog*, Poetry Australia Foundation, Vol. 4, no. 8 (November), pp. 69-78.
- Rouhier-Willoughby, Jeanmarie (n.d.), 'Propp's Structure of the Magic Tale', Russian Folklore, Department of Russian & Eastern Studies, University of Kentucky.
http://www.uky.edu/~jrrouhie/rae370_proppmagic.html
 [accessed 12th November 2002]
- Ruf, Frederick J. 1994, 'The Consequences of Genre: Narrative, Lyric and Dramatic Intelligibility', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (Autumn), pp. 799-818.
- Scaruffi, Piero 2001, *Thinking of Thought*.
<http://www.thymos.com/tat/title.html>
 [accessed 23rd August 2007]
- Scholes, Robert & Kellogg, Robert 1966, *The Nature of Narrative*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Seamon, Roger 2006, 'The Price of Plot in Aristotle's Poetics', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 64, No. 2, Spring.
- Sexton, Anne 1962, 'All My Pretty Ones', *All My Pretty Ones*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, pp. 4-5.
- Sheppard, Robert 2009, 'Poetics as Conjecture and Provocation', *New Writing*, 5: 1, pp. 3-26
- Simic, Charles 1994, *The Unemployed Fortune-Teller: essays and memoirs*, The University of Michigan Press, Michigan.
- 1995, 'Marina's Epic', *Frightening Toys*, Faber and Faber Limited, London, pp. 91-93.
- 1999, 'Ambiguity's Wedding', *Jackstraws*, Harcourt Brace, Orlando, p. 52.
- 1999, 'The Blizzard of Love', *Jackstraws*, Harcourt Brace, Orlando, p. 44.
- Smith, Hazel & Dean, Roger T. (eds.) 2009, *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 1-38.
- Smith, J. C. & De Selincourt, E. (eds.) 1937, *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*, Oxford University Press, London.
- Smith, Martha Nell 1998, *Titanic Operas*.
<http://www.emilydickinson.org/titanic/preface.html>
 [3rd April 2008]
- Snaevarr, Stefán 2007, 'Don Quixote and The Narrative Self', *Philosophy Now*, Issue 60.
<http://www.philosophynow.org/issue60/60snaevarr.htm>
 [accessed 23rd August 2007]
- Sterne, Laurence 1967, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, Penguin, London, p. 127.
- Stewart, Harold 1969, *A Chime of Windbells*, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Tokyo.
- Stewart, Susan 1993, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Duke University Press, Durham.
- Strand, Mark & Boland, Eavan 2000, *The Making of a Poem: A Norton anthology of poetic forms*, W.W. Norton and Company New York.
- Strand, Mark 2001, *The Weather of Words: poetic invention*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.
- Sullivan, Graeme 2009, 'Making Space: The Purpose and Place of Practice-led Research', in *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative*

- Arts*, eds. Hazel Smith & Roger Dean, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 41-65.
- Sweeney, Matthew 1997, 'The Bridal Suite', *The Bridal Suite*, Cape Poetry, London, p. 5.
- Terada, Rei 2008, 'After the Critique of the Lyric', *PMLA*, Vol. 123, Issue 1, pp. 195-200.
- Todorov, Tzvetan 1973, *The Fantastic: A structural approach to a literary genre*, trans. Richard Howard, Cornell University Press, New York.
- 1977, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard, Cornell University Press, New York
- 1981, *Introduction to Poetics*, trans. Richard Howard, The Harvester Press, Brighton.
- Tomashevsky, Boris 1965, 'Thematics', *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, eds. Lee T. Lemon & Marion J. Ries, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.
- Tompkins, Jane P. 1980, *Reader-Response Criticism: from formalism to post-structuralism*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Todorov, Tzvetan 1973, *The Fantastic: A structural approach to a literary genre*, trans. Richard Howard, Cornell University Press, New York.
- 1977, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard, Cornell University Press, New York
- Tsur, Reuven 1997, 'Aspects of Cognitive Poetics', *Literature, Cognition & the Brain*, Alan Richardson (ed.), Boston College, Boston.
<http://www2.bc.edu/%7Eericharad/lcb/fea/tsur/cogpoetics.html>
 [accessed 17th July 2003]
- Tufte, Virginia 1966, "'High Wedlock Then Be Honored": Rhetoric and the Epithalamium', *Pacific Coast Philology*, Vol. 1 (April), pp. 32-41.
- 1970, *The Poetry of Marriage: The Epithalamium in Europe and Its Development in England*, Tinnon-Brown, Los Angeles.
- Vaughan, Kathleen 2009, 'Mariposa: The Story of New Work of Research/Creation, Taking Shape, taking Flight', in *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*, eds. Hazel Smith & Roger Dean, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 167-186.
- Vogler, Christopher 1992, *The Writer's Journey; mythic structure for storytellers and screenwriters*, Michael Wiese Productions, Studio City.
- Walsh, William 2006, 'When Language Fails: An Interview with Eamon Grennan', *The Kenyon Review*, Summer, Vol. 28, Iss. 3.
<http://www.proquest.umi.com/pqdlink?did=1073385281&sid=3&Fmt=3&clientId=20831&RQT=3098&Vname=PQD>
 [accessed 16th October 2006]
- A Wedding* 1978 (motion picture), dir. Robert Altman, Twentieth Century Fox.
- Welsford, Enid 1967, *Spenser - Fowre Hymnes/Epithalamion: a Study of Edmund Spenser's Doctrine of Love*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Welsh, Andrew 1978, *Roots of Lyric: primitive poetry and modern poetics*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
- West, Michael 1974, 'Prothalamia in Propertius and Spenser', *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Autumn), pp. 346-353.
- Wheeler, Arthur L. 1930, 'Tradition in the Epithalamium', *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 205-223.
- Whitmore, Charles E. 1918, 'A Definition of the Lyric', *PMLA*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 584-600.

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0030-8129%281918%2933%3A4%3C584%3AADOTL%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K>
[accessed 3rd April 2008]

Williams, Sonny 2006, 'Tell Me a Story of Deep Delight', *Contemporary Poetry Review*.

<http://www.cprw.com/SWilliams/delight.htm>
[accessed 11th August 2006]

Williamson, George 1967, *A Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot*, Thames and Hudson, London.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig 1953, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, 3rd edn., Macmillan, New York, p. 4e.

Wolf, Werner 2005, 'The Lyric: Problems of Definition and a Proposal for Reconceptualisation', *Theory into Poetry: New Approaches to the Lyric*, eds. Eva Muller-Zetzelman & Margarete Rubik, Rodopi, New York, pp. 21-56.

Woodward, Daniel H. 1962, 'Some Themes in Spenser's "Prothalamium"', *ELH*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (March), pp. 34-46.

Zumthor, Paul 1990, *Oral Poetry: an introduction*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.