

THE POETRY  
OF  
**N. H. BRETTELL:**

*a critical edition*

**Vol. I:** Text of Poems & Variant Information

**Vol. II:** Introduction & Commentary

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In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English, Rhodes University.



## ABSTRACT

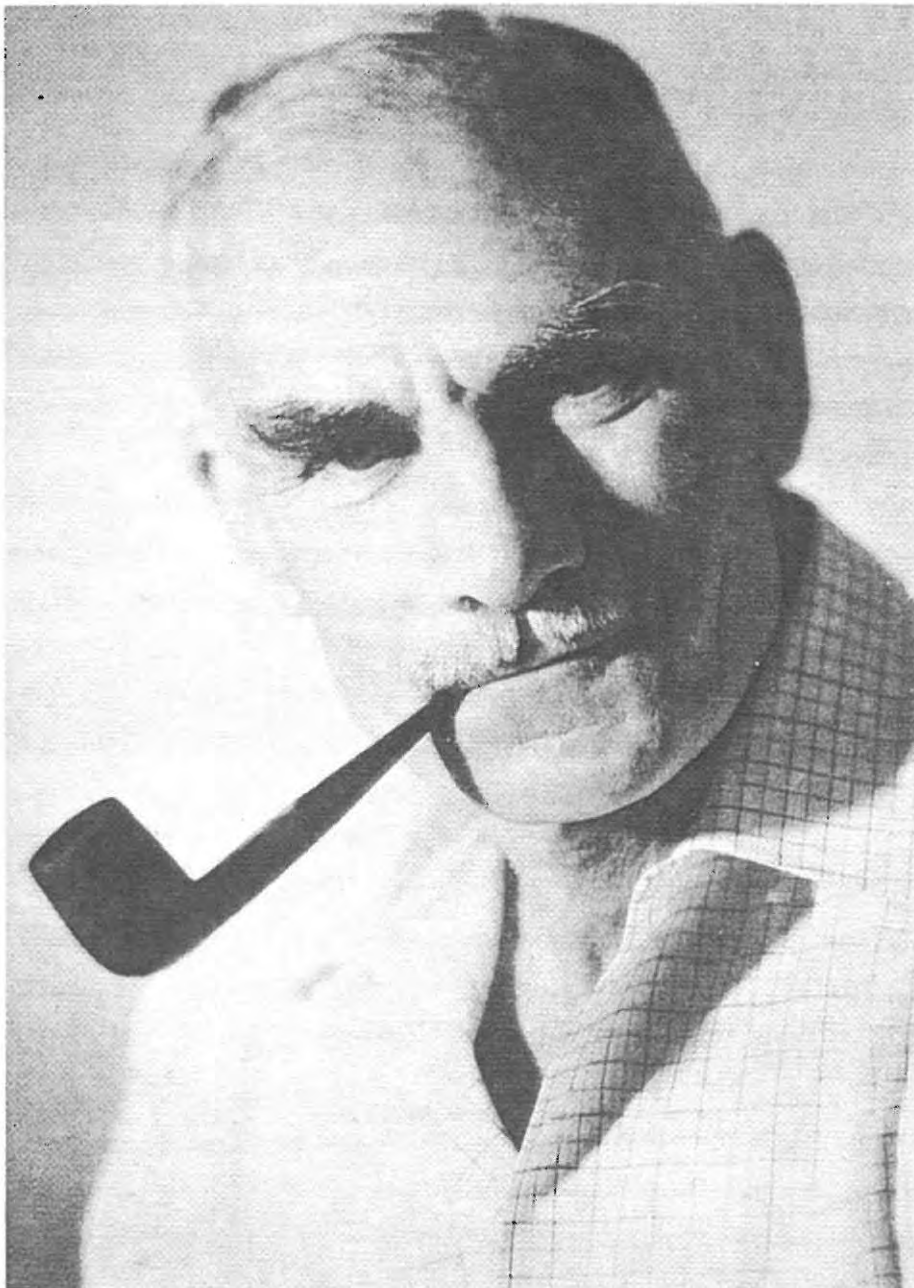
This thesis presents for the first time a critical reading edition of all known poems by N. H. Brettell. It makes no claim to being definitive, nor does it attempt to establish a final text. It represents merely the best thinking of the editor.

Brettell printed and circulated his poetry primarily in hand-made illustrated volumes in a process reminiscent of the scribal publication of the seventeenth century. Only 137 of his 206 extant poems were commercially published during his lifetime. In this study all known printed versions of Brettell's poetry whether in privately printed or commercially published form were examined. All variant readings were recorded and are shown. Wherever possible the relationships between texts are also noted.

The poems in this edition are ordered in each case according to the version in the latest datable privately produced collection.

The commentary and critical introduction were compiled with the general reader in mind. No previous familiarity with southern African fauna and flora is assumed: animals, birds and insects are described and their scientific names supplied. Expressions current in ordinary British or South African English and present in non-specialist dictionaries are not glossed, but archaic and dialectal forms felt to require explication are briefly explained. So too are less familiar South African dialectal expressions which have been assimilated into the South African English lexicon. Intertextual, Christian and mythological references, both African and Western, are annotated in an attempt to make such references accessible to readers who may not share Brettell's cultural background. The intention is to close the changing distance between the text and the audience.

An essay discussing the merits, potential and limitations of electronic scholarly editing is included as part of the textual introduction. A CD-Rom containing Brettell's watercolour illustrations in his privately produced collections and audio-clips of him reading his poetry accompanies this thesis.



**N. H. Brettell (1908-1991)**

*Reproduced, with permission, from the collection of the National English Literary Museum.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This edition of Brettell's poetry has been produced with the generous support of many people and institutions to whom I extend my thanks.

First amongst these are N. H. Brettell's children, John and Rosemary Brettell, whose support for the project has been unfailing and who have repeatedly supplied me with valuable insights into their father's life. Their hospitality, generosity and kind advice have made the long hours spent on this project a pleasure.

Special thanks are extended to the staff of the National English Literary Museum for affording me assistance and workspace, but particularly to Ann Torlesse, Lynne Grant and Jeremy Fogg who have assisted me in freely accessing NELM's Brettell holdings and who have never been too busy to listen or help. Thanks also to Bijoya Sen Gupta and Thomas Jeffery for their help in retrieving material on Brettell and to Richard Burmeister for assistance with desk-top publishing and printing.

I am indebted to the staff of the Rhodes University English Department particularly my supervisors Professor Malvern van Wyk Smith and Professor John Gouws for their encouragement, insight and expert guidance. Gratitude is also expressed to Professor Paul Walters, Professor Gareth Cornwell, Dr Ron Hall, Dr Kai Easton, Dr Dan Wylie, Mr Eugene de Klerk and Miss Jayne Glover for helping to keep me focused on the task at hand.

The insights into Brettell's life received from Mrs Betty Finn and Canon Richard Holderness have proved invaluable. I reiterate my thanks to Mrs Betty Finn for her hospitality in Lenzie, Scotland.

I also extend my gratitude to Miss Jamie Alexander for photocopying and couriering material between Grahamstown and Kadoma, Zimbabwe, to Mr Grant Miller for his work in creating the JAM electronic editing suite and to Professor Paul Eggert, Professor Peter Shillingsburg and Mr Edward Vanhoutte for prompt advice and careful guidance during the planning stages of the project.

I am grateful to the National Research Foundation for financial assistance.

Finally I thank all those whose patience, hospitality and generosity I have tried in the past five years and never found wanting: my wife Louise, my siblings and my parents for their patience, their faith in me and their unwavering support. Any errors and misjudgements that remain are all my own.

In lines process as light  
~~large~~ for the old from the eternally young.  
 with angleable gestures of fingertips  
 bend of head  
 So you live  
 I of contemptuous downward glance



Helen pouring wine for Paris

5th C BC. plate

Rippling droppings

must be immortal as far as we can.

Lines of pottery - lines of life

escape for us with the ancient seed

# CONTENTS

*Pencil, ink marks and  
highlighting ruin books  
for other readers.*

## VOLUME I

### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (Volumes 1 & 2)

N. H. Brettell	(Vol.I)	iv
Brettell's handwritten draft of "Attic Shape" Ms	(Vol.I)	vi
Illustration accompanying "Attic Shape"	(Vol.I)	594
Noel and Eva Brettell at Pungwe Falls	(Vol.II)	x
Noel Brettell running in 1926	(Vol.II)	xiv
Noel Brettell and members of the Harriers running team (1927-8)	(Vol.II)	xiv
Noel Brettell in January 1934	(Vol.II)	xx
Eva as a young woman	(Vol.II)	xx
Brettell's house in Nyanga	(Vol.II)	xxiv
Brettell's house in Nyanga in 2000	(Vol.II)	xxiv
Brettell's handwritten "Dedication to Eva: for 'Bronze Frieze'"	(Vol.II)	xxv
Noel Brettell	(Vol.II)	lxviii
Brettell's handwritten annotations for "Lakeside: Word and Reverie"	(Vol.II)	117

SIGLA AND ABBREVIATIONS	xv
-------------------------	----

COMMENTS BY N. H. BRETTELL ON WRITING POETRY	xvii
--	------

### POEMS

*BRONZE FRIEZE: Poems Mostly Rhodesian. Oxford University Press. 1950.*

#### I. AFRICAN

Maronda Mashanu	5
War and Peace	11
Antelope and Mad Baboon	15
Vox Populi	19
Donkey Cart	21
Locust Birds	25
Heard at Inyanga	27
From Africa: 1941	31
Umsasa	33
"L'Après-midi d'un Faune"	35
No Prayer for Rain	37
Autumn Song	39
Christmas Carol	41

#### II. OCCASIONAL

Books and Toys	47
Christmas Tree	51
Bougainvillea	55

### III. PERSONAL

Flower of the Clove	63
Departure Platform	65
In the Train	67
Cophetua	69
To an Old Man, Dying	71
Wind at the Funeral	73
Frost	75
Fancy's Knell	77
The Hill	79

### IV. TRIVIAL

Birthday of a Sloth	83
Ease	85
Spring Song	87
Song	89
Sanctuary in Africa	91
To Rosemary	93
Wood-smoke	95
Dwarfs' Chorus	97
Escape by Water	101
Epilogue: No Road	103

### ARHODESIAN LEAVE (Privately printed).

Threnody in Spring	109
--------------------	-----

### ON LEAVE

[Southern Cross and Charles' Wain]	117
Columbus	119
On Clent Hill	121
Cataclysm	123
Winter's Tale	125
Harvest at Horsebridge	129
Chalton Mill	135
Leaving in September	137
To Walter de la Mare	139
To Eva	141
A Chinese Screen	143
Air Mail	145

### RETURN

On an Inyanga Road	151
No Road to Xanadu	153
The Eavesdropper	157
African Student	163



The Cabbage Seller	167
Outside Kimberley	171
From a Hotel Window	173
Walking in Woods	177
African Afternoon	181
Fantasia in Pseudo-Tudor	183
Weathercock	187
Maronda Mashanu Revisited in Time of Crisis	191

#### THE OWL AND THE IVY

The Owl and the Ivy	195
Elephant	197
Giraffes	201
Duiker Doe	203
Hoopoe	207
Wagtail	209
Dikkop	211
Crowned Cranes	213
The Nameless Bird	217
The White Harrier	219

#### SEASON AND FESTIVAL

New Year	223
Spring Song	225
Quartet: Ex Libris:	
I. Summer	229
II. Autumn, after drought	231
III. Winter	233
IV. Spring	237
Epiphany 1965	241
A Boy is Born	243
Song for Severn	247
Song for Apples	249
Song for Silver	251
Window in Between	253
Skid	255
The Children	257
Schoolmaster	259
End of Year Returns	263
Wind and an Eagle Owl	265
After Published Verse	269

#### ONE YEAR (Privately printed).

January	273
Mantis and Moth	275
February	279
Cosmos	281
March	283

Cuckoo	285
April	289
Traveller's Joy	291
May	293
Ironworkers	295
June	299
Felled Wattle	301
July	303
Antbear	305
August	309
In the Wattle	311
September	313
The Summit	315
October	317
Deri-Deri	319
November	321
Kwashiorkor	323
December	327
Mother and Child	329

**LAKESIDE: WORD AND REVERIE: Sebakwe and Ngesi (Privately printed).**

I. "I lie and search the wind"	335
II. "That boy the waters of Winander knew"	339
III. "The concrete stands across the gorge"	343
IV. "Against the pallid front of dawn"	347
Envoi	351

**ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS (Privately printed).**

Personae	355
Locus	357
Genius Loci	359
I [A dark and midnight shape]	361
Tom	363
[Spear in an old man's hand]	365
II. [Muffle of hoof-beats]	367
Dick	369
[Froth of a young man's dream]	371
III. [Two gleaming wheels]	373
Harry	375
IV. [Car]	377

**...AND UNDERFOOT SEPTEMBER (Privately printed).**

I. PROEM	
Spring in the air	383
Moon	385
Arson	387

## II. TRIUMVIRATE OF SILVER

Triumvirate of Silver	391
Ausonius	393
Claudian	395
Prudentius	397

## III. HEIRS TO THE KINGDOM

Agrippa	401
Petty Thief	403
The Birds	405
Schoolgirls	407
Hunchback	409
Gorse	411
Spiderwebs	413

## IV. THE WALL: A FABLE

The Wall	417
Nocturne	425

### **RECESSIONAL (Privately printed).**

Prospect	429
Naturalist	433
Neighbour	437
Clerk in Holy Orders	441
Suicide	445
Poetess	447
Village Headman	449
Max Gate	451
Aubade for Orpheus	455

### ENDPIECE: Incomprehension

I	Spastic Child	459
II	Dung Beetle	461

### **COUNTRY INTO TOWN: Threnody with some echoes (Privately printed).**

Sparrow	465
Sunset	469
Spitting Cobra	473
Thrush	475
Wild Orchids	477
Cloud	479
Dung	481
Hengrave Hall	485
Shadow Show	489

Fritz	491
Nocturne	495
Song by Owl-Light	497
Air Line	499
Cuckoo	503
Itchen Estuary: Bitterne	507
Severn: Above Bevere Lock	509

## UNCOLLECTED POEMS

### UNDERGRADUATE POEMS.

The Singer	517
Severn. May 22	519
Odysseus	521
June 14th	523
Tres Via	525
Stakenbridge. July 13 <sup>th</sup>	527
When I go down to Stratford on Avon	529
Charlemagne	531
Cathedral	533
Reliquia	535

### POEMS WRITTEN AFTER ARRIVING IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA.

Song	539
Thief	541
Retreat from Rapture	543
Centaur's Song, 1942	545
Turn of the Year	547
Safe Interior	551
Nightfall	553
Rhodesian Spring Song	555
Dedication to Eva: for "Bronze Frieze"	559
Zimbabwe	561
Expecting Peace	567
At Home	569
Early Hour	573
Transit	575
Hesitations: I	577
Hesitations: II	579
Hesitations: III	581
Birth in Bethlehem	583
Georgic	589
To Hugh Finn	591
"Posthumous Publication of a Poet Blown up by a Landmine"	593
Attic Shape	595
I, You, and Cymbeline	597
Ballad: Madonna and Baobab	599
Rain for Zimbabwe Christmas	603

INDEX OF TITLES 605

INDEX OF FIRST LINES 611

VOLUME II:

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE i

INTRODUCTION

General Introduction  
N. H. Brettell (1908-1991) xi  
Critical Introduction xxviii

Textual Introduction  
Texts lxix  
Description of Sources lxx  
Publication History xcvi  
The Present Text ci  
Critical Apparatus cviii  
Electronic Scholarly Editing cix

COMMENTARY

*Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* 2  
"A Rhodesian Leave" 46  
"One Year" 96  
"Lakeside: Word and Reverie" 114  
"Eclogue in the Hills" 122  
"...And Underfoot September" 128  
"Recessional" 149  
"Country Into Town" 160  
"Uncollected Poems" 176

LIST OF SOURCES

List of Manuscripts 202  
List of Printed Sources 223  
List of Audio Recordings 229

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 230

INDEX TO INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY 247

APPENDIX

CD-Rom containing copies of Brettell's watercolour paintings and audio-clips of him reading his poetry.



## **SIGLA AND ABBREVIATIONS**

- ACV:** *An Anthology of Commonwealth Verse.*
- B:** *Birthright: A Selection of Poems From Southern Africa.*
- BC:** *The Blackcountryman.*
- BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian.*
- BRS:** *Beneath a Rhodesian Sky.*
- BSAV:** *A Book of South African Verse.*
- C:** *Chirimo.*
- CPT:** *Commonwealth Poems of Today.*
- CSAP:** *A Century of South African Poetry.*
- DSAE:** *A Dictionary of South African English.*
- EE:** *Microsoft Encarta 98 Encyclopedia.*
- EF:** *Elected Friends: Poems for and about Edward Thomas.*
- FGISA:** *Field Guide to Insects of South Africa*
- FV:** *Four Voices: Poetry from Zimbabwe.*
- ICZ:** *Insights: Criticism of Zimbabwean and Other Poetry.*
- ILR:** "Literary Oscar '72": supplement to *Illustrated Life Rhodesia.*
- LCEL:** *Longman Companion to English Literature.*
- MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English.*
- NARV:** *A New Anthology of Rhodesian Verse.*
- NBSAV:** *A New Book of South African Verse in English.*
- NC:** *New Coin.*
- NCT:** *New Contrast.*
- NELM:** *National English Literary Museum.*
- NIV:** *Niven Manuscript.*
- NSAW:** *New South African Writing.*

- OED:** *Oxford English Dictionary.*
- OAA:** *Out of the African Ark.*
- OPR:** *Occasional Papers & Reviews.*
- PEN:** *P.E.N. 1960: New South African Writing.*
- PR:** *Poetry in Rhodesia: 75 Years.*
- PRS:** *Poetry Review Salisbury.*
- PSAV:** *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse.*
- RB Col:** *Rosemary Brettell Collection.*
- RH Col:** *Richard Holderness Collection.*
- RBSA:** *Roberts Birds of South Africa.*
- RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry.*
- RSN:** *The Rhodesia Science News.*
- S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems.*
- SA:** *Shades of Adamastor: Africa and the Portuguese connection.*
- SAP25** *Twenty Five Years of English South African Poetry.*
- SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile.*
- SP:** *Selected Poems.*
- STD:** *Standpunte.*
- SW:** *Shadows of War.*
- TT:** *Two Tone.*
- UG:** *The University Gazette.*
- VRY:** *Verse for You: Book Three.*
- WSL:** *The Wilder Shores of Love.*
- WZ:** *Writing in Zimbabwe 1961-1979.*
- ZPR:** *The Zimbabwe Poetry Review.*
- ☒:** *see CD-Rom for watercolour illustration.*
- ⏮:** *see CD-Rom for audio-clip of Brettell reading his poetry.*



## COMMENTS BY N. H. BRETTELL ON WRITING POETRY

*Why does one write poetry? The answer to this difficult question is at least made easier for us than in the apocryphal days when one made money by it; though presumably some-one does make a meagre living by composing doggerel for Christmas cards. There is vanity, of course: though that is little stimulus enough when the audience is so narrow. I think the most obvious answer is that it is a kind of self-relief. I remember once enlarging upon this to a Greek woman; not then, I suppose, familiar with the literal meaning of "catharsis", I couldn't comprehend her look of shocked surprise. But the feeling of blessed relief after finishing a poem is like the authentic thrill in the nerves that is its inception, one of physical satisfaction. Housman goes further and calls it a secretion - and implies that it could be a morbid secretion, like the pearl in the oyster.*

*I find it odd that the writing of many - most - of my poems takes so long. I was asked recently if I could date some of them: very difficult. On reflecting I found that one at least was begun fifteen years before it was completed. Often I have wished for the delight that must come when a poem "writes itself" without asking. Siegfried Sassoon tells how late one night, tired and rather depressed, he was going to bed when the first two lines and then the whole poem drifted into his mind and was scribbled down in a few minutes. Next morning, he found it was "Everyone Sang" - that most lovely of all his lyrics. I can only conclude - to finish the metaphor - that my purgatives have not been potent enough.*

*But there follows the whole business of technique. Here, I admit I belong to the tradition. Probably because of my old-fashioned education, I have never been happy with our modern freedom and suspect the assumption that, with the ass in the fable, you have only to open your mouth to get a shower of gold. Metre, of some sort, a poem must have, and I have never been happy without rhyme, though I have welcomed the subtlety of effect that comes with a half-rhyme.*

Undated manuscript  
NELM MS 2005.59

\* \* \*

*I have attempted in my verse to resolve the contradictions and dilemmas of a man born and educated in England, but whose life has been spent in Africa, and to whom regret for the one has sharpened awareness of the other. Much of my work begins in the contemplation of the peasants and animals of the African veld or returns to it, although I cannot agree with those critics who demand that our poetry have an 'African' content and decry any that does not. A poem is simply the thing a poet writes - at any time, anywhere. I came late to poetry, despite an academic training in literature, and perhaps my rural background makes me regard its composition as akin to the mystery of craftsmanship; its form, when realised, seems to produce (indeed mysteriously) something one only half-knew was there. I work slowly and intermittently, sometimes putting a poem away for a long time before taking it up to fashion its final form once it has reached that stage, I cannot alter it. I have welcomed the use of assonance and half-rhyme, but prefer the arrest, surprise and decision of rhyme. Critics have seen the influence in my work of Latin literature, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century poets and the Georgians, especially Edmund Blunden, who, together with Arthur Shearly Cripps and Francis Carey Slater, encouraged me to publish my first volume in 1950.*

N. H. Brettell  
[6] December 1979  
NELM MS 96.19.215

BRONZE FRIEZE: POEMS  
MOSTLY RHODESIAN



I  
African

## MARONDA MASHANU

### Publication History:

*School*. 1945. 26. [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 117.] *No copy located*.

**BF**: *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 1-6.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/26(b); NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

**Text**: BF

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: To...blindness ] [T <i>over</i> t]o Arthur Shearly Cripps, in his blindness	475/28
24 plot. ] plot,	475/28
footnote: Maronda ... Mashonaland ] [Maronda ... Mashonaland <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28

MARONDA MASHANU\*

*To Arthur Shearly Cripps, in his blindness*

I

It stood alone, that grim euphorbia:  
Goat boy in dangling monkey skins,  
Whistling his surly beasts after sparse nibbling,  
Could scramble up through clefts where no path was,  
And yodel a summer's day under its shade— 5  
    But I could not.

Singing alone, that elf-locked piccanin—  
Bronze frieze of girls, Diana with the water gourd,  
Flashing of hoes, the green corn's assegai,  
Or roasted rats sizzling in the embers, 10  
Brews in black pots under the murky thatch—  
    And God knows what.

Brooding alone, my sullen memories:  
No clean-etched line of flute or dancer,  
But jig-saw fragments tumbled in a box, 15  
Half-evil glint of faces I dare not remember,  
Phantom of kloof and kopje loved long since,  
    And now forgot.

Alone, aloof, that great-branched candelabra:  
Focussing no image in my groping thoughts, 20  
Beckoning above me over the bridle path  
Halting behind me like my own lean shadow,  
As I passed heavily on with slackened rein  
    To that green plot.

Alone, asleep, that strange sequestered church; 25  
Blue starlings flirted round its broken altars,  
And climbed and hung, and climbed and hovered,  
Thin spire of smoke not teased by any wind  
Against the gentle evening dim with rose  
    And apricot. 30

\* Maronda Mashanu: The Five Wounds—the Rev. A. S. Cripps's mission church in Mashonaland.

34	umbered ] <del>writ</del> large umbered	475/28
40	fantastic ] fantas[t <i>over</i> i ]ic	475/28
57	tethered ] <del>patient</del> tethered	475/28
64	quaint ] qua[i <i>over</i> n]nt	475/28

## II

Alone, remote, blind eyes:  
Gleaning undefeated the gold aftermath—  
Like that familiar painting, dim grey and rose,  
Earthy hulks of peasants umbered by sunset—  
Gleaning in twilight seen so sure by you 35  
    And not by us.

Folded and still, quiet hands:  
Not our meddling unsatisfied fingers,  
Burrowing in middens for unusual grubs  
We hope will turn fantastic butterflies— 40  
To traffic not one jewel worth the selling  
    For all our fuss.

Happy and sure, old dreams:  
Content to make new songs out of old memories,  
Of tilth and drought and clarion-calling cocks, 45  
Fadeless as time, beyond the blight of fashion,  
Rising like birds through leaves of lemon and oak  
    Or arbutus.

Happy and high, singing heart:  
Prompt to recapture lilts Arcadian 50  
Where negro fingers gesture across the moon,  
The drum tapped deftly, hips and shoulders poised—  
O listen, from your haunted evergreen,  
    Theocritus!

## III

Secure you rest, among those memories, 55  
As the quiet sun sinks across the wold;  
The grey stems redden, my tethered horse  
Gently crops the turf; a herdsman's call  
Drifts and lingers like slow smoke  
    Across the plain. 60

Resolve me, once for all,  
These craven doubts like owls flying by daylight  
Pestered by sparrows from their green hermitage—  
Resolve them all with your quaint argument,  
To doubt the ancient truth, ancient and ageless, 65  
    Never again.



70 wreaths ] wreathes  
74 beauty ] bea[u *over* t]ty

475/28  
475/28

Absolve me, now and for ever,  
From twisted sins that make a green thing ashen,  
Harlequin antics under forbidden apples, 70  
Marigold wreaths on phallic chimney stacks,  
Hobgoblin heresies, seeking God's rainbow  
In sink and drain.

Rest so, never in doubt,  
Never in doubt that beauty and truth are one,  
That truth will rise, resolute, unconfined, 75  
Like water drawn unerringly from deep wells  
To carry in drought to drooping loveliness  
The smell of rain.

Rest so, ever in peace,  
Your knuckles steady on your homely stick; 80  
And may the sunset that so often for us  
Underlines cheeks with harsh violet shadows,  
Be like a benison on your patient eyes,  
Soft, with no pain.

## WARAND PEACE

### Publication History:

*The Link*. September 1945. 151. [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 117.] *No copy located*.

**BF**: *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 7-9.

**NARV**: *A New Anthology Of Rhodesian Verse*. Chosen by John Snelling. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell Limited, 1950. 3-5.

**SW**: *Shadows Of War*. Ed. Badcock, Peter, and Robin Graham. Rhodesia: Galaxie Press, 1978. 21 (lines 62-69 only).

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/26(b); NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle:	Reverie ] [R over r]everie	475/28
2	and ] [a over A]nd world, ] world	475/28 NARV
	^	
7	snapdragons, ] snapdragons[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ] snapdragons, ] snapdragons	475/28 NARV
	^	
9	his ] h[i over o]s	475/28
14	wire, ] wire	NARV
	^	
15	villain ] vill[ia <i>corrected by hand to ai</i> ]n	475/28
	stoats ] st[oa <i>corrected by hand to ao</i> ]ts	475/28
21	breasts ] bre[a over s]sts	475/28
23	crenellated ] castellated	NARV
	crenellated ] <del>eastellated</del> crenellated	475/28
29	careless ] effortless	NARV
	careless ] <del>effortless</del> careless	475/28
	pinion, ] pinion	NARV
	^	

## WAR AND PEACE

*Reverie on Wedza Hill, Mashonaland, 1942*

Two o'clock, and time for the afternoon News:  
and down there in another world,  
in that white mote of a farmhouse among the blue plantations  
someone is talking about the war,  
in haughty indifference whether we win or lose: 5  
—talking of war,  
while the bees are busy about the deep-throated snapdragons,  
and a lizard halts on the afternoon terrace,  
as moveless as his shadow on the stone.

Two o'clock, and time for some blind attack, 10  
all the soul drained from eyes to entrails;  
mouth a hatchet gash in a tight mask  
fingers scalded by hot rifle barrels  
and shrivelled flesh strung on twisted wire,  
—like the villain stoats on the gamekeeper's fence at home 15  
where pine needles smother the hoof beats on the track.

—At home—at peace—long since:  
the peace that now in a golden mist  
lies on the still savannas in drugged indolence.  
The broad land lifts its bosom half asleep, 20  
the undulating fall of sleeping breasts;  
and the perch of eagles,  
boulder and cliff and crenellated keep,  
where fierce eyes search for fish like spears of light  
over the unruffled path of barbel and bream, 25  
from our blue altitude, higher than any eyrie,  
is but a turning over in slow sleep.

Fancies come easily here:  
as kestrels ride the wind on careless pinion,  
to land so light, so sure, on the precipice edge— 30  
so thoughts, winged from memory's dominion,  
tilt into my mind, Rodin's crag of stone.

And I remember, beneath many a granite ledge,  
pigmy paintings in rust-red and bronze—  
archer and girl and mincing antelope 35  
and tiny javelin thrown;  
ant-like harlequinade under the giant shadow  
like the mad dance of mites under a microscope—  
ambush and love and writhe in fantastic round,  
beneath the silent symmetry of stone. 40



And I remember, in the womb of London,  
above the scramble of the termite town:  
the streets rustle as autumn floors rustle with insects,  
where bus after bus reeled off like a drunken galleon  
cascade of white faces streamed down the subway 45  
endlessly eddying ever down and down  
bubbles on the black breast of a wave.  
And above, beetling between us and the stars,  
above the soul-less geometrical architrave,  
Night, the negro mother with bosom deep, 50  
stone lips sullen with the weight of bars,  
bearing her babe into the cavern of sleep.

Already in fancy, as the afternoon  
mellows its radiance like a ripening fruit—  
I am lying in bivouac drowsiness 55  
in a kloof like a nurse's elbow by a dropping spruit;  
And I see Africa,  
impassive, unassailable, unscathed,  
fold tired men like her own nurseling,  
in peace of plough and orchard blossom swathed, 60  
in hushed plantations where the trees  
await the crimson fanfares of the spring.

Tired in my blankets, I am ready for sleep,  
the sleep that I think must fall like dew on soldiers.  
The forest coils above me like campfire smoke, 65  
and a bulbul strikes one note on a sweet bell—  
to-day's farewell—  
the moon is anchored in the deeps of heaven,  
And Night, mother and nurse, draws to the curtains.

## ANTELOPE AND MAD BABOON

### Publication History:

BF: *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 10-12.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/26(b); NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

1	sultry ] <del>golden</del> sultry	475/28
4	pain ] [p over a]ain	475/28
19	Scandalize ] Scandali[z inserted by hand over s]e	475/28
31	Then, ] Then[, inserted by hand]	475/28
33	From ] [F over f]rom	475/28

## ANTELOPE AND MAD BABOON

Every sultry afternoon  
Antelope and mad baboon  
Mock me with their far disdain,  
Knowing well that all my pain  
Pain or joy or labouring thew 5  
Never found the avenue,  
Never threaded through the woods  
To the inmost solitudes  
                    Where I cannot follow.

The monkeys are afraid of me, 10  
Setting sentries out to see  
Where my clumsy foot advancing  
Sets the forest leaves a-glancing,  
And each unsuspected place  
Stirs with insult and grimace, 15  
                    Yell and yoick and hollo;  
Dame and sire and piccanin  
Wake the krantzes with their din,  
Scandalize the sleepy valleys  
With their vitriolic sallies, 20  
And with loud indignant sound  
Swing their flourished sterns around;  
Through the labyrinth of trees  
Toss their ancient blasphemies,  
Fainter through retreating woods 25  
To the echoing solitudes  
                    Where I cannot follow.

Little steenbok, russet red,  
Tosses up his princeling's head  
For one poised uncertain glance— 30  
Then, like sunlight on a lance,  
Springs away in swift alarm  
From my half-intended harm.  
Never dolphin of the sea  
Leapt the waves so sure as he 35  
Breasts the ripples of the grass;  
Never bird whose sudden pass  
—Leaping on the startled sight—  
Loops a silken skein of light  
From river's brim to river's brim, 40  
Not so lithe or blithe as him,  
                    Kingfisher or swallow.  
Princeling's head and dancer's feet,  
Pointed step so sure and fleet,  
Ah, so delicate and sure, 45



60 Threading ] Thread[in *over* ed]g  
71 crannies ] c[ra *over* ar]nnies

475/28  
475/28

Leaving never slot nor spoor  
To guide me through the mazy woods  
To the greener solitudes  
Where I cannot follow.

But still I walk each barren slope, 50  
And still I nurse the craven hope  
That when the evening shadow flings,  
And the tired homesick wings  
That perplexity has loosed  
Fly a-fluttering home to roost 55  
In the dovecotes of my mind—

I will up and I will find  
Some forgotten secret track  
Smothered up with bush and brack,  
Threading through my baffled moods 60  
To those secret solitudes.

There I'll sit and count my nuts,  
While my guesses hop their scuts,  
And wish and complex swing at ease  
In the forest's cool trapeze, 65

And in the green and rustling peace  
Preen the quills of my caprice;  
And I'll find at last, at long,  
Something deeper than a song,  
Hidden in the darkest hole 70  
In the crannies of my soul.



## VOX POPULI

The night is full of voices: shrill  
With prophecy or dull with doom,  
The ghostly tongues of babel fill  
The corners of the quiet room.

The night is restless: turn the knob 5  
From news review to song request,  
Symposium grave and jiggling mob  
From Hilversum to Budapest.

The roar of crowds at the ring-side 10  
That breaks like surf on reef and skerry,  
And tossing down the frothy tide  
The helter-skelter commentary.

The rain is drumming on the roof  
And mutes the feeble spurt of morse, 15  
The lonely voice of ships, aloof  
Antennae peering out the course.

The wind is rising: change the tune  
From metre band to metre band,  
From acid quip to oily croon—  
Till, with a chance turn of the hand, 20

The tail-end of a piece of Brahms  
Mounts the last stair and sudden stops,  
To strand us with uplifted palms  
Dumbfounded on the pinnacle tops.

Outside, the rain has stopped. The gutter chimes 25  
Its falling cadence, resonant, melancholy;  
The stir of crickets hails the fatted times  
Come with the rains, the end of avarice.  
And underneath the dripping orchard tree  
The lonely dikkop\*, calling once or twice, 30  
Bodes ill, they say, to some, but not to me.

Across the rise, our neighbour's headlights play,  
The voice comes, far and faint, of welcoming dogs,  
And pulsing from the resurrected vlei,  
The many-mouthed democracy of frogs. 35

Dikkop—an African night bird that often calls around homesteads: by some regarded as a bird of ill-omen.

## DONKEY CART

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 15-17.

**NARV:** *A New Anthology Of Rhodesian Verse*. Chosen by John Snelling. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell Limited, 1950. 6-7.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/26(b); NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

4	poetry ] p[oe over eo]try	475/28
5	Over the ] Over[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]the	475/28
20	beasts: ] beasts.	NARV
21	Bottom ] (Bottom	NARV
21-22	<i>no stanza break ] stanza break</i>	NARV
22	ears. ] ears.)	NARV
23	have ] havev	475/28
29	dog ] do[g over b]	475/28

## DONKEY CART

With a half-fascinated faint abhorrence  
—You would have smiled at me, perhaps—  
I followed the slow cart through the afternoon  
Reading the poetry of D. H. Lawrence.

. . . . .

Over the veld the hot air lay in swathes, 5  
Thick and unquiet as his glowering moods  
    Brooded upon the world.  
(There in the dust the labouring beetle bathes,  
Grasshoppers leap and rest; uncertain if he should  
Take that one step, halts the chameleon. 10  
Pods dry and curled  
Crackle beneath the wheels.  
Over them hung the sullen afternoon.)

Before and beyond our burnished desolation, 15  
Lava-like creeping in a snaky line  
    With the first fires wet,  
His savage metres bore his imagination  
Smouldering; torrid primeval soil, not yet  
Smoothed by the subtle fingers of the rain  
Into suave pastures for the gentler beasts: 20  
Bottom and Quince, my twin somnambulists  
Before me wagged their melancholy ears.

He should have known donkeys: more than horse or cows  
    They tease a cynic fancy—  
Strayed half-way up the stairway of the years, 25  
Delayed by some mis-shaping necromancy,  
Turning aside for slow and bitter browse  
—Thistle or prickly pear—they went awry,  
And horse and ox and dog have passed them by.

Queer little brutes: 30  
Outlaws and rebels,  
Scorning the closest fence and sweetest sward  
For secret bitter shoots  
In sand and pebbles,  
The renegade's reward. 35  
They never care—  
Indifferent both to blasphemy and goad,  
They size you up with grave half-blinking stare,  
And shrug their narrow shoulders to the load.

43	drying ] dry[in <i>over es</i> ]g	475/28
	footnote: shaft, ] shaft	475/27(a)
	^	
	Disselboom ... Afrikaans). ] [Disselboom ... Afrikaans). <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
	wagon ] waggon	475/28
	Disselboom ... Afrikaans). ] <i>omitted</i>	NARV

I can see them still at the cold end of time: 40  
Groundsel in gaping streets and broken wharfs,  
Skyscrapers toppled down—  
When the last fish squirm in the drying slime,  
And baleful toads the last things to drown:  
On some Caucasian crag, my tattered dwarfs 45  
Watch unperturbed the frozen wrath of God,  
Acknowledged by a slow indifferent nod.

. . . . .

So we creaked up the sandy road,  
Their harness and my fancies:  
Like a lame iambic, the disselboom\* 50  
Jolts on the draaghout\*, uncertain of the load.

\*Disselboom—the shaft, and draaghout—the neckbar of a cart or wagon (Afrikaans).





## LOCUST BIRDS

I was aware of wings: and then  
The storks came flying ten by ten,  
Ten by ten and score by score,  
Crowding it seemed for evermore  
From their dark and secret woods 5  
To my empty quietudes.  
Glint of black and flash of white  
Dappling the morning light,  
Down spiral storeys wheeling lower  
Down their blue and crystal tower. 10  
Where the morning shadows reach  
And link m'hashas each to each  
Across the blond and level land,  
There they ruminantly stand,  
And find existence gravely good 15  
In a world alive with food.  
Belly white and black cravat  
—Predikant or advocate—  
In sombre synod and correct  
Strutting stately, circumspect. 20  
Lest my quiet acres feel  
Heartless, humourless, unreal,  
I thank them as they strut and fly  
For their quaint philanthropy:  
Friendly folk and sober dress 25  
To populate my emptiness.

M'hasa—a Rhodesian tree with dark foliage.



## HEARD AT INYANGA

*Christmas 1946*

They came a gliding frieze against the hills,  
Three negro girls one after another,  
Threading the silent path from kraal to fountain;  
Bright-skinned and glad, white-eyed and flashing smile:  
One had a crimson doek, another yellow; 5  
On the sharp edge of the ravine they passed  
Against the wash of cobalt on the hills,  
Etched by the wind and coloured by the sun;  
While in the blue below, a cow-bell rang,  
And in the blue above a kestrel hung. 10

They passed, singing;  
And I listened till they were beyond my hearing  
Before I recognized the tune—  
Of every improbable incongruous thing  
It was 'God Save the King'— 15  
The air at least, but not, I think, the words—  
The air transcribed a little as these people will,  
A little upward lilt towards the end  
As lips curl upwards in a caricature's grimace.

The tune went shyly sauntering up the path. 20  
—Who ever heard it as a tune before?  
Here were no tired multitudes  
Waiting a miracle in memorial squares  
Or outworn aisles beneath the cobweb ensigns.  
No blink-eyed audience 25  
Fed on gross perfume and the fluttering dark,  
Like stalled cows newly milked,  
Stood for a space, while the tri-coloured chords  
Snatch back the blind that shutters out tomorrow,  
Before the oily ebb recedes towards 30  
A drink, a cigarette, the picture news,  
And all the usual languid anodynes.

Peel off our threadbare lendings, Africa:  
Melt off our incrustations, Capricorn:  
Prick with the needles of your minor keys 35  
Your dissonant harmonic's faint unease.  
Another easy year droops to its close,  
Another opportunity recedes.  
The mountains wait in huge indifference  
The building of our second-hand estate. 40

43	naïve façade ] naive facade	475/28
	naïve façade ] na.ive fa[c <i>over</i> ],ade	PLO56(5)
46	of ] [o <i>over</i> i]f	475/28
	Constantia ] Constan[t <i>over</i> r]ia	475/28
47	moralizings ] morali[z <i>inserted by hand over</i> s]ings	475/28

Could we not here translate our prejudice  
And colour it with innocence and calm?  
Build on our patient land the naïve façade  
Of something new and precious in itself—  
See from the Little Street of Delft transcribed  
The swan lines of a Groot Constantia?

45

The kestrels mock my moralizings  
Poised on the hauteur of the midmost wind.  
The bells ring fainter, and the hills are quiet,  
Reclining in the timeless wash of blue.

50

**FROM AFRICA: 1941**

**Publication History:**

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 21-22.

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 475/26(b); NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

**Text: BF**

**Variant Readings:**

7	sweet persuasion ] <del>yielding-sweetness</del> [sweet persuasion <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
8	leaden ] leade[n <i>over h</i> ]	475/28
11	as ] <del>like</del> [as <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
19	alabaster ] [al <i>over la</i> ]abaster	475/28

## FROM AFRICA: 1941

“Why stand so suddenly still,  
In spite of twin stars’ peace and one thin moon,  
Your gladness crumpled as a shot duck  
Drops in the sullen silver of the fen.”

“And must I tell you then, 5  
In spite of two white arms and ten clasped fingers—  
Your sweet persuasion hangs like chains of lead,  
Like leaden chains bound to a granite wharf.”

“Why divide love by half, 10  
In spite of this night’s bliss and next day’s hope:  
Half mine and half far-off; as a pointer pauses  
Rapture within his jaws but questing yet.”

“No, I can not forget, 15  
In spite of leaves hung still and one dove brooding—  
A brutal pigmy trampling through skeleton woods,  
Mankind at arms, gesticulating ape.”

“And can you not escape, 20  
In spite of tangled wire and thousand bayonets;  
For here drink peace: the sky a cup of alabaster  
And one thin silver goblet tilts the moon.”

“I cannot change the tune, 25  
In spite of wood-fire’s glow and closed red curtains—  
Suave innuendoes from polished walnut  
Recalling doom from entrails of tin and tack.”

“It will come back: 30  
In spite of millions’ rack and one’s indifference—  
Silent and sure as hoof beats in the sand,  
Silent and sad, tiredness after pain.”

“It will not come again: 30  
In spite of one drugged heart and both eyes blind—  
That loveliness we walked with on the hills  
Cowering now in a cellar deaf with guns.”



## UMSASA

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 23-24.

**SW:** *Shadows of War*. Badcock, Peter, and Robin Graham. Salisbury, Rhodesia: Galaxie Press, 1978. 41 (lines 29-32 only).

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/26 (b); NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

11	martyrdom ] m[a over y]rtyrdom	475/28
25	—Ah ] [— inserted by hand]Ah	475/28
30	reconciled— ] reconciled[— inserted by hand]	475/28
31	Spring ] Spr[i over u]ng ]	475/28
32	naïve ] naïve	475/28
footnote:	Umsasa ... bronze. ] [Umsasa ... bronze. inserted by hand]	475/28
	tree ] trees	475/28

## UMSASA\*

Springtime in Capricorn: what can you resurrect?  
May in the air and underfoot September.  
New hope can hardly any joy expect,  
nor old remember.

Russet branch of autumn, bronze spray of spring— 5  
An early promise, or a late pretence?  
Twin-faced allegiance is hard-pressed discerning  
the difference.

This is the true end and the beginning 10  
Of old dreams dead or new imperilled—  
(Sycamore the cardinal red martyrdom winning,  
umsasa the herald.)

Whose livery shall it be in a new world?  
Crimson to die in, or be born in scarlet— 15  
Europe or Africa, flaunting or furred,  
master or varlet?

From grave priest to careless athlete turning,  
From oracle to Olympia the torches send—  
What fitter than our candles bravely burning 20  
at either end?

The baleful red in that grey latitude,  
What can it tell but funeral fires forlorn—  
That here so gently stirs, a rosy attitude  
that welcomes dawn.

—Ah yet, without trumpets and no censer swung 25  
(Later will come the scents, later the storm)  
The colours steal like dawn the woods along;  
tassel and tuft inform

The grey earth dazed with drought and worn with war;  
New loves and old loyalties reconciled— 30  
O Capricornic Spring, your promises are  
so naïve, so wild.

\*Umsasa—a common Rhodesian tree, whose spring foliage is in many delicate tints of red and bronze.

“L’APRÈS-MIDI D’UN FAUNE”

**Publication History:**

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 25.

**NARV:** *A New Anthology of Rhodesian Verse*. Chosen by John Snelling. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell Limited, 1950. 8.

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 475/26(b); NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

**Text:** BF

**Variant Readings:**

Subtitle fly-leaf ] Fly-leaf	NARV
“Autobiography” ] Autobiography	NARV
8 letter-press ] letterpress	NARV
11 pause ] [pa <i>over</i> ap]use	475/28
12 grasped ] gra[sp <i>over</i> ps]ed	475/28
13 heifer ] h[ie <i>corrected by hand to</i> ei]fer	475/28

**“L’APRÈS-MIDI D’UN FAUNE”**

*For the fly-leaf of Kingsley Fairbridge’s “Autobiography”*

Lest it should be when we have gone away  
that frost has fallen on this faun’s afternoon,  
and only the needle scratches mournfully  
on the blank silence of the record:

lest it should be through our Rhodesian day 5  
the lory shouts reproaches to the echoes alone,  
and only memory fingers half-heedfully  
the letter-press of a dusty chronicle:

turn to these pages of a boy’s endeavour 10  
who loved, stauncher than we, this lovely lonely land,  
but did not pause, as we pause, questingly,  
but grasped his vision in his two brown hands,

and filled with tilth and homestead, ox and heifer,  
deserted leagues of memory-peopled plain, 15  
compelled to human music stalwartly  
the wistful cadence of that haunted prelude.

## NO PRAYER FOR RAIN

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 26.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/26(b); NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

4	Thou ] T[ho over ou]u	475/28
	Thy ] [T <i>inserted by hand over t</i> ]hy	475/28
5-6	<i>stanza break ] no stanza break</i>	475/27(a), 475/27(b)
13	eucalyptus ] euca[l over p]yptus	475/28

## NO PRAYER FOR RAIN

Not for the rain I pray:  
For who am I to commandeer the clouds  
Or straighten out vermicular isobars,  
Or Thou Omnipotent, bound by Thy own-made laws,  
To advise the lightning or transfer the stars? 5

The lubbard sun comes shouldering through the haze,  
And cracks the water jars.

Give me forbearance, Lord:  
The patience of a tree that, three months since  
Its thoral gaiety of leaf put on, 10  
Indifferent still awaits the laggard groom,  
Still trimming lamps for nuptials not begun.

The noon is brass, and eucalyptus leaves  
Hang edgeways to the sun.

Only acceptance give: 15  
The serf's contempt, the helot's irony,  
In flood to irrigate or in drought to drain  
To implicate a foolish overseer,  
And, unconcerned, bend to the hoe again.

The languid moon still lies upon her back 20  
And will not spill the rain.

## AUTUMN SONG

### Publication History:

*The Link*. October 1945. 175 [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 116.] *No copy located*.

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 27.

**ACV:** *An Anthology of Commonwealth Verse*. Ed. Margaret J. O'Donnell. London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1963. 325.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 11.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

**Text: BF**

### Variant Readings:

6	you well ] [y <i>over</i> u]ou well	475/28
19	Africa ] Afr[i <i>over</i> o]ca	475/28

## AUTUMN SONG

- You simple-minded African bird,  
Who make a song from two cracked notes,  
And dropping them, take up a third,  
Unclaimed by more ambitious throats:  
Lory, hoopoe, hollow bell, 5  
Sing you simple, sing you well.
- You bare unruffled African scene,  
Spare in line and brave in hue,  
Stroke of russet, stroke of green,  
Distant indolent smear of blue— 10  
Till umsasa comes to dress  
Your unselfconscious nakedness.
- You broad up-yodelling African voices  
Brimming the flagon of the hills,  
When with dance and jocund noises 15  
Like autumn branches fall the flails:  
Drum and monotone renewed,  
Ungarnished as your daily food.
- Africa—timidly loved, half understood,  
Take my shy northern heart and teach it; 20  
Ease its drought and drain its flood  
And in your simple sunlight bleach it;  
Smooth my involuted sense  
With your two notes of innocence.



## CHRISTMAS CAROL

### Publication History:

*The Link*. December 1945. 243. [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 116.] *No copy located*.

*School*. 1945. 20 [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 116.] *No copy located*.

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 28-30.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: From ] [F <i>inserted by hand over</i> f]rom	475/28
9    dong dong ] dong do[n <i>over</i> m]g	475/28
22    I see ] I[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]see	475/28
23    inglenooks, ] inglenooks	475/27(a), 475/27(b), 475/28
	^
32    wagons ] waggons	475/28

## CHRISTMAS CAROL

*From Rhodesia, 1942*

We shall not listen here for any bells  
Where the sandy track makes through our African bush  
For the old Christmas star:  
No men with lanterns go under swinging boughs,  
To wake the iron tongues with their glad news 5  
Where little steeples lift their fingers up.

But from the black woods like a dropped pebble  
A bird rang suddenly his tiny treble—  
Double bob, treble bob, ding dong dong,  
Carol courageous as a seraph's song. 10

And slowly, strangely, echoed in my head  
Those quiet persistent notes  
That are the warning of the German radio—  
Eight sprinkled notes from a child's musical box  
Sown on the rare quiet of a trumpeting world. 15

Those bitter men, our enemies,  
Used to look with children's eyes,  
Listened once with children's ears  
Through the intervening years  
For that modest cottage tone, 20  
Bell celeste and xylophone.

I see them, lovers of tunes like that,  
Smoking large curly pipes in the inglenooks,  
Slow and glugged with a tavern content,  
Lovers of rounded hams and sausages 25  
And the rounded smiles of babyhood—  
While the cricket crinkles the smooth quiet  
As this bird sings on the hearth of sunset.

I see them carving ancient toys  
Dolls for girls and tops for boys, 30  
Cuckoo clocks that hourly shout,  
Painted wagons lumbering out;  
Knife and cup and wooden spoon,  
Grinning gesturing pantaloons,  
Carven out of kindly wood; 35  
Well they knew and understood—  
Kindlier than transatlantic  
Toys of steel and streamlined antic,

43	medieval ] mediaeval	475/28
53	by ] b[y <i>over</i> t]	475/28
57	prophecy ] p̄rophe[c <i>inserted by hand over</i> s]y	475/28

Electrified and chromium-plated Motor-car that never waited On the margin of a wood And listened to the solitude.	40
And further, in a medieval twilight, Warm little town in Europe's frozen heart, Harness bells keep time to the trotting horses, While lantern-lit bands of revellers With linked hands beat the merry tale, Lusty or sweet, starling or nightingale, Ancient companionship of glee and carol;	45
There are the orange window squares, and above, the steeples Toss out their merry message to the snow; And there, prying at latches and exploring the chimney pots Good Nicholas himself drops gifts by stealth.	50
Good will to men, good will at last; From the heavens overcast Through the angry baffled sky Drops the unwearied prophecy: Unto us a Child is born— Pixie angel leprechaun Round the tavern or the kraal Shout their Christmas madrigal To the old unwinking star In Germany or Africa.	55      60



II

Occasional

## BOOKS AND TOYS

### Publication History:

*The Link*. June 1945. 83. [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 116.] *No copy located*.

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 33-36.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS475/28.

**Text:** BF

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: Christmas ] Chris[t <i>over</i> r]mas	475/28
morning ] morning,	475/27(a), 475/27(b), 475/28
^	
3    them ] ð [them <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
10   bedcurtains ] be[d <i>over</i> e]curtains	475/28
19   morning ] m[or <i>over</i> ro]ning	475/28
23-24 . . . ] [. . . <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
29   If ] [I <i>over</i> i]f	475/28
they would ] they <del>w</del> would	475/28
30   Words ] Wor[ds <i>over</i> sd]	475/28

## BOOKS AND TOYS

### *Christmas morning 1944*

- Spin your mechanical toys,  
You shouting girls and boys,  
    So merrily let them spin;  
You careless girls and boys  
Wind up your clockwork toys. 5
- No more, alas, for me;  
As I curiously turn the patterned dust-covers  
—Harsh geometric patterns that not graciously twine,  
Rosebriar and eglantine,  
Like Jacobean chintzes, bedcurtains for lovers— 10  
Governor and balance wheel  
Helix of managed steel  
Not for our introverted mood avails:  
But at our back the urgent clanking roar  
Drives us down zigzag track and dizzy spoor 15  
—No shining sure perspective of the rails  
To carry our little freights, pert and cocksure,  
Once round the bedroom floor and back again.
- Disturb the morning air,  
Eliot and Baudelaire, 20  
    Unhelped by cog or pin;  
Arnold or de la Mare,  
Persuade the thwarted air.  
    . . .
- Shout your readymade words,  
Set like the song of birds 25  
    In one unstudied mode;  
You wanton wandering herds  
Twitter your easy words.
- If they would only come easy,  
Words to dissolve our inward brume of night, 30  
Like rainwater lathering softly on the hands,  
Or the effortless waves, each after each,  
Skein interlacing skein of muslin white  
Lazily sketching patterns on the sands.



36	in ] i[n <i>over</i> j]	475/28
	frustrate ] fr[u <i>over</i> i]strate	475/28
43	Carbuncles ] C[ar <i>over</i> ra]buncles	475/28
48	O'erslide ] O[' <i>over</i> 8]erslide	475/28
53-54	. . . ] [. . . <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
60	shepherd ] sh[e <i>over</i> p]pherd	475/28
61	darling ] [d <i>over</i> D]arling	475/28
70	patterns ] [pa <i>over</i> ap]tterns	475/28
71	innocency ] inno[c <i>over</i> e]ency	475/28
73	sand, ] sands[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28

—But only the spent waves stumble up the beach 35  
 And fall in froth and fury, still frustrate.  
 If only words came with eighteenth-century ease,  
 Planing close like walnut, or cutting solid—  
 With however blunt a knife—like cheese.  
 But we forget how easy metre goes, 40  
 And thought, driven inward, lurks or bursts in pain  
 In angry eruptive whelks and scarlet whorls,  
 Carbuncles imitate the rose,  
 And gone is gust and verve.  
 If only after roaring nights of rain 45  
 The level floods would rise,  
 And with no fleck of foam the lithe-limbed chute  
 O’erslide the sullen dams of our reserve—

Sing, sing your silken song,  
 Herrick for ever young, 50  
     Easily shift the load;  
 Davies in rags and wrong,  
 Unloose your whippet tongue.

Scatter your make-believes,  
 You yet-untempted Eves, 55  
     Weave your glad coronal;  
 Young ringlets crowned in leaves,  
 Reach me your make-believes.

Persuade me, with no argument,  
 As if to lead me, like the shepherd boy, 60  
 Who (darling invention of our Christmas cards)  
 Carries his one lamb to the starlit byre  
 In innocent adoration.

Craftsman of Galilee, give us your one-foot rule,  
 Teacher of honest commonplace, 65  
 Homespun and olive staff  
 Sower and sheepfold and the leaven-pot  
 The simple way of sifting grain from chaff.  
 Inform our multifarious odds and ends  
 With patterns where the motive changes not, 70  
 Symbols for innocency:

Child of the close swaddling bands,  
 Man of the firm footprints in the sands,  
 Christ rigidly spreadeagled on the tree:

Suckling and harvest sheaf, 75  
 Thorn crown and olive leaf,  
     Wedding and funeral—  
 Acquaint us with your grief  
 And help our unbelief.

## CHRISTMAS TREE

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 37-39.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28; RH Col 4 (lines 1-12, 17-36, 45-48 and 53-56 only).

### Text: BF

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 56 lines except for RH.Col 4, a Christmas card, which has 39 lines. In this card the text of "Christmas Tree" has no indentation, lines 11-12 of BF form one line and lines 13-16, 37-44 and 49-52 of BF have been omitted.

### Variant Readings:

Title: Christmas Tree ] Christmas Tree <i>footnote</i> : from "Bronze Frieze", 1950	RH Col 4
Subtitle: No ] no	RH Col 4
But ] but	RH Col 4
weather ] weather—	RH Col 4
3    plant ] plant, ^	RH Col 4
11-12 Will ... legacies, // Bacteria ... chromosome ] Will ... chromosome	RH Col 4
13-16 With ... unison— ] <i>omitted</i>	RH Col 4
15    him ] hi[m <i>over s</i> ]	475/28
18    keystone ] keyston[e <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
21    And will ] But will	RH Col 4

## CHRISTMAS TREE

*"No enemy  
But winter and rough weather"*

### I

Will someone, black or white, stand here,  
A hundred Christmases from now,  
Beneath these seedlings that I plant  
Beneath their grown and ancient bough?

And will he find the promises renewed, 5  
Goodwill to men that falls from heaven again,  
The new insurgence of the pregnant earth  
That, desperate drought forgotten, drinks the rain?

For him again in hermit mould, 10  
The broken veld, the virgin womb,  
Will work their gnomic legacies,  
Bacteria and chromosome.

With must and mould inscrutably conceived  
Earth's secret processes shall contribute  
To bless him with this perfect unison— 15  
The rain, the microbe, and the hungry root.

Or will he pause, and breathless wait  
The keystone atom's final fission  
To blast in universal ash  
The seed's untroubled parturition? 20

And will he sigh to see the promises  
Of clouds big-bellied with the future sheaves  
Evaporated in the hate of men,  
And wait, crushing these aromatic leaves,

Smelling perhaps the gift of myrrh 25  
Within the wind of Christmastide,  
And wonder if his new-found hope  
By the next News will be denied?

28-29	II ] ...	RH Col 4
30	Perhaps, when ] Perhaps,when ^	475/28
	Perhaps, ] Maybe	RH Col 4
31	Will ... prejudice ] The years will lapse, the winds will veer,	RH Col 4
32	And ... heritage. ] And history will turn its page.	RH Col 4
33	will ] may	RH Col 4
34	And ] A[n over b]d	475/28
37-44	The rise ... reprove. ] <i>omitted</i>	RH Col 4
43	Exorcized ] Exorcised	475/28
45	commissar ] commi[s over a]ar	RH Col 4
47	caprice of breeze, ] the whim of wind	RH Col 4
48	hanging ] hna[an is inserted by hand]ging	RH Col 4
49-52	Wit ... thunder. ] <i>omitted</i>	RH Col 4
49	Wit ] Wi[t over y]	475/28
51	Ariel ] ariel	475/27(a), 475/27(b), 475/28
	mobilized ] mobilised	475/28

## II

- They are slow growers, cypresses:  
Perhaps, when these have come of age, 30  
Will may be free of prejudice  
And clean of entail heritage.
- By then the balance will have tilted up,  
And fearless fellows meet at kerb and hearth,  
And only frost will flout and drought betray 35  
His well-laid sequences in plot and garth.
- The rise and fall of quicksilver  
Remain his one uncertainty,  
The fickle ways of wind and wrack,  
The mock manoeuvres of the sky. 40
- The ordered nerves and balanced endocrine  
In perfect harmony shall sweetly move,  
Exorcized of their timid treacheries  
Free of the fears that cavil and reprove.
- Then equerry and commissar, 45  
And calf and whelp and cub together,  
Shall only fear caprice of breeze,  
Malevolence of hanging weather.
- Wit in a cask and Innocence in a stall  
Provide the chequered shade to labour under, 50  
And Ariel only mobilized for strife  
Drive with his volted whips the mutinous thunder.
- And striding through the fenceless land  
With no caprice and no pretence,  
White to black and east to west 55  
Shall bear their gifts of frankincense.

## BOUGAINVILIA

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 40-43.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle A ] [A <i>inserted by hand over</i> a]	475/28
9 Rhône ] Rhone	475/27(a), 475/27(a), 475/28
14 smell ] smells	475/28
19 dozen ] do[z <i>over</i> x]en	475/28
thrushes ] thrus[h <i>over</i> g]es	475/28
31 emphasize ] emphasi[z <i>over</i> s]e	475/28

## BOUGAINVILIA

### *A misprision*

When I first saw it, fifteen years ago,  
New then, with expectation sharpened by regret,  
From close-kempt hamlet and cathedral town  
Where pastel-pale wistaria loops the arches  
And level lawn beyond and grave grey stone— 5  
I saw the purple sprays a-drip like wine  
Over a whitewashed wall that held the sun:  
Ah, Bougainville, I thought, some old French town  
Hanging upon an eyebrow of the Rhône,  
Where aquiline arches over a coiling current 10  
Link house to tall tiled house:  
Where with a serious mien the burghers drink  
In cavernous kitchens fresh with rosemary  
And honestly smell the garlic and the cloves;  
In some such place 15  
Mad painters hung their walls with sunflowers  
And stationed cypresses along the corn;  
From every trellis drip the purple bracts  
And a dozen thrushes shout from the flowering almonds:

The streets are wide in Bougainville: 20  
    Beneath the sycamore shade  
The friendly lattice leans its ear  
    To catch and serenade;  
The jocund rivulets soak the root  
    Of citronel and pear, 25  
And flowers flaunt in Bougainville  
    —But I was never there.

And words are wise in Bougainville:  
    Beneath the trellised skies  
Round bench and board opinions creak 30  
    And tankards emphasize  
The oaths apocalyptic  
    That flatter or condemn,  
And doubts are drowned in Bougainville  
    —For all I know of them. 35

And folks are gay in Bougainville:  
    Beneath the ripening fruit  
Merrily lifts the toe to sound  
    Of mirliton and lute.  
They toss their songs like flowers up 40  
    In spiral overtone,  
The easy hearts of old Provence  
    —That I have never known.



46	pane ] [p over a]ane	475/28
48	saw ed: was refer to notes on this poem	BF, 475/27(a), 475/27(b), 475/28
49	sienna ] si[e over n]na	475/28
	forest, ] forest[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
52	guns, ] guns[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
61	death, ] death[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
65	misprisions, ] misprisions[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
66	Amaryllis ] [A over a]maryllis	475/28
	Delilah, ] Delilah[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
67	worlds, ] worlds[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28

But it dropped out of the News the other night,  
 And I flinched as from a pebble tossed at a window 45  
 Smashing the pane to stars:  
 'Bougainville, island in the Solomon group'—  
 And through the splinters saw the proper picture,  
 Beach raw sienna and viridian forest,  
 The sand spouting in fountains from the shells, 50  
 Rags of palm and tattered banana fans  
 Veiling the shuddering slow recoil of guns,  
 Phallus erected for sterility;  
 There where the rollers hang and break in foam,  
 The old malevolent sea 55  
 Baring its fangs between blue curling lips.  
 And peering between the apertures  
 Framed with the leaves broken-winged fluttering,  
 The goggled visages that once were men;  
 And everywhere, from wrestling lianes 60  
 Twining about that ravelled web of death,  
 The frantic bracts splash down their gouts of blood.

Only to borrow back those fifteen years  
 That we have said goodbye to.  
 We have been so cozened by misprisions, 65  
 By Amaryllis and Delilah,  
 Flirting with fancies in our private worlds,  
 Mistaking palliative for remedy,  
 Decking a compromise with permanence,  
 The vague philandering of good Christian men. 70

Above the lintels of Palladian clubs  
 The portly cherubs sit and sing:

It'll all come right  
 They won't dare fight,  
 The bird of peace is home to roost 75  
 We've conquered war with dynamite.

Perpetuate  
 The perfect state,  
 The living room to which we're used  
 Shored up with latest surrogate. 80

Bureaucracy  
 Has got the key,  
 The world's great age is being loosed  
 Encouraged with a subsidy.



The guns upset the atmosphere: 85  
("We never had such rain before the war:  
The bombs have brought this drought to Africa")  
The mist we loved to drape our landscapes with,  
Goes with the blast, and sulphur sunflower tone  
Vibrates intolerably on the retina 90  
And probes the sluggard brain:

Lucky for us, whose times have changed the colour  
Of the green dreams of twenty-one.



III

Personal

## FLOWER OF THE CLOVE

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 47.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 10.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28; NELM MS 2002.41.8.

### Text: BF

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 24 lines except for NELM MS 2002.41.8 which has 23 lines.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	FLOWER ] [ <i>F over illegible character</i> ]LOWER	2002.41.8
Subtitle:	To ] [ <i>T inserted by hand over t</i> ]o	475/28
	To Eva ... Sudan ] to —— from Port Sudan	2002.41.8
1	came, ] came <sup>^</sup>	2002.41.8
2	summer that seems so ] summer so	2002.41.8
6	startling ] sudden	2002.41.8
7	pushing ] springing	2002.41.8
9	bean-flower's ] bean-field's	2002.41.8
	and ] and[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]the	475/28
11	Eglantine round the bole ] Your own clematis, sweetness that stole	2002.41.8
12	Of sentinel yew ] From every bosky ant-hill, joy to traveller.]	2002.41.8
13	Keeping renaissance watch over the sepulchre. ] <i>omitted</i>	2002.41.8
	renaissance ] ren[ <i>ai over ia</i> ]ss[ <i>a over s</i> ]nce	475/28
17	— As [— <i>inserted by hand over</i> )]As	475/28
19	Sunken ] [ <i>S over A</i> ]unken	475/28

## FLOWER OF THE CLOVE

*To Eva from Port Sudan*

It was like this you came,  
In that hot summer that seems so long gone;  
I remember it still when leaves shiver and turn over  
Like half-dead ashes gently blown upon.

Like all things shy and secret: 5  
The speedwell's startling blue,  
Primroses pushing through  
The grasses wet;  
The bean-flower's fragrance and the nightjar's churr,  
Damp earth fresh laboured by the hermit mole, 10  
Eglantine round the bole  
Of sentinel yew  
Keeping renaissance watch over the sepulchre.

Like all things shy and secret,  
Crushed mint, bruised thyme, pear-blossom wet— 15  
Stealing so, perfume-like, into my love.

—As when in some far city under the moon,  
With cavernous arch and curtained bedchamber,  
Sunken with sleep, heavy with scent of clove—  
Comes up the street, shivering the acacia trees, 20  
Brimming the night, miraculous, the sea:  
So you came; so will you ever be,  
Cool in the stifling night, calm in the thunder,  
Stealing so, perfume-like, into my love.



## DEPARTURE PLATFORM

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 48-49.

**NARV:** *A New Anthology of Rhodesian Verse*. Chosen by John Snelling. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell Limited, 1950. 9-10.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

19	back ] [b over c]ack	475/28
29	landscape ] lan[d <i>inserted by hand</i> ]scape	475/28
31	Anaesthetized ] Anaestheti[z over s]ed	475/28
32	stereotyped ] stereotyp[e over i]d	475/28

## DEPARTURE PLATFORM

I wish the train would start:  
Our conversation fails, and even your faithful heart  
Searches bewildered for the last word to say  
And finds it said. 5  
We are marooned on an islet of the dead;  
The crowd washes round us and away—  
Busy or unperturbed, parting and going home,  
Grey shifting tide and sudden flash of foam—  
The white smile of the shouting fruit-sellers,  
The gleam of hurried cups of tea: 10  
The row of gossip gulls on sunny shelves  
And penguins, glossy dowagers;  
Dank wildernesses where the river hogs stumble  
Through the stark elbows of the mangrove thicket—  
So on our fancies fumble 15  
As panic fingers grope for a lost ticket,  
Till the jerk of the coupling  
Sends our dreams toppling,  
Sends our dreams toppling back upon themselves—  
And I see across the slowly widening space 20  
Of waving caricatures and clamouring bells,  
Your tragic eyes in your dark watching face  
Like night's last stars, uncertain sentinels.

Ah, the relief of journeying after spent passions:  
To lean back on the half-resistant cushions, 25  
And light a pipe so nonchalant and slow  
(Lest the wise world should stare and nod and know).  
To watch with calm incurious regard  
The unrolling landscape as it backward reels,  
With never desire to speed nor doubt retard, 30  
Anaesthetized by that incessant tune,  
The stereotyped iambic of the wheels.

And in the afternoon,  
After serpentine creeping round the flanks of hills  
And shrill leap from the cutting's dim arcade, 35  
Glide to an easy place,  
See sun-white gables stare through ancient trees,  
And honeysuckle muffle the window-sills  
As quiet fingers frame a brooding face,  
Hear the hens meditating in the shade, 40  
And taste the smooth ingredients of peace.

## IN THE TRAIN

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 50.

**NARV:** *A New Anthology of Rhodesian Verse*. Chosen by John Snelling. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell Limited, 1950. 11.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

**Text:** BF

### Variant Readings:

Sub-title Arley on Severn ] [( *deleted*]Arley on Severn[ ] *deleted*]

11 time ] t[i *over* o]me  
one ] o[n *over* h]e  
14 woodsmoke ] wood-smoke  
19 rain. ] rain;

475/28  
475/28  
475/28  
NARV  
NARV

## IN THE TRAIN

### *Arley on Severn*

We could have gone on and on—  
Sitting together in the roaring train,  
With your hand in my hand again.  
On and on,  
Past tree and farm and villages without form, 5  
Like wild swans riding the furious rain  
Necks stretched and wings astrain,  
Into the spinning wreckage of the storm.

But we got out, 10  
And went down slowly into the little town.  
It was past milking time; by one and one,  
The cows came loitering out under the trees;  
A woman sat knitting a russet shawl,  
And witchingly rose the woodsmoke in the air,  
And sweetly raught the spire up to heaven, 15  
And nobly went the river through it all.

So we went down,  
And peace came up like scents to meet us,  
Like sweet earth scents after tempestuous rain.  
And the white stars came out as we went down. 20

## COPHETUA

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 51.

**NARV:** *A New Anthology of Rhodesian Verse*. Chosen by John Snelling. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell Limited, 1950. 12.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

**Text: BF**

### Variant Readings:

4	always ] <del>ever</del> [always <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
6	beggar maid ] beggar-maid	NARV

## COPHETUA

Never remember me: oh do not say,  
When wind rises like this through other trees  
In someone else's garden far away,  
—He always loved the wind; its voice was his,  
His glance the shaken leaves, and I  
A beggar maid that by the water-break  
Breaks her heart also—never say this,  
Never remember me: for your own sake.

5

For I would have you ever a queen; as older  
And ever rich, and gracious still, you reign,  
Tossing your beauty's largesse to the winds like grain,  
When, amid distant bells pealing, you will set,  
Not bound by shadowy chains of any regret,  
Your accolade on someone else's shoulder.

10

## TO AN OLD MAN, DYING

### Publication History:

BF: *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 52.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

10	Closing ] Cl[os <i>inserted by hand over</i> so]ing	475/28
16	telling of ] telling[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]of	475/28
17	victories ] victor[i <i>over</i> u]es	475/28
18	away ] [a <i>over</i> w]way	475/28

## TO AN OLD MAN, DYING

The night they told me, the wind came at my window,  
And the rain came whispering out of the darkness,  
Whispering insistently on the blind pane  
Like beauty's wistful voices at the shut door  
Of some dead soul. 5  
Tears, tears, the wind was crying,  
And the rain was quietly weeping  
And the blown lamp weakly flickering  
Like eyelids wearily closing  
Closing at last on long long years of waiting. 10

But I was not sad, soul that is slowly going:  
The life that was is the fact, not tears at dying.  
The rain and the wind peopled with eager life  
The blank black night. 15  
They were sighs telling of past embraces  
They were smiles telling of lost babyhood  
They were trumpets telling of spent victories.  
You are going away now, I am coming in singing.

There was no sorrow here, there was no lamenting,  
Only the wind crying, only that whispering rain. 20



## WIND AT THE FUNERAL

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 53.

**NARV:** *A New Anthology of Rhodesian Verse*. Chosen by John Snelling. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell Limited, 1950. 13.

**SW:** *Shadows of War*. Badcock, Peter, and Robin Graham. Salisbury, Rhodesia: Galaxie Press, 1978. 1.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

Title:	WIND AT THE FUNERAL ] <i>omitted</i> [indexed as “Verse: N. H. Brettell”]	SW
2	waiting grave ] open grave	NARV
5	thrown ] throw[n <i>over</i> m]	475/28
14	dust devil ] dust-devil	NARV
15	listened ] l[is <i>over</i> si]tened	475/28
16	wild ] w[i <i>over</i> o]ld	475/28

## WIND AT THE FUNERAL

I could not think of death  
As the soil went whispering into the waiting grave,  
And the gravel chattered in goblin roundelay;  
The wind rises, the priest's vestments wave  
Like a newspaper sheet read idly and thrown away. 5

The wind rises still, devil wind troubling the cypresses even  
—Black acolytes in saturnine servitude—  
Whirling the frantic leaves and scraps of grass: in frolic rude  
Lifting the spire of human dust to very heaven.

No death—not in dust and ashes— 10  
Dust blowing like smoke from nostrils after the plough,  
Burnt grass astir with green thrusting lances—  
No thought of dying now  
While the mad dust devil thrashes the cypress branches.

I listened to the offices of the gust: 15  
For out of that wild labour was I born,  
Created from a handful of blown dust  
Knit up with water and breathed through with wind;

I listened to the gust's mad obsequies,  
One flesh with dust and surging grass and trees. 20

## FROST

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 54-55.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

16	tumbled ] t[u over i]mbled	475/28
19	Rising ] R[i over s]sing	475/28
24	defiance ] [d over e]efiance	475/28
34	ecstasies ] ecsta[c inserted by hand s]ies	475/28
	eternized ] eterni[z inserted by hand over s]ed	475/28
37	may ] may[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]be	475/28
38	said ] s[ai over ia]d	475/28

## FROST

Do these things to please me, love, she said.

She said make me a poem,  
Word and sound chasing like girl and goatherd  
Through the fantastic forest branches,  
Thoughts of me ever for you escaping 5  
The charmed portcullis of the woods.

She said carve me a profile in bas-relief,  
Like cold cut crystal against a candle flame,  
Against wind shaken brilliance glacial and still,  
As I have seen held in the cloven husk of night 10  
The ivory kernel of the dawn.

She said paint me a portrait in water-colours,  
So lips, ever up-turned at the smiling corners  
May smile forever from your brooding walls  
Or unexpected leap like flame between 15  
The tumbled papers on your desk.

She said make me a piano sonata,  
As dark tresses tumble and glances smile upward,  
Rising on wings, skimming on hissing skates,  
Hurrying to a lilt running to meet the morning 20  
The morose ticking of the clock.

She said plant me flowers in a garden,  
Standing in phalanx, tulip or gladiolus,  
Gamesome bugles shouting a gay defiance  
Against the dark patrols encircling my beauty, 25  
The furtive shadows on the lawn.

But I said I will do none of these: for always  
When the air has stirred around word or melody  
Or light been unravelled with urn-like shapes or colours,  
Silence descends like frost, the incantation ceases, 30  
The ether ebbs on the timeless shore.

And I said I will hold you in a thought,  
With no passion stirring, no not one willow leaf,  
Our ended ecstasies eternized in memory,  
Hueless, shapeless, flavourless as water, 35  
The carven lineaments of death.

If that may be so, please yourself, she said.

## FANCY'S KNELL

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 56-57.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

20	crown ] cr[o over w]wn	475/28
22	leagues ] l[ <i>illegible characters corrected by hand to ea</i> ]gues	475/28

## FANCY'S KNELL

Yes, stand a little way off, listless and still,  
And do not look at me with those wise eyes.  
Stand further off, listless and still;  
I must revise my thoughts of you incalculably.

It has always seemed to me fancy's great folly 5  
To imagine two things where there's only one.

As when you go to that little English town  
Where the river loiters under ancient arches—  
Where never leathern jack is filled with ale  
Nor halberdier nor pikeman ever marches— 10

You think, on a carpet of sun between two trees  
In a green gown Perdita wanders still:  
When the breeze blows the shadow-work over her face,  
And leaves you only a wind-tossed daffodil:

So will it be when we no longer ride 15  
Across the empty spaces of a windy plain,  
And your glad fancies argue me to catch  
Glimpses a tired heart to entertain:  
Gnomes lurk in the fantastic pointed thatch  
Cringing beneath the granite boulder's crown, 20  
Satyrs chase shadows where the steenbok leap—  
And far beyond the burnished leagues of grass,  
The gentle heave of hills, leviathan asleep.

Will it be folly if I think it was  
Richer because of you, poorer for your loss? 25

Yes, stand a little way off, listless and still,  
Listless and still beyond the reach of dream:  
You will be quiet there and will not hear me  
Trying sad preludes in bleak anterooms, my dear.

**THE HILL**

**Publication History:**

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 58-59.

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

**Text: BF**

**Variant Readings:**

9	years' ] years	475/27(a), 475/27(b), 475/28
13	you ] [y over t]ou	475/28

## THE HILL

You say the best is behind us; in the long climb  
Upward through all these years, there was the time  
To stop and watch the green unravelling  
The tender uncurling of ferns in the stone's shadow,  
And pimpernel, the hill's brave starveling— 5  
The tiny jewel-like things long love can show us,  
Jewel-like glance and tiny intimate gesture  
Not shrinking yet from the grey leagues below us:  
Twenty years' joy behind us, and nearer to us  
Narcissus pools in one another's eyes. 10

And you say: there is nothing left us now but memories  
And the slow reluctant descent to shadowy valleys.

—But have you heard the nightingale singing?  
Shy warning flute, and then the white cascade,  
White spray of notes on waves upward flinging— 15  
Processional of boys in white festal bands  
With all the throb of moonlight in their throats  
Up blinding stair of sound unfalteringly hasten:  
The sudden stop, while the leaves in the still wood  
Catch their breath shivering; and then—listen— 20  
The last slow notes that drip into your hands.  
I would not lose those three descending notes  
For all the climbing spires of his first prelude.

So it comes back unsought:  
Like that frosty night on the hills over Sheffield 25  
Above that saturnine valley of bitter scars;  
The city lay a glittering bowl of light,  
Tiara and diadem by the dark heights revealed.

My heart spoke high to my descending feet:  
Life gave to youth the chalice of all delight, 30  
But to the old a porringer of stars.





IV

Trivial

## BIRTHDAY OF A SLOTH

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 63.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: Rapunzel, Rapunzel, ] Rapunzel, Rapun[z over s]el,	475/28
8      Between ] B[e over w]tween	475/28

## BIRTHDAY OF A SLOTH

*“Rapunzel, Rapunzel,  
Let down your golden hair.”*

Slippers on the feet and my pipe drawing easy,  
Winter in the chimney ruminantly mumbling,  
Turrets in the embers masonry of rhyme,  
Stair of bright tresses from embrasure tumbling—  
And I too indolent to climb. 5

Too indolent to follow, where in difficult places  
The skirt of an echo ever faint and thin goes  
Between tree trunks and ever-expectant doors:  
As still comes stealing through my library windows  
The ancient strumming of the troubadours. 10

Should I get up now and put on my hobnails  
And stride seven miles into another garden,  
I could pluck three thoughts no man has ever said;  
But sheets smell of lavender and coffee cups pardon,  
The clock ticks moodily: time to get to bed. 15

Time to get to bed where easy hopes thrive,  
Hope for easy images like deep fish spawning  
Under secret stones while the dark stream glides;  
Nothing ever happens except another morning,  
Twelve hours drift on the lethean tides. 20

The clock swings sullenly: I am thirty-five.

EASE

**Publication History:**

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 64.

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

**Text:** BF

**Variant Readings:**

10 Schubert ] [S *over* s]chubert

475/28

## EASE

Nothing to do that need be done:  
The firewood cut and out of the rain,  
The horses bedded, the hens at roost,  
The rain beginning and set the sun,  
Last year's leaves raked out of the drain: 5  
Nothing to do that need be done.

Nothing to do that need be done:  
Across the threshold sleeps the dog,  
The question begged, the problem shelved,  
And Schubert on the gramophone; 10  
The kindling leaps around the log—  
Nothing to do that need be done.

## SPRING SONG

### Publication History:

BF: *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 65

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

2      flaring ] ~~blooming~~ [*flaring inserted by hand*]      475/28

## SPRING SONG

*For a convalescent*

A mile away, the wood's on fire  
With bursting bud and flaring spray;  
This year, unhailed, forgetfully,  
The Spring goes on his witless way  
To keep his promise with the trees 5  
And break his tryst with me.

The lithe wind leaps from sleeping stall  
And claps the iron on the roof,  
And I the empty hours beguile  
Counting the trochees of his hoof, 10  
With not the life to reach a stirrup,  
Nor strength to stroll a mile.

The shadows walk across the wall,  
The sunbeams dance in bowl and ewer,  
In greening boughs the gossip birds 15  
Proclaim their heartless overture,  
Leaving me the ancient call  
To reconcile with words.





## SONG

Never come in the spring  
Or in the summer,  
Never encourage tears  
Or suggest laughter, 5  
Never come in your silks  
Or simple muslin,  
Never give me a keepsake  
Not one dark ringlet,  
Never bid me farewell 10  
Lift not one finger,  
Never trouble my rhymes  
Or break my measures,  
Trespass not in my walks  
Stand a good mile off:

But O love, come lost love 15  
Live in one thought,  
Perfect as marble.

## SANCTUARY IN AFRICA

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 67-68.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28 = NELM MS 98.4.110 (except for handwritten emendations to the subtitle of NELM MS 475/28).

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: “—not ] [“ <i>over</i> n]—not	475/28
1941. ]1941[. <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	475/28
1941. ] 1941	98.4.110
	^
14 satisfied ] sat[i <i>over</i> u]sfied	475/28
21 But ] [B <i>over</i> b]ut	475/28
23 mode ] m[o <i>over</i> a]de	475/28
24 wood ] [w <i>over</i> s]ood	475/28
28 loudest ] lo[ude <i>over</i> des]st	475/28
34 upholstery ] upho[l <i>over</i> s]stery	475/28

## SANCTUARY IN AFRICA

*“—not a retreat, but a strategic withdrawal to prepared positions”—any News in 1941.*

- Against the noise of men gone mad,  
Screaming bomb and sergeant's shout,  
Plunging plane and klaxon horn,  
I'll fence my acres round about:  
    Acacia and bramble set 5  
    Their valiant little bayonet.
- I'll none of them of any breed;  
No blaspheming scarlet fool,  
No black-shirted mountebank  
Shall trespass in my coverts cool: 10  
    But the deer with dainty shoes  
    Tread the wistful avenues.
- My mild-eyed melancholy hounds  
With milk and porridge satisfied,  
My meekly pacing thoroughbred 15  
Shall quest along the woodland ride:  
    But not for trophy nor for food  
    Shall vex my vixen's solitude.
- My rooms I'll curtain as I please  
Not with silk or damascene, 20  
But casement bought in quiet shops  
Of old unfashionable green:  
    No concrete's acrobatic mode  
    Shall flout my comely brick and wood.
- Through suavely polished cabinet, 25  
Propaganda's frantic ghost  
Shall not hector to believe  
Who shouts loudest means the most:  
    My only fulmination be  
    The thunder of a symphony. 30
- And not for nothing: with my gold  
Forsworn I'll buy this sanctuary—  
With chromium plate and bathroom tiles  
And double-sprung upholstery:  
    The wealth of twenty towns put by 35  
    To get my precious poverty.

**TO ROSEMARY**

**Publication History:**

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 69.

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

**Text: BF**

**Variant Readings:**

10	sunlit ] sunl[i over e]t	475/28
13	for ] f[o over i]r	475/28

## TO ROSEMARY

Darling, take my hand and lead  
Me down the mazes of your head,  
Where liveried rats take up the reins  
Of little steeds with silver manes  
To chariot us to fairyland.

5

My darling, let your elvish eyes  
Lead me to those alleys blind,  
Where bears and pigs and peccaries  
Talk in the parlours of your mind,  
The sunlit towers of your dreams.

10

My darling, let your tiny fingers  
Twine honeysuckle round my hand;  
My darling, hold me tight, for I  
Am exiled from your fairyland.

## WOOD-SMOKE

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 70-71.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

Title:	WOOD-SMOKE ] Wood[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]Smoke[. <i>deleted</i> ]	475/28
2	wood-smoke ] wood[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]smoke	475/28
4	well-nigh ] we[l <i>over e</i> ]l-nig[h <i>over j</i> ]	475/28
20	The ] T[h e <i>corrected by hand</i> ] ^	475/28
	their ] the[i <i>over u</i> ]r	475/28
21	The promise ] The[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]promise	475/28

## WOOD-SMOKE

I shall always burn wood on my fires  
So that I may have wood-smoke curling in the inglenook,  
Stirring the old unfathomable desires  
Imagination has well-nigh forsaken  
For the suave substitute of lamp and book. 5

It has been all youth and joy:  
Old campfires in the mists of young July,  
When boys with skins all gold ran out to swim  
While the old river went past silently;  
And one young star came out to hear our stories 10  
Through the charmed lattice of the willow branches.

And it has been the loneliness of earth:  
Bivouac under the blind bright stars,  
And under the tiny voice of night-time things  
The deeper silence that is Africa's; 15  
And then a bird call, and the virgin light of dawn,  
And then the amber light, and then the flame.

And it has been the nobleness of work,  
Smoke curling from stubble on the autumn fields,  
The tumbrils jolting out with their steaming loads 20  
The promise of a next year's valiant yields;  
Old honest feel of snathe and spade and pitchfork,  
The furrow driven true from hedge to headland.

And it has been the promises of hope,  
Broken orange boxes in a huddled grate 25  
That sweetened the air over a grumbling city,  
Sweetened the air with fancies delicate  
Of the grave loveliness of noble windows  
And friendly casements blind with honeysuckle.

I shall always burn wood on my fires. 30



## DWARFS' CHORUS

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 72-73.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28 = NELM MS 98.4.110 (except for handwritten emendations to the subtitle and lines 22 and 24-25 of NELM MS 475/28).

**Text:** BF

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle	For ] [F <i>inserted by hand over</i> f]or	475/28
	For ] for	98.4.110
	Snow ] S[n <i>over</i> b]ow	475/28
	Dwarfs'' ] Dwarfs'' [. <i>deleted</i> ]	475/28
	Dwarfs'' ] Dwarfs''.	98.4.110
1	everything that's ] everything's that	475/27(a), 475/27(b), 475/28
7	candlesticks ] can[dl <i>over</i> el]esticks	475/28
22	Filigree ] Fil[i <i>inserted by hand</i> ]gree	475/28
	Filigree ] Filgree	98.4.110
	topazes ] t[o <i>over</i> p]pazes	475/28
24-25	Dwarf: ] Dwarf[: <i>over</i> ;]	475/28
	Dwarf: ] Dwarf;	98.4.110





CHORUS:

Rich man, poor man, tinker or silversmith,  
We have loads of metal here to keep your anvils busy.  
Gold for the guineas and silver for the threepenny bits,  
Copper for the rivets and solder for the seams,  
Lead for the bullets and brass for the candlesticks,  
And iron for the nightmare's shoes.

30

## ESCAPE BY WATER

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 74-75.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

### Variant Readings:

17	gesture ] gest[u over y]re	475/28
19	I leave ] I <del>m</del> [l over L]eave	475/28

## ESCAPE BY WATER

- Do not come with me over the sea,  
Do not come with me under the moon—  
For I will go out in a little boat  
And none but my thoughts with me  
To sail in the paths of the moon. 5
- Down to the shadows at the edge of the sea,  
Down to the widening ripples of night,  
Kiss in the surf, and there part with me,  
As we stand with our faces white  
With worship under the moon. 10
- Break the ropes of promise and vow  
—They are already beginning to fray—  
Head thrown back in the arrogant prow,  
For the way of a thought is a lonely way  
And the tune a solitary tune. 15
- Wave the shreds of our broken hope  
—Last white gesture in deepening blue—  
You on the beach and I on the poop,  
For though half of my mind I leave with you,  
The other will go with me. 20
- Dreams are slaves, but my thoughts are free—  
I saw this, darling, just too soon:  
So—do not come with me under the moon,  
Do not come out with me over the sea. 25

## NO ROAD

### Publication History:

**BF:** *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1950. 76-78

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO56(6) = NELM MS PLO56(6“a”); NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b); NELM MS 475/28.

### Text: BF

**Note:** NELM MS PLO56(6“a”) is a carbon copy of NELM MS PLO56(6). I have appointed the accession number to distinguish it from the original.

### Variant Readings:

Title: Epilogue ] <i>omitted</i>	475/27(a), 475/28, PLO56(6)
Subtitle: In half tones ] [ <i>deleted</i> ]In half tones[] <i>deleted</i>	475/28
45 towards ] tow[ar <i>over</i> ra]ds	475/28
towards ] towa[r <i>over</i> f]ds	PLO56(6)

## EPILOGUE: NO ROAD

### *In half tones*

It was an old track forgotten,  
From an old homestead broken,  
Playground of bats and lizards  
And quiet never awoken  
By watchdog or chanticleer. 5  
Nothing stirred, nothing greeted there.  
Pigweed and devil-thorn  
Sprawled on the sandy wheel-spoor,  
Crooked elbow and kudu horn  
Leant the umsasa branches. 10  
Quick as the sunlight lances,  
One cheerful honey-guide  
Sure of his forest mazes  
Flirting wings side to side  
Down the track beckoned. 15  
One questing ear quickened  
To elf-drum and goblin-pipe,  
My gentle-mouthed gelding  
Through sun-dapple and shadow-stripe  
Pushed his soft muzzle. 20  
Eye-glint and feather-rustle  
Stirred the grey shadows in,  
Resentful and timid folk  
Weasel and francolin.  
—Then right athwart the road 25  
A fence through the forest trod,  
Four unrelenting strands  
Barring me God knows what  
Improbable elfin lands.  
Spitted on barb and fang 30  
Hung, wind and sunshine dried,  
Froglet and grasshopper  
Shrivelled and mummified,  
The blunt butcher-bird's larder.  
There was no going farther— 35  
No parleying with a fence—  
Here was I, fool in Arden:  
Better get home from hence.  
How eagerly the dead-beat horse  
Turns again homeward, 40  
Though reluctance and faint remorse  
Sits the slack saddle.  
Home-grazing sauntering cattle  
Loitering their shadows after  
Turned towards the waiting byres. 45





Gossip and laughter  
Stirred the old orchard bole—  
Babbler and oriole  
Fluted and bantered. 50  
Over the friendly veld  
Smoothly we cantered;  
Through the home gate at last,  
From unexorcized past  
To uneasy present:  
Yesterday's work put off, 55  
And the News none too pleasant.



# A RHODESIAN LEAVE



## THRENODY IN SPRING

*In memoriam: A. S. Cripps*  
*Priest and Poet in Mashonaland*

*"That time of year thou may'st in me behold—"*  
(Shakespeare: Sonnet 73)

### I

You chose the time well to die:  
Our air still tingles with the latest frost;  
Now, where the dead leaf falls, the new blade shoots,  
With furtive fingering to the hidden springs  
To bring life bravely up. 5

The kaffirboom bursts open with a cry  
And spreads its ancient fingers tipped with gems;  
Among the gaunt stones of your lonely home  
See, the first frail msasa shakes its fronds  
In shreds of tender hope. 10

Our southern spring is stirring cautiously,  
Feeling its way through calyx, tendril, tuft;  
The daring flowers that come before the leaves,  
The shy sand-apple flowers open their pink mouths,  
The cassia's golden cup 15

Lifts its shrill monstrence to the brooding sky.

15-16	<i>line break ] no line break</i>		PRS
19	hang ] han[g <i>inserted by hand over d</i> ]		2002.41.3
	hang ] hand		98.4.2
	pippin ] pippi[n <i>over j</i> ]		475/3
21	children's ] childrens'		PRS, RB Col
22	drifting ] dr[i <i>over f</i> ]fting		RB Col
	windfalls ] w[i <i>over o</i> ]ndfalls		475/3
	brook ] br[o <i>over r</i> ]ok		98.82.14
23	Where ] W[h <i>over j</i> ]ere		2002.41.3
	glutted ] [g <i>over t</i> ]luted		PLO56(12)
25	loosestrife ] loose[s <i>inserted by hand</i> ]trife		2002.41.3
	loosestrife ] loostrife		98.4.2
26	Lift ] Lifts		S&P
	spires. ] spires[. <i>inserted by hand by Finn</i> ]		98.82.14
26-27	<i>stanza break ] no stanza break</i>		475/3
27	lazy ] [l <i>over d</i> ]az[y <i>over t</i> ]		RB Col
	book: ] book,		PRS, PLO56(12), 475/3, RB Col
29	fumbling ] fum[b <i>over v</i> ]bling		2002.41.3
	fumbling ] fu[m <i>over n</i> ]bling		475/3
	snapdragons ] snap-dragons		2002.41.3
31	byres. ] byres		475/3
33	potato-lifter's ] potato lifter's		PRS, PLO56(12), 475/3 [T], RB Col
37	cracked. On ] cracked[. <i>over</i> ,] On		PLO56(12)
38	beam ] beam[s <i>emendation by H. Finn</i> ]		98.82.14
	wavers ] waver[s <i>over z</i> ]		475/3
39	ranging; ] ranging.		PRS, PLO56(12), RB Col
40	opulent ] opul[e <i>over s</i> ]nt		PLO56(12)
	ripening, ] ripening		PRS, PLO56(12)
	ripenting, ] ripening[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]		RB Col
41-42	<i>line break ] no line break</i>		PRS
42	look. ] look		PRS

II

Now in that Kentish boyhood you forsook  
 (Carrying its seed through half a continent)  
 The boughs hang heavy with the luscious pippin,  
 The wasps are drunken in the hearts of plums,  
 And children's happy choirs 20

Salvage the drifting windfalls from the brook  
 Where orchard canopies droop over gluttoned pools;  
 The scent of hops upholsters the rich air,  
 Along the idle banks, loosestrife and meadowsweet 25  
 Lift up their drowsy spires.

Hear all the lazy tunes from summer's book:  
 From the far field the slur of hone on scythe,  
 The sated bees fumbling the snapdragons,  
 The distant clack and whirr of tedder and rake, 30  
 The munching in the byres.

Work waits on growing: idle hangs the hook;  
 Only the whirling potato-lifter's iron fingers  
 Toss the fat tubers like a juggler's balls,  
 The pented ferrets snuffle in their straw 35  
 September's dark desires.

The cuckoo's voice is cracked. On rick and stook  
 The long beam wavers, and returns to us.  
 Across the latitudes the Spring goes ranging;  
 Now, in the pause before his opulent ripening, 40  
 The green year of the shires

Leans for a moment on the spade to look.



43	summer ] Summer and ] an[d over i]	PRS, RB Col, PLO56(12) RB Col
45	fruit ] frui[t over y] self-same ] selfsame bough ] spray, ^ bough ] bough, ^	2002.41.3 PRS, RB Col, PLO56(12), 475/3 PRS, RB Col, PLO56(12) 475/3
46	muhachas <i>Finn</i> : m'hashas muhachas ] [[m over M]'hashas <i>altered to muhachas by H. Finn</i> muhachas ] m'hashas drought ] drought, ^	2002.41.3 98.82.14 PRS, RB Col, PLO56(12), 475/3 PRS, RB Col, PLO56(12)
49	Saint ] Sainst	475/3
50	poverty ] [p over o]overty	98.82.14
51	Cover the ] [C over O]over[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]the leaves, ] leaves[: <i>inserted by hand over</i> ,] leaves, ] leaves:	RB Col 98.82.14 S&P
52-53	<i>stanza break ] no stanza break</i>	475/3
60	of ] [o over i]f of ] oft grass; ] grass:	475/3 RB Col PLO56(12)
63	Ashes to ashes ] Ashes to grass Ashes to ashes ] As[h over g]es to grass towering ] t[ow over wo]ering towering ] f[t over l]owering towering tree ] flowering tree	PRS, PLO56(12) RB Col 2002.41.3 RB Col PLO56(12)
64	harvest ] h[ar over <i>illegible character</i> ]vest	98.82.14
65	clouds] [clouds <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.14
67-68	<i>line break ] no line break</i>	PRS
68	in ] i[n over s] quicken ] quicken[s <i>inserted by H. Finn</i> ]	RB Col refer to notes on this poem S&P, 98.82.14

III

Spring and high summer going hand in hand  
Meet in us now. The young leaf and the sere,  
Blossom and fruit hung on the self-same bough 45  
Learn, as our dark muhachas scorn the drought  
To garner up the past

And fill the future of our patient land.  
O gentle season of Saint Francis, bless  
Your bitter compassion for all poverty, 50  
Cover the jutting ribs with drift of leaves,  
The acorn and the mast

Muffle your footfall in the aching sand.  
The husk is split, the kernels scattered wide,  
The lonely germens of your scrupulous songs 55  
Perfect as seed, as quick with secret life,  
On the scarred furrows cast.

The shrill lament dies down. The silent band,  
The white, the black, with fallow footsteps now  
Rustles the silence of the wayside grass; 60  
Through broken doorway to the broken apse  
Carries you silently.

Ashes to ashes: dust to the towering tree;  
Full-fed for harvest is the season planned.  
When, certain of grain, the lofty clouds are massed, 65  
From that Arcadian autumn where you are,  
Watch us, and understand

Spring, surging in us, quicken the seed at last.



ON LEAVE

[SOUTHERN CROSS AND CHARLES' WAIN]

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.4.10 [typed by Finn].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

**Variant Readings:**

Title:	["SOUTHERN ... WAIN"] SOUTHERN CROSS AND CHARLIE'S WAIN	
		RB Col, 98.4.10
1	Southern ] Sout[h over j]ern	475/3
	Charles' ] Charlie's	RB Col, 98.4.10
2	hear ] see	RB Col, 98.4.10
3	shouting ] shouti[n over illegible character]g	2002.41.3
	birches, RB Col, 475/3: birches	2002.41.3
		^
4	churches, RB Col, 475/3: churches	2002.41.3
		^
	churches, ] chu[r over t]ches,	RB Col
6	Southern ] Sou[t over i]hern	2002.41.3
	Charles' ] Charlie's	RB Col, 98.4.10
	Wain ] Wai[n over j]	475/3
8	dismissal, RB Col, 475/3: dismissal	2002.41.3
		^
9	plain— ] plain.	RB Col, 475/3
10	Southern Cross and Charles' Wain: ] Southern Cross and Charlie's Wain:	RB Col, 98.4.10
	Southern Cross and Charles' Wain: ] Diadem and daisy chain	475/3
11	Diadem and daisy chain, ] Diad[e over a]m and daisy [c over r]hain,	98.4.10
	Diadem and daisy chain, ] Sout[h over j]ern Cross and Charles' Wain:	475/3
14	hand, left 475/3: hand left	RB Col, 2002.41.3, 98.4.10
		^
15	Charles' ] Charlie's	RB Col, 98.4.10

[SOUTHERN CROSS AND CHARLES' WAIN]

Southern Cross and Charles' Wain: When shall I hear together again The cuckoo shouting through the birches, Playbox chimes from little churches, The endless rumour of the rain—	5
Southern Cross and Charles' Wain: The reedbuck's high alarum whistle, The lhourie's petulant dismissal, The bateleur's shadow on the plain—	10
Southern Cross and Charles' Wain: Diadem and daisy chain, High heart, low heart, mist and sun, Journeys starting, journeys done, Right hand, left hand, pitch and toss, Charles' Wain and Southern Cross.	15

## COLUMBUS

### Publication History:

*The Link*. December 1950. 37 [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 116.] *No copy located*.

**PEN:** *P.E.N. 1960: New South African Writing and a Survey of Fifty Years of Creative Achievement*. Johannesburg: The South African P.E.N. Centre, 1960. 16.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 10.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 3 of NELM MS 2002.41.3); NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 32 lines except RB Col which has 31 lines.

### Variant Readings:

2	on ] o[n <i>inserted over illegible character by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
	Viennese 475/3, PEN, S&P, RB Col, 475/3: Vienese	2002.41.3
	Viennese ] Vien[ <i>n inserted by H. Finn</i> ]ese	98.82.14
	lilts, ] lilts;	PEN
3	nonchalant ] nonch[ <i>a inserted by hand</i> ]lant	2002.41.3
	nonchalant ] nonchlant	98.4.2
	nonchalant ] elegant	PEN, RB Col
	passengers ] pass[ <i>e over a</i> ]ngers	98.82.14
	doze, ] doze[; <i>inserted by hand over</i> ,]	98.82.14
	doze, ] doze;	S&P
5	southern ] sou[ <i>th over illegible characters</i> ]ern	98.82.14
7	flat ] calm	PEN, RB Col
8	Canary ] [C <i>over c</i> ]anary	475/3
9	interest; ] interest:	PEN, RB Col, 475/3
11	The cuts, the cards, ] The slump, the dump,	S&P, 98.82.14
12	two's and three's, ] twos and threes;	PEN, RB Col
13	The ... avenues. ] <i>omitted</i>	RB Col
	cul-de-sacs ] cul-de-[ <i>s over illegible character</i> ]acs	98.82.14
	avenues. ] avenues;	PEN, 475/3
14	prince ] [pr <i>over rp</i> ]ince	2002.41.3, 98.82.14
15	sailing ] sa[il <i>over li</i> ]ing	RB Col
16	contract ] contr[ <i>a over s</i> ]ct	475/3
18	Africa's ] [A <i>over a</i> ]frica's	RB Col

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## COLUMBUS

In white and crimson the trim steamer goes,  
 The band on the deck plays the old Viennese lilt,  
 The nonchalant passengers sit and saunter and doze,  
 As each familiar star-group wheels and tilts  
 The southern sea-road uncurls softly under our bows 5  
 And lapses softly regretful into our wake.  
 With this flat passage, tomorrow we should make  
 The Island of Grand Canary: it does not arouse  
 Any great interest; what matter where, over these blue and boring seas?

What matter where? We've escaped the glum unease, 10  
 The cuts, the cards, the hopeless endless queues,  
 The fog, the sludge, the juggling two's and three's,  
 The shuffling cul-de-sacs and avenues.

No prince, no mayor, nor any town-councillor  
 Attended our casual sailing. We go as we please, 15

Our easy contract dangling from our hand,  
 To have our shot at building Manchester  
 In Africa's far and vaguely promised land:  
 (And if we don't fancy it, need anyone care?  
 You can get back, they say, in eighteen hours by air.) 20

—But ever moth-like, dipping, careening, behind us,  
 Beating and yawing, blunt bows blundering through,  
 A caravel rides the sea-roads, to remind us  
 Of one lost voyager's effrontery;

High on the lonely poop he paces endlessly 25  
 (The fo'c'sle's thoughts upon tomorrow's landfall,  
 Wine and sweet fruits, flaskful and windfall,  
 The rigging full of yellow singing birds)

With his safe-conduct of a dead man's words,  
 Pinning his life to the just-possible miracle, 30  
 He stares across the empty starboard sea,  
 With hair blown back, the arrogant Admiral.

- 19 And ] A[n over b]d 475/3  
 20 eighteen hours by air.) ] twenty-four hours by air). PEN, RB Col  
 24 effrontery; ] effrontery. PEN, RB Col  
 27 flaskful PEN: flaskfull S&P, RB Col, 475/3, 2002.41.3, 98.4.2, 98.82.14  
 29 safe ] [s inserted over illegible character by H. Finn]afe 98.82.14  
 words, ] words PEN  
 ^  
 30 just-possible ] just possible S&P, 98.82.14  
 31 starboard ] star-board S&P  
 starboard ] starbo[ar inserted over illegible characters by H. Finn]d 98.82.14



## ON CLENT HILL

### Publication History:

*The Link*. March 1951. 41. [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 117.] *No copy located*.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.4.10 [typed by Finn].

**Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3**

### Variant Readings:

1	round ] around	98.4.10
3	scents, ] scents ^	RB Col, 98.4.10
4	idleness ] id[le <i>over</i> el]ness	475/3
	lad's ] Lad's	RB Col
7	kind; ] kind.	98.4.10, 98.82.26.21
9	confidential ] confid <sup>i</sup> ential	2002.41.3, 475/3
	confidential ] [c <i>over</i> d]onfidential	RB Col
11	Smooth ] Smmoth	RB Col
	flanked; ] flanked:	98.4.10
	dressing gown ] dressing-gown	98.4.10, 98.82.26.21
13	fire ] f[ire <i>over</i> ear]	RB Col
14	nosing ] n[o <i>over</i> s]sing	RB Col
15	drifts ] drifted	98.4.10, 98.82.26.21
16	hang ] han[g <i>over</i> h]	475/3
18	unchanged ] unch[an <i>over</i> na]ged	2002.41.3
19	unpledged, RB Col, 475/3: unpledged ^	2002.41.3
	unpledged, to ] unpledged,to	98.4.10
20	redeem, ] rede[e <i>over</i> d]m, <del>to pick up</del>	2002.41.3
	redeem, ] redeem,after	98.4.10

## ON CLENT HILL

O, the kind air slipped round us like a glove,  
The wind that gently wrapped us from behind,  
Full of the old scents,  
Love-in-idleness, lad's love,  
The villager Sweet William, 5  
The bee-sought heather and the nodding bents:  
O, to us so-long-truants they were kind;  
So patient had they waited us to come.  
The confidential midland country takes us back,  
Thicket and spinney and the gentle down 10  
Smooth-flanked; like an old dressing gown  
Hanging behind the door of our lost years,  
Nor rent nor threadbare, spite of fire and rack  
And all the neighbourhood of nosing fears. 15  
On field and foundry drifts the summer haze. 15  
The Wychbury woods still hang about their heights,  
Old clothes, a green and slippered ease,  
Old and unchanged through quiet days and nights,  
Ours and unpledged, to pick up as we please,  
Ours to redeem, after so many days. 20

## CATACLYSM

### Publication History:

**STD:** *Standpunte* 12 (1), 1958. 31.

**BSAV:** *A Book of South African Verse*. Selected by Guy Butler. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. 90-91.

**TT:** *Two Tone* 2 (2), March 1966. 1.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 11.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 185.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 12-13.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

Title:	CATACLYSM ] CATACLYSM[: <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.14
	^	
	CATACLYSM ] CATACLYSM:	S&P, SGS, SP
	^	
Subtitle:	"Othello" ] Othello	S&P, SGS, SP
2	stirs ] s[t over i]irs	98.82.14
	gillyflowers <i>ed:</i> gillie-flowers	S&P, SGS, SP, 2002.41.3
	gillyflowers ] [gillie-flowers <i>altered to</i> gilly-flowers <i>by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
	gillyflowers ] gillieflowers	STD, BSAV, TT, RB Col, 475/3
5	assembled ] assembl[e over i]d	2002.41.3
	assembled ] assembly	STD
8	lawns; ] lawns:	TT
	again ] ag[ai over in]n	98.82.14
9	fruit ] fruit,	STD, BSAV, TT, RB Col, 475/3
	^	
13	weirs. ] [werirs. <i>altered to</i> weirs. <i>by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
14	half-past ] halfpast	TT
16	one: ] one[: <i>altered to</i> . <i>by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
	one: the] one. The	S&P, SGS, SP
	inside ] inside,	STD, BSAV, TT, RB Col
	^	
19	circumstance, ] circumstance:	STD, BSAV, TT, RB Col

*Variant information continued on facing page*

CATAclysm

*"Othello" at Stratford*

Beneath the fourteen pointed arches  
 The cool draught stirs the gillyflowers;  
 The petals on the dust-enmarbled water  
 Pollen and gold of many summer hours  
 Float where the assembled swans 5  
 Accept the casual flattery and the crumbs.  
 The idle punt and pinnace loiter down  
 Lipping the tidy lawns; now and again there comes  
 Through faltering willows and slow-ripening fruit  
 Through avenues of slow-maturing years, 10  
 Where the sleek green Triton's shoulder of the chute  
 Breaks to the tumble of foam,  
 The round-the-corner rumour of the weirs.

It's half-past one. The pleasant playday crowd  
 Waits on the green and lets the petals slide. 15  
 It's half-past one: the Moor, somewhere inside  
 Daubs on the dun complexion of his shame.  
 Soon the cold trumpets will proclaim aloud  
 The pomp and circumstance, the violins  
 Insinuate the insult and the blame, 20  
 The half-remembered interrupted song  
 That lifts and falters like a very willow leaf.  
 And ever from our seated helplessness,  
 The sidelong hint, the word, the handkerchief,  
 Like straws whirl on the inevitable flow— 25  
 Leaving us all just Roderigo.

Aloof as swan or water hyacinth,  
 The green stream glides beneath the solid stone,  
 Voussoir and pier and plinth—  
 The reassurance of the centuries 30  
 We lean our wistful wishes on  
 To shun the vertigo of the swirling years.  
 The plot swings steadily down towards the weirs:  
 How further must we drift, before  
 The testy senators tumble us into war? 35

28	green ] smooth	STD, BSAV, RB Col
	green ] gree[n over m]	98.82.14
29	Vousoir TT, SP: Voissoir	BSAV, STD, S&P, SGS, RB Col, 475/3, 2002.41.3, 98.82.14
30	centuries ] ce[n over j]turies	475/3
35	The ] [T over t]he	98.82.14

## WINTER'S TALE

### Publication History:

*The Link*. September 1950. 43 [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 117.] *No copy located*.

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 4, 1957. 13.

**PEN:** *P.E.N 1960: New South African Writing and a Survey of Fifty Years of Creative Achievement*. Johannesburg: The South African P.E.N. Centre, 1960. 96.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 13 of NELM MS 2002.41.3).

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

	Subtitle: At ... Slater ] (At Stratford on Avon) // To Francis Carey Slater	RP, RB Col
	At ... Slater ] from Stratford-on-Avon in memoriam: // Francis Carey Slater)	PEN
	At ] [a <i>over</i> s]t	2002.41.3
1	One ] One, ^	RB Col
	Summer ] summer	RP, PEN, RB Col, 475/3
	winter, ] winter ^	PEN
3	With ] Wit[h <i>over</i> y]	475/3
6	now ] no[w <i>over</i> e]	475/3
9	cloud ] cloud, ^	PEN
10	bilious, RP: bilious ^	PEN, 2002.41.3, RB Col
	bilious, ] b[i <i>over</i> o]llious ^	475/3
11	with ] wit[h <i>over</i> y]	475/3
12	angel, RP, PEN: angel ^	2002.41.3, 475/3
13	Leontes ] Le[o <i>over</i> n]ntes	2002.41.3, 475/3
	hump ] [h <i>inserted by hand over</i> H]ump	2002.41.3
	hump ] Hump	98.4.2
	pollard ] p[o <i>over</i> l]llard	RB Col
	lychgate ] lych-gate	PEN
14	crowns ] cr[ow <i>over</i> wo]ns	RB Col
16	incubus ] inc[u <i>over</i> y]bus	RB Col
18	One ] One, ^	RB Col

*Variant information continued over the page*

## WINTER'S TALE

*At Stratford*

*In memory of Francis Carey Slater*

One who in Indian Summer told of winter,  
Seeing the storm deploy across the blue  
With purple penons streaming, and the lightning splinter  
A childish bogeyland of ghost and graveyard  
With sudden entry of spears; and knew 5  
That now and then  
Some unpredicted trick of atmosphere  
Will turn the threatened storm to clear,  
Leaving the evening drained of cloud  
Aquamarine and bilious, 10  
Exhausted with the spent anxiety:  
Hermione a marmoreal tombstone angel,  
Leontes hump and pollard over a lychgate bending,  
Exchanging crowns with due propriety,  
Expect a grandson who might be Mamilius, 15  
Every sly incubus of probable hate  
Gently exorcised for the happy ending.

One who in African winter told of summer,  
When the dust lay on a forsaken garden,  
And when the hard bright moon, the cold newcomer, 20  
Put on her aureole and the first rain came,  
Came with expected promise and full pardon:  
One whose benignant prophecy could guess  
That out of certain storm came kindness,  
The unfailing miracle of the urgent veld 25  
That in a night is green;  
Who knew another boy, barbaric born,  
With full round belly and white eyes a-gleam,  
Listens for Hili,\* that sly leprechaun  
Who in the reedy sibilance of the stream 30  
Will wink and whistle at the timid maiden  
With the poised water-pitcher laden:  
And entertains the winter kraal-fire band  
With lazy summer tale of ox and corn—  
—And careful lest the crickets understand. 35  
Mamilius and Manzi: bred in each troubled time  
Of storm and drought,  
Keeping alive with childish mock and mime  
A candle-flame no goblin can put out.

\* (Hili: an African water-sprite—see "Dark Folk" by F.C.Slater.)



23	One ] On[e <i>over illegible character</i> ]	2002.41.3
	One ] On[e <i>over w</i> ]	RB Col
	whose ] [w <i>over h</i> ]hose	2002.41.3
24	came ] c[a <i>inserted by hand</i> ]me	475/3
	kindliness, ] kindliness.	RP
27	barbaric born ] barbaric-born	RP
28	a-gleam ] agleam	PEN, RP, RB Col, 475/3
29	Hili ] [H <i>over h</i> ]ili	475/3
	leprechaun ] leprechaun, ^	RP
34	ox ] beeves	RP, RB Col
35	—And ] —[A <i>over a</i> ]nd	475/3
	—And ] [— <i>over \$</i> ]And	2002.41.3
	—And ] And	RP
	bred ] born	RB Col
36	troubled ] troublous	RP
	footnote: (Hili: ... Slater.) ] <i>omitted</i>	RP
	(Hili: ... Slater.) ] (Hili: an African water-sprite-see “Dark Folk”.)	PEN



## HARVEST AT HORSEBRIDGE

### Publication History:

**PEN:** *P.E.N. 1960: New South African Writing and a Survey of Fifty Years of Creative Achievement*. Johannesburg: The South African P.E.N. Centre, 1960. 56.

**TT:** *Two Tone* 4 (3), June [1968]. 2-3.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 12-14.

**NBSAV:** *A New Book of South African Verse in English*. Selected and Edited by Guy Butler and Chris Mann. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1979. 88-90.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO56(11) = NELM MS PLO56(11“a”); RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3; NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn’s Editor’s Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3

**Note:** NELM MS PLO56(11“a”) is a carbon copy of NELM MS PLO56(11). I have appointed the accession number NELMMS PLO56(11“a”) to distinguish it from the original.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	Harvest At Horsebridge ] Harvest At Horsebridge, Hampshire	NBSAV
Subtitle:	a Rhodesian ] aRhodesian	98.4.2
	^	
2	Beside ] [B over b]eside	RB Col
3	saws ] s[aw over wa]s	98.4.2
4	out ] [o over i]ut	98.4.2
5	odorous ] odorou[s over illegible character]	98.82.14
6	sty, ] sty	PLO56(11)
	^	
7	byres, ] byres	S&P, NBSAV, 98.82.14
	^	
9	earth ] [e over w]arth	98.4.2
16	back, ] back	PEN
	^	
21	Hampshire S&P, NBSAV, 98.82.14: Wiltshire refer to notes on this poem.	2002.41.3
	Hampshire ] Saxon	PLO56(11), RB Col
	Hampshire ] Wiltshire	PEN, TT, 475/3, 98.4.2
23	To ealdorman or carl or yeoman ] To eald or man or carl or yeoman	TT
	To ... yeoman ] To swarthy sire or flaxen woman	PLO56(11), RB Col
24	To ... woman— ] To earldorman or carl or yeoman	PLO56(11), RB Col

*Variant information continued over the page*

## HARVEST AT HORSEBRIDGE

### *A Rhodesian ruminates*

The restless combines fret and clack  
Beside the ancient Roman track;  
The jiggling cutter saws and fusses,  
Tosses out the fragrant trusses,  
Blocks of odorous masonry 5  
To raise the stack and bed the sty,  
And, trampled in the reek of byres,  
To feed the hungry old desires  
Stirring in the womb of earth  
Bursting with the green of birth, 10  
To regiment the spears of grain  
Along the ancient track again.

Beside the ancient Roman road  
The waggoners toss up the load;  
The chronicles of fifty farms 15  
Are written large across their back,  
And legends live along their arms  
And grey eyes under eyebrows black  
As conifer or blond as barley,  
While consonant and vowel parley 20  
Across the honest Hampshire tongue—  
Larynx and lips that could belong  
To ealdorman or carl or yeoman  
To swarthy sire or flaxen woman—  
But not a lineament of the Roman. 25

How the blind centuries forgot  
The terse and close-cropped overlord;  
Did he once think how time would rob  
The burnish from his idle sword,  
When his little hog-maned cob 30  
Jogged his dangling buskined foot  
Jogged his clipped unsmiling pate  
Through the fluted villa gate:  
And while the moody shadows draw  
Across the latifundia, 35  
He'd bar the door and chase the damp  
And trim the scared reluctant lamps  
Along the echoing portico;  
And while the draughty tapers dripped  
Unrolled the precious manuscript, 40

26	forgot ] forget <i>no indentation ] line indented</i>	TT PEN
27	<i>no indentation ] line indented</i>	PEN
29	sword ] sw[o over i]rd	2002.41.3
30	When his ] While his	475/3
33-34	<i>no stanza break ] stanza break</i>	NBSAV
34	moody ] m[o over m]ody	2002.41.3
35	latifundia, ] latifundia.	TT
36	He'd ] He'[d over s]	98.82.14
38	portico; ] portico,	PLO56(11), RB Col
40	precious manuscript,] treasured manuscript ^	PLO56(11), RB Col
41	Revolving ] Revol[v over c]ing so ] two or so ] o[r over t] <del>two</del> so	2002.41.3 98.4.2 RB Col
43	from his ] from <del>h</del> his Mantuan— ] Mantuan,	98.82.14 475/3
44	While ] Whil[e over r] the ] th e ^	98.82.14 RB Col
46	years. ] years!	PLO56(11), RB Col
47	storm ] storm, ^	PLO56(11), RB Col
48	north ] north, ^	PEN, PLO56(11), RB Col
49	instantaneous ] inst[a over n]ntaneous instantaneous ] instaneous brilliance ] br[il over li]liance	2002.41.3, 475/3 PLO56(11), RB Col 98.82.14
50	the ] th e ^	RB Col
51	mouth ] teeth	PEN, PLO56(11), RB Col, 475/3
53	tall ] proud	PLO56(11), RB Col
54	Silchester ] Silc[h over j]ester	98.4.2
55	Shards ] S[h over g]ards	RB Col
58	crimson ] scarlet	PLO56(11), RB Col
60	southern ] south[e over r]rn	2002.41.3
61	sickles ] si[c over f]kles marks ] ma[ <i>illegible character deleted</i> ]rks	2002.41.3 RB Col
62	the ] th e ^	RB Col
63	wall, ] wall ^	PEN
65	crawl ] cr[a over w]wl	98.82.14
68	dozen ] do[z over x]en	2002.41.3
69	the ] th[e over h]	RB Col
70	The ] [T <i>inserted by hand</i> ]he barbarian ] b[ar over ra]barian	98.82.14 98.4.2

*Variant information continued over the page*

Revolving for an hour or so  
For bees or beeves some curious plan  
Adapted from his Mantuan—  
While the cold nostalgia stirs  
Through the bright hexameters. 45

How the bright sun illumines the dark years.  
The voltage of the old forgotten storm  
Striding the cathodes from the south to north  
With instantaneous brilliance split the dark  
And caught the wild intruders— 50  
Dirk in the mouth and one leg over the wall:  
And did the glimpse suggest, uneasy sir,  
That time your tall imperium had bespoke:  
Mud in a reedy field at Silchester,  
Shards on a shelf in Basingstoke? 55

It's time to return—  
The whistle shrieks across the soaring larks,  
The tractor's crimson flames at another turn—  
Time to go back, cross the forgotten track;  
Back in our exiled southern summer 60  
The monstrous sickles of our question marks  
Lay the long swathes the swart sun will burn.  
The slow cracks widen in the wall,  
The footprints harden in the mud,  
And through our sour refusals crawl 65  
The infiltrations of the blood.  
The concrete towers fall, the markets topple,  
Percentage flounders down to score and dozen,  
And through the crevices the arc-lights double  
The stares and spears of the barbarian. 70

O walk across the centuries, my cousin,  
My black or pale or tawny antiquarian:  
Explore us from your quaint antipodes,  
And in your unimaginable matters  
Label my mysteries: 75  
My few bright words  
My tarnished taps and platters  
My potent sulphonamides and frustrated rhyme.  
O will they seem so pitiful, wry with rust,  
Beneath your alien curiosity? 80  
Kindly deal with me as you sift the dust  
And from my story scrape the crust of time.



71	walk ] w[al <i>over</i> la]k	RB Col
	walk ] wal[k <i>over</i> f]	475/3
72	tawny ] [t <i>over</i> y]awny	98.82.14
	tawny ] tawn[y <i>over</i> t]	RB Col
73	quaint ] qua[in <i>over</i> ni]t	RB Col
74	unimaginable matters ] unimaginable <del>mysteries</del> matters	RB Col
	matters ] matters,	475/3
	^	
75	mysteries: ] m[y <i>over</i> t]steries:	RB Col
78	rhyme. ] rhyme:	PEN, PLO56(11), RB Col, 475/3
79	rust, ] rust.	PEN
81	Kindly deal ] [Kindly deal <i>altered to</i> Deal kindly by <i>H. Finn</i> ]	S&P, NBSAV, 98.82.14
	with ] wi[th <i>over</i> ll]	475/3

## CHALTON MILL

### Publication History:

*The Link*. February 1951. 47 [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 116.] *No copy located*.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 14-15.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

4	lean ] lea[n over b]	475/3
13	clover ] eclover	2002.41.3
14	us ] us, ^	S&P, RB Col, 98.82.14
15	askew; ] askew.	RB Col
17	bevel ] bevel, ^	RB Col
21	downland ] d[o over i]wnland	475/3
	downland ] do[wn over nw]land	98.82.14
22	uncurled ] un[c over f]urled	475/3
27	change, ] change ^	S&P, 98.82.14
28	dozen ] do[z over illegible character]en	98.82.14
	outgrown; ] unknown;	RB Col
29	efforts ] projects	RB Col
30	or ] [o over i][r over illegible character]	98.82.14
	half ] ha[lf over fl]	98.82.14
	half begun ] half-begun	S&P, 98.82.14
31	century, decade ] century and decade ^	RB Col, 475/3
32	youth, ] youth ^	RB Col, 475/3
33	prophecies ] prophe[c over s]ies	475/3
34	nightfall ] night[f over l]all	475/3
36	come, ] come ^	S&P, 98.82.14
38	thrum, ] thrum ^	S&P, 98.82.14

## CHALTON MILL

We have come, but no others, No drover, no laden asses; The dust of summer smothers, The lean shadow passes, The afternoon gone.	5
No glint on the copper Of weathervane glory, No grist in the hopper, No leaves in the story— None.	10
We have come, half the world over, Half a life through; Smell of hay and clover Old to us and new. The great post leans askew;	15
The fissure in the stone The split in cog and bevel The last light filters on; The sunset lingers level, And then is gone, gone.	20
Once on the downland gables We held the bud uncurled, The projects and the fables, Our unpredicted world. Bleached with a fiercer sun	25
We bring it now full-blown: Seven thousand miles of change, A dozen years outgrown; Our random efforts range Forgot or half begun.	30
They have lapsed, century, decade, The land's youth, and ours, The prophecies mislaid. The creeping nightfall lours Where once the morning shone.	35
Now the lean fancies come, To mock the ruin in its Heyday; the great vanes thrum, Scything the windy minutes, One and one and one.	40



## LEAVING IN SEPTEMBER

### Publication History:

*The Link*. September. 1950. 20 [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 117.] *No copy located*.

PRS: *Poetry Review Salisbury* 3, December 1954. 10.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2.

**Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3**

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 35 lines except PRS which has 28 lines and RB Col which has 36 lines. Lines 5-35 of NELM MS 2002.41.3 & NELM MS 475/3 correspond with lines 6-36 in RB Col.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	Leaving In September ] Leaving England In September	PRS
2	nearly ] turning	PRS
3	dottle ] d[o <i>over</i> i]ttle	475/3
4	gone. ] gone:	PRS
5	By ... one ] Now all to do is done	PRS
	By ... one] All the goodbyes are said.	RB Col
6	The ... falter, ] And all the goodbyes said.	PRS
	The ... falter, ] By slow and single one // The spent leaves falter,	RB Col
6-7	<i>no stanza break</i> ] <i>stanza break</i>	PRS
7	Between me and the sun ] <i>omitted</i>	PRS
8	Green and gold alter: ] <i>omitted</i>	PRS
9	Yellow leaf falling ] <i>omitted</i>	PRS
10	Green leaf left, ] <i>omitted</i>	PRS
11	But the russet mast not shattered ] <i>omitted</i>	PRS
12	Nor chestnut cleft. ] <i>omitted</i>	PRS
13	Everything that mattered ] <i>omitted</i>	PRS
14	Is careless now: ] The shrewd and happy squirrel	PRS
15	The shrewd and happy squirrel ] Is careless yet	PRS
16	Can still forego ] He can still forget	PRS
18	Nor the cautious rooks ] And the cautious rook	PRS
19	Look for further ] Seeks for no further	PRS
	further ] fu[r <i>over</i> t]ther	475/3
20	stooks ] stook[s <i>over illegible character</i> ]	2002.41.3
	stooks ] stook	PRS
24	eavesdropper, ] eavesdropper	RB Col
25	call— ] call:	PRS

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## LEAVING IN SEPTEMBER

Blackberries not quite ripe,  
The hawthorn nearly red,  
The dottle in my pipe  
In two puffs is gone. 5  
By slow and single one  
The spent leaves falter,  
Between me and the sun  
Green and gold alter:  
Yellow leaf falling  
Green leaf left, 10  
But the russet mast not shattered  
Nor chestnut cleft.

Everything that mattered  
Is careless now:  
The shrewd and happy squirrel 15  
Can still forego  
The filbert's milky shell;  
Nor the cautious rooks  
Look for further gain  
Than the leaning stooks 20  
And the half-loaded wain.

Spent guinea, lost copper,  
The beech leaves fall:  
I, the eavesdropper,  
Hear the thrush call— 25  
To love, to loss, to winning,  
The years along?  
Someone else's day  
This is beginning,  
Someone else's tongue 30  
Has the last say.

Flat on the gilded vane  
The level rays shine,  
The clock chimes seven:  
I leave at nine. 35

27 along? ] along:

32 vane ] vane,

^

PRS

PRS

## TO WALTER DE LA MARE

### Publication History:

RP: *Rhodesian Poetry* 4, 1957. 11.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3; NELM MS 98.4.2.

**Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3**

**Note:** Lines 1, 6, 11 & 16-19 are not double indented in RP.

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: Africa ] Africa,	RP, RB Col
1     expect ] expect,	RP
3     His ... resurrect ] Only his wistful witchcrafts resurrect	RP
4     memory: ] memory—	RP
7     and ] an[d <i>over illegible character</i> ]	2002.41.3
8     Crowned ] Cr[ow <i>over wo</i> ]rned	RB Col
for luck ] f[o <i>over p</i> ]r luck	475/3
poverty ] p[o <i>over v</i> ]verty	RB Col
11    anticipate ] anti[c <i>over v</i> ]ipate	475/3
13    Inwrought ] In-wrought	475/3, 98.4.2
with ] wit[h <i>over illegible character</i> ]	475/3
14    pinned it to ] pinned to	98.4.2
we, ] we	475/3
we, ] [w <i>over W</i> ]e,	98.4.2
16    clear ] nine	RP
note, ] notes,	RP
22    burn. ] burn!	RP

## TO WALTER DE LA MARE

*On returning to Africa after reading "O Lovely England"*

What song did we expect  
When the thrush called us from the apple tree?  
His wistful witchcrafts only resurrect  
Arias from hollow memory: we,  
Whose sun breeds paradise of plume but numbs the singer. 5

What dower did we desire?  
When the leaves' tossed guineas twist and twine,  
Crowned heads for luck, tails for gay poverty,  
Largesse for our cupped handfuls: we,  
Whose winds shrivel the sap even when green sprays linger. 10

What words anticipate?  
When the old silversmith in his last filigree  
Inwrought with rose and amaranth the magic date  
That pinned it to our lost childhood: we,  
Whose timid gifts tarnish with drought to beggar the bringer. 15

O bird with the same clear note,  
Gold leaves with the old currency,  
Old poet with the bound loyalty,  
O placid purlieus, Arden and Camelot—  
Sweetly release us, tongue-tied, taciturn, 20  
Obsequious sunflower lackeys, we  
Whose faces yearn to the sun, while our roots burn.

TO EVA

Publication History:

PRS: *Poetry Review Salisbury* 1, January 1952. 3.

Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2.

Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3

Variant Readings:

Subtitle:	She in Cape Town, // I in Rhodesia, in drought ] After Leave	PRS
	She in Cape Town, // I in Rhodesia, in drought ] She in Cape Town	RB Col
2	remembrance; ] remembrance	PRS
4	half-waking ] half waking	RB Col, 475/3
5	recedes ] re[c over d]edes	2002.41.3
7	suspended ] [s over u]uspended	475/3
8	frog's-eye ] frogs-eye	PRS
	prismatic ] prismatio	RB Col
9	ceiling. ] ceilin[g inserted by hand].	RB Col
14	turquoise ] tu[r over t]quoise	475/3
	floating ] floa[t over r]ing	RB Col
	island, PRS, RB Col: island	475/3, 2002.41.3
	^	
19	now that my ] now, my	RB Col
	front door ] frontðdoor	RB Col
22	brackish ] salty	PRS, RB Col
24	pale ] grey	PRS
	savannas ] Savannas	PRS
26	grey ] swift	475/3
26-27	<i>stanza break ] no stanza break</i>	PRS
29	interval ] interval,	PRS
	^	
30	blue, the green, PRS, RB Col: blue the green	475/3, 2002.41.3
	^ ^	
31	you ] y ou	RB Col
	^	
32	easy ] quiet	PRS, RB Col
33	up the skein ] up skein	PRS
34	you, PRS, RB Col, 475/3: you	2002.41.3
	^	
35	you, and PRS, RB Col, 475/3: you and	2002.41.3
	^	

## TO EVA

*She in Cape Town,  
I in Rhodesia, in drought*

I lived alone for fourteen days  
Between the fact and the remembrance;  
One of those clear inhuman intervals—  
The moment of half-waking  
When the dream recedes and day is not quite come— 5  
Or as a diver stares through his pellucid world  
With breath suspended, mind incurious,  
A frog's-eye view, distorted and prismatic,  
Before his upward thrust shatters the green ceiling.

I lived without you 10  
When I had lived so much within you,  
Alone with you on the blue roof of England:  
We owned the empty downs, the posting shadows,  
The turquoise reaches and the floating island,  
The horizontal calm of sea and sky 15  
And the far finger of the one cathedral,  
Gathered the cowslip seed, hoping our memories  
Might flower again in a dry African garden.

And I cannot think now that my front door opens  
Opens no longer on close lawns and elms 20  
Nor the blue northern air—  
But first on the brackish greens of ocean  
Then on the grey steppes of the Karoo  
Now on the pale savannas and the ashen woods—  
The highway leaping underneath my car, 25  
Spinning grey spool on spool of sullen space  
Between the green fact and the grey remembrance.

My wife, my sanity, my one cool gentleness,  
Bring back the empty fortnight's interval  
To reconcile the blue, the green, the grey: 30  
When you come home,  
Home, and your deft and easy fingers  
Knit up the skein,  
And I can piece it out again with you,  
And hide in you, and live in you again. 35

## A CHINESE SCREEN

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; 98.4.10 [typed by Finn].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

1	You ] [Y over illegible character]ou	RB Col
	boulevard ] bouvelard	2002.41.3
	boulevard ] bou[l over v]e[v over l]ard	475/3
	boulevard ] bou[lev over ve]ard	RB Col
2	alone ] a[l over illegible character]one	98.4.10
4	jalousies <i>ed:</i> jalouses	RB Col, 475/3, 2002.41.3, 98.4.10
5	music: ] music;	RB Col, 98.4.10
8	Crimson ] Cr[i over o]mson	475/3
	pagoda ] pa[g over f]oda	RB Col
	of ] o[f over n]	RB Col
12	and ] an[d over f]	475/3
	and ] an	98.4.10
13	utmost ] [presentmost altered to utmost by H. Finn]	98.4.10
	utmost ] <del>f</del> rezentmost	RB Col
14	of ] [o over O]f	475/3
17	autumn's ] untumns's	2002.41.3
19	<i>no indentation</i> ] <i>line indented</i>	98.4.10
23	footprints ] footsteps	RB Col, 98.4.10
	find ] findt	RB Col

## A CHINESE SCREEN

You in the snow, under the boulevard trees,  
Treading alone our old paths over again:  
The loud red buses and the shouting train,  
The muffled crescents, silent jealousies,  
Remote as Chinese music: and you go 5  
Printing your bird-like message on the snow;  
Thin note of bamboo reed and one-stringed fiddle  
Crimson pagoda in a sea of silver  
Pale oval-featured goddess in the middle,  
No thaw to clog nor blizzard to bewilder— 10  
How can I find the words to read the riddle  
As tiny and far you go under the frozen beeches  
Into our whitened memories' utmost reaches?  
Here, in the tremulous African end-of-season,  
The rain is over, and leaves fade to the fall, 15  
All plans awry and scribbled every reason,  
And sap leaks from the autumn's overhaul:  
While our starved love is swelling big in bud—  
Now, while the blind snow shines, I can recall  
Days etched like icicles; 20  
Before the glum encroachment of the mud,  
And before April's lances leap behind them—  
O leave your footprints there for me to find them.



## AIR MAIL

### Publication History:

**PRS:** *Poetry Review Salisbury* 3, December 1954. 9.

**NSAW:** *New South African Writing: the South African P.E.N. Centre Presents its Selection of the Best Original Writing of the Day (2)*. Ed. Tony Fleischer, A. C. Partridge, Lewis Sowden, Edgar Bernstein, Dolores Fleischer. Cape Town: Purnell and Sons, [196-]. 98-99.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 15-16.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3**

### Variant Readings:

1	earth's subtended curve: ] great earth's curve:	PRS, RB Col
2	silver freighted ] silver-freighted	S&P, 98.82.14
	jungles ] jungles, ^	PRS, S&P, RB Col, 98.82.14
3	questions PRS, NSAW, S&P, RB Col , 475/3, 98.82.14: question	2002.41.3
4	in a ] in their	RB Col
8	hidalgos ] hi[d over l]algos	98.82.14
10	Sheba ] She[b over d]a	2002.41.3
11	above ] a[b over v]ove	2002.41.3
	innuendoes ] [i over u]nnuendoes	2002.41.3
	innuendoes ] innuendoes, ^	PRS, NSAW, RB Col, 475/3
12	walls ] wells	NSAW
13	frog-lust; the ] frog-lust. The	PRS, NSAW, RB Col, 475/3
	hadada ] [hadada altered to hadada by H. Finn]	98.82.14
	hadada ] hadada	PRS, NSAW, RB Col, 475/3
15	Cleopatra ] Cleop[at over ta]ra	98.82.14
17	sour ] sallow	PRS, RB Col
18	Sallow as juice of ] Keeping alive on	PRS, RB Col
19	Where ... dynasties ] When ... d[y over u]nasties	RB Col
21	wing ] wings	PRS
	Aegean ] A[e over r]gean	475/3
24	portals: ] porches:	PRS, RB Col
25	you, wild ] [y over o]ou, wild	2002.41.3
	Sappho ] Sapph[o over e]	2002.41.3
26	orchards ] [o inserted by hand over a]rchards	98.82.14

*Variant information continued over the page*

## AIR MAIL

- The wings slant over the earth's subtended curve:  
As silver freighted bellies brush the jungles  
Our questions cross their answers. With the cuckoo,  
Storks in a gawky hurry, and the unresting swallows,  
Over to you, my far love, over to you. 5
- My blue-enveloped thoughts go their high road,  
Over the spuming cataracts and the mile-wide rivers,  
The lost maps where the doomed hidalgos drew  
The sprawling veins of treasure in the mountains:  
Over to you, dark Sheba, over to you. 10
- Serene above the whispered innuendoes  
Where behind tall walls they spurned the embattled desert  
With asp-hate and frog-lust; the grave hadeda flew  
Over the spawning delta choked with lotus:  
Over to you, Cleopatra, over to you. 15
- Over the smoking mouth of God careening,  
The dragons shrunk to maggots: sour desires  
Sallow as juice of dill and feverfew,  
Where subterfuge is dust and the dynasties ended:  
Over to you, cold Jezebel, over to you. 20
- Owl's wing over the Aegean and the moonlit islands,  
The sea wine-dark with oblivion's bitter draught,  
Unseen the shores the oarsmen never knew;  
The lidless eyes stare through the forlorn portals:  
Over to you, wild Sappho, over to you. 25
- Over the flat orchards go my humble passions;  
Against the casements flap the dazed papillons,  
With toadstools in the garden and in the arbour mildew,  
With peasants blind as beeves and the leaders evil:  
Over to you, Madame Bovary, over to you. 30
- Over the snoring cities and the nightmare legends,  
Across a day of continent and a night of sea,  
Skimming the guarded passes and discreet parterres,  
My thoughts strain quill and bone and blood to reach you.  
Planing at last down clouds to the twittering eaves, 35  
All England like a dove's wing, grey and blue,  
Through swathes of sweetness to the perfect landfall:  
Over to you, my own love, over to you.



27	casements ] shutters	S&P, 98.82.14
	casements ] casement	475/3
	papillons, ] papillon[s, <i>over</i> ,;]	475/3
32	continent ] continents	PRS, NSAW, RB Col, 475/3
	night ] league	PRS
34	bone ] [b <i>over</i> h]one	475/3
37	Through ] Throu[g <i>over</i> h]h	475/3



RETURN

## ON AN INYANGA ROAD

### Publication History:

**PSAV:** *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*. Ed. Stephen Gray. London: Penguin, 1989. 200-202.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 199.

**EF:** *Elected Friends: Poems for and about Edward Thomas*; Comp. Anne Harvey. London: Enitharmon Press, 1991. 47.

**BC:** *The Blackcountryman* 25 (2), Spring 1992. 33.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 15.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 18 of NELM MS 2002.41.3).

### Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 24 lines except for NELM MS 98.82.20 which has 25 lines.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	INYANGA ] INY[A <i>over</i> N]NGA	98.82.20
1	Up ] [U <i>over</i> Y]p	2002.41.3
4	said: PSAV, SGS, EF, BC, SP, 98.82.20, 475/3: said.	2002.41.3
7	Yelps ... counterpane PSAV, SGS, EF, BC, SP, 98.82.20, 475/3: Yelps at the cuff of the wind. It was his way	2002.41.3
8	Is ... way ] <i>omitted</i> way ] way.	2002.41.3 BC
	^	
11	slice ] sli[c <i>over</i> f]e mist ] mist,	475/3 EF, BC
	^	
12	Isle ] isle Isle ] isle[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	PSAV, SGS, EF, BC, SP, 475/3, 98.82.20 98.82.17
	^	
	sun, ] sun	SP, 98.82.20, 475/3
	^	
13	And ] And, him, ] him	PSAV, SGS, SP, 98.82.20 475/3
	^	

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## ON AN INYANGA ROAD

*For Edward Thomas*

Up the dark avenue, leading to no end,  
 We both plod on, he thirty years ahead,  
 Leaving the circled hearth, the book, the friend,  
 Seeking a word no friend or book has said:

Leaving the hearth, although the cruel rain 5  
 Claws the blind pane, and the casement stay  
 Yelps at the cuff of the wind. The counterpane  
 Is smooth with sleep. It was his way

To clench up his joy as tight as bud or fist  
 And think as straight as ploughboy throws a stone. 10  
 The blue scythe of his eyes would slice the mist  
 The Merlin's Isle I've sought in an alien sun,

And like him, never found, losing my way, myself.  
 On we go, on and up. The track is harsh with flint,  
 Diamonds but quartz and turquoise scraps of delf, 15  
 His the edged splinter, mine  
 The agate's curious grain of serpentine.  
 Through the black pines the constellations glint  
 And scrawl their heartless theorems on the sky.

His long stride never falters left or right: 20  
 Even at eighty-odd you can go far in a night.

The final hills arch their enormous crests,  
 Stretch their black necks up to the steepest pitch  
 Of the world's utmost gable: to Sheba's Breasts  
 Or Mother Dunch's Buttocks—which? 25

14	On ] One	2002.41.3
	flint ] fli[n over j]t	475/3
18	black ] [b inserted by hand]lack	2002.41.3
	black ] lack	98.4.2
20	falters ] falters,	EF, BC
	^	
24	gable PSAV, SGS, EF, BC, SP, 98.82.20, 475/3: gables	2002.41.3
	Sheba's ] Sheb[a over s]'s	475/3





## NO ROAD TO XANADU

- He came, I think, from Porlock:  
Or some such place across the stony glen,  
With his shy deprecatory knock  
Slitting the half-spun dream,  
Filching the virgin theme, 5  
Clotting the timid image on the pen.
- Sir—would I come with gun or gin  
Or necessary poison: sir, they are much beset  
Nightly with evil beasts ferretting in  
Through pale and pen and kraal— 10  
Hyena, ratel, serval,  
Bloodgorged and tearing where they cannot eat.
- And unreluctantly I rose to talk  
Of beeves and tilth and anxious husbandry  
On dust-blown fields prone to the shadow of hawk; 15  
Where the thin winds whistle,  
Snivel through bent and thistle  
And swathes stretch numb under a glaring sky.
- The season strains the end of all resource,  
The calves stir the rattling husks of corn, 20  
The goats pick the browse in the dry watercourse,  
And the idle sheep of sleep's  
The only breed that's like to keep  
On bitter oxalis or devil-thorn.
- Out of the dark they slink, the striped, the blotched, 25  
The glossy and the scruff, the sleek, the lean,  
Caverns of mouths with gleaming canines notched,  
Naked and undissembling  
Lustful hackles trembling,  
Meet for blunt answer: cordite or strychnine. 30
- Where are the beasts of dream? the armigers  
Of king or khan or subtler potentate,  
With serene legend smooth as Roman verse  
For duke or don or demagogue  
Glimmering through the nightmare fog 35  
In gilt and gules on gay heraldic gates?

40 capicorn ] capicorn, SP  
^  
41 unicorn ] unicorn, NSAW, C, S&P, 98.82.15  
^  
42 scutcheons ] sc[u *over* i]tcheons 2002.41.3

Stop up the fountains, split the dulcimers,  
Worm at the root of incense-bearing tree;  
The beasts of truth, the wolves, the scavengers,  
The surly rams of capricorn  
See lion, falcon, unicorn  
Dragged from their scutcheons, stripped of the blazonry.

40

## THE EAVESDROPPER

### Publication History:

**NSAW:** *New South African Writing: the South African P.E.N. Centre Presents its Selection of the Best Original Writing of the Day* (5). Ed. Fleischer, Tony, Edgar Bernstein, A. C. Partridge, Mary Morison Webster, Geoffrey Haresnape, Dolores Fleischer. Cape Town: Purnell, [196-]. 27-29.

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 13, 1976-1977. 10-12.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 20-22.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 208-210.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-Ian Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 78-80.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 16-18.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20; NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col (except for a handwritten emendation to line 75 of RH Col); NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 97 lines except for RP which has 96 lines. In NELM MS MS/196 line 97 of NELM MS 2002.41.3 has been omitted due to an error in the photostatic copy.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	THE EAVESDROPPER ] <del>THE</del> EAVESDROPPER	98.82.14
	THE EAVESDROPPER ] EAVESDROPPER	S&P, SGS, MBZ
3	Dead? ] Dead:	RP, SP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
	Dead? ] Dead[: <i>in the margin H. Finn suggests substituting ? for :</i> ]	98.82.20
	I held ] I[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]held	98.82.14
6	flight ] flight,	RP
	^	
8	blue ] blue,	RP, SP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
	^	
13	cataracts ] c[at over ta]aracts	98.82.14
	day. ] day?	RP, SP
15	twitch ] prick	S&P, SGS, MBZ, 98.82.14
	wings ] wings,	S&P, SGS, MBZ, 98.82.14
	^	
17	<i>no indentation ] line indented</i>	SGS



18	ended, ] ended.	S&P, SGS, MBZ
19	strife, ] strife ^	SP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
	triumph, ] triumph ^	RP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
	simple ] simp[ <i>l over p</i> ]e	2002.41.3
	puzzle ] spuzzle	2002.41.3
20	pattern ] [pa <i>over ap</i> ]ttern	98.82.14
	kaleidoscope ] kalaid[o <i>over s</i> ]scope	98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
	kaleidoscope ] kalaid[o <i>over s</i> ]scope <i>altered to kaleidoscope by H. Finn</i>	98.82.20
21	through; ] through[— <i>inserted by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
	through; ] through—	S&P, SGS, MBZ
22	—Mine ] [— <i>deleted by H. Finn</i> ] Mine	98.82.14
	—Mine ] Mine	S&P, SGS, MBZ
24	dust ] du[s <i>over d</i> ]t	98.82.14
27	careful ] carefull	475/3
29	mazer dish ] mazer-dish	RP
	dish ] dish, ^	S&P, SGS, MBZ, 98.82.14
30	calabash ] calab[a <i>over illegible character</i> ]sh	98.82.14
33	carefully ] cunningly	S&P, MBZ, SGS, 98.82.14
34	gaiety ] gai[e <i>over r</i> ]ty	2002.41.3
36	linger, ] l[i <i>over o</i> ]nger ^	98.82.14
37	Symbol ] Symbols	SP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
39	easy ] simple	SP, RP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
40	wit ] wit, ^	NSAW, S&P, SGS, MBZ, 98.82.14
43	tomorrow's ] tom[o <i>over m</i> ]rrow's	475/3
	tomorrow's ] tomorrow[' <i>over</i> (]s	98.82.14
44	return at ] return [in the <i>altered to at by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.20
	return at ] return in the	2001.1.3.4
	return at ] return to the	RP
	day ] day, ^	NSAW
46	wallet ] wal[l <i>e over e</i> ]t	475/3
47	nutlet ] nu[t <i>over l</i> ]let	2002.41.3
49	blood ] [b <i>over o</i> ]lood	2002.41.3
51	porridge ] [p <i>over P</i> ]orridge	98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4, 475/3
52	savours ] savours. ^	RP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
	savours ] savours[— <i>inserted by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
	savours ] savours—	MBZ, S&P, SGS
53	—But ] But	RP, S&P, SGS, MBZ, SP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
	—But ] [— <i>deleted by H. Finn</i> ]But	98.82.14
56	valleys' ] valley's	RP, SP
62	circumstance ] ci[r <i>over t</i> ]cumstance	2002.41.3
63	fox. ] fo[x <i>over illegible character</i> ].	475/3
	fox. ] fox?	SP

Someone is dead:

Will never hitch the yoke  
Against tomorrow's furrow;  
Never return at redolent fall of day  
Vibrant with batwing and the cricket's skirl, 45  
The wallet stuffed with gleanings,  
Root sprig or nutlet  
Or the potent toadstool,  
Intricate simples for the blood  
Simple relish for the food; 50  
The porridge solemnly blurts, the jocund stew  
Sniggers with secret savours  
—But someone is done with sense  
And cannot hear  
The thronging neighbours 55  
Ripple the valleys' flagons brimmed with dark,  
With loo, halloo, and longspun quavering answer  
Lifted on lilt of wind.  
Eavesdropper on the lonely tops,  
How can I guess the words 60  
Sharp with significance  
And urgent circumstance  
As yelp of buzzard or fox.  
But someone lags too late:  
Now, when the drum beckons and the feet assent 65  
And the night stirs and squirms like insects;  
Black as night, naked as noon,  
Under the ripe and hanging moon:  
Spell for rain, lure for flesh,  
Lore and lust entangled there 70  
In the tabor's narrow mesh;  
And the gay consenting ghost  
Partnered to his twilight end,  
With the ripple and the tap and the double-fisted beat  
And the patter and the snap of the castanetted feet 75  
—Do you remember an inn, Miranda—  
That I can comprehend.

My son must go home:

His son, Musemwa, that brisk manservant—  
Can he close up death's eyes 80  
With the slick expertise  
That buffs an alien burnish?  
Old man with the quiet stare



65	assent ] assent, ^	NSAW
66	And the night ] The night And the night ] and night insects; ] insect[; <i>H. Finn suggests — presumably in place of;</i> ]	NSAW RP 98.82.14
72	ghost ] [g over h]host	2002.41.3
74	double-fisted ] double fisted	RP
75	And ... feet ] <i>omitted</i> of ] [o over p]f castanetted ] castenetted castanetted ] [castenetted <i>altered to castanetted by H. Finn</i> ] feet ] feet[— <i>inserted by H. Finn</i> ] feet ] feet—	RP 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4 2001.1.3.4 98.82.20 98.82.14 MBZ, SGS
76	—Do ] [— over \$]Do —Do ] [— <i>deleted by H. Finn</i> ]Do —Do ] Do inn, ] inn ^	2002.41.3 98.82.14 MBZ, S&P, SGS RP, SP, 98.82.20
82	That ] T[h over <i>illegible character</i> ]at an ] and	2002.41.3 475/3
83	stare ] stare, ^	SP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
84	eyelid, like ] eyelid ,like	RP
86	Nor ] No Nor ] No[r <i>inserted by H. Finn</i> ] matt ] matt, ^	NSAW, 2001.1.3.4, 475/3 98.82.20 RP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
88	dapper ] da[p over o]per son— ] son[— over \$]	475/3 2002.41.3
94	sandalled ] sandalle[d over e]	2002.41.3
95	Into ] In[t over r]o	98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4
96	there ] here	RP
97	Half-way ... snail. ] <i>omitted due to photostatic error</i> Half-way ] Halfway Half-way ] Hal[f over g]-way snail. ] snail ^	MS/196 NSAW, RP, SP, 98.82.20, 2001.1.3.4, 475/3, 98.82.17 98.82.14 MBZ

Carved deep within the eyelid, like  
The incised vision of a marionette 85  
Nor white nor iris, only black and matt  
Sunken with reticence like a moving pool:  
Staid father, dapper son—  
Whose feet will lead  
On your uncharted unreluctant journey? 90  
I watch them go,  
The impatient and the slow,  
The gleaming wheeling bicycle, the grave  
Deliberate shamle of the sandalled feet,  
Into the dust of sunset, saffron pale— 95  
Leaving me there, pausing uncertainly  
Half-way between the swallow and the snail.



## AFRICAN STUDENT

### *Shakespeare for "A" level*

The pressure lamp hisses into the silence  
The narrow radius of sufficiency.  
Mousefoot, moth-flutter, batwing, fumble and twitch  
The foolscap shadows of the thatch.  
Black scholar, intent, impassive still, you have no place 5  
In time or language: as, pages rapidly flicking,  
You turn from text to gloss to commentary,  
Or now, as one listening to music might  
Stare through the face of a friend,  
You with poised pencil point look up, question the night, 10  
Midnight, Twelfth Night, or what you will.

Or what you will: Illyria or Arcady,  
The polity that never was but could be now,  
Built with the measureless cubes of want and wit;  
After the wit-weary exit of the courtiers, 15  
The lonely envoi of the clown's last song  
Leaves questions hung like cobwebs. Can you then  
Sort out the faceless fragments into place,  
Print on the dark your projects' clean impress,  
With ridge and furrow the uncouth landscape combing, 20  
To every Hodge his acre, every Jack his mistress—  
O mistress mine where are you roaming?

Roaming: keep your wild hills for roaming; rest  
Within the enormous solace of their thighs.  
Still pick your ditties out of the wind's teeth, 25  
Wind and the rain, the clean and bitter east  
That shakes the bright drops through the flinching leaves  
To twitch and fall like notes of harpsichord  
To the nimble tissues of the cricket's fiddle:  
Each untouched thing that still is but a toy; 30  
The land is innocent still: so, keep innocency,  
Keep the half-naked thing you were  
When that you were and a little tiny boy.

8	Or ] or music ] music, ^	TT, NSAW, MBZ, 98.82.15, 475/3	TT
9	Stare ] stare		TT
10	You ... point ] You, ... point, You ] you night ] ni[g <i>over</i> h]ht	TT, NSAW, MBZ, 98.82.15	TT 98.82.15
11	Midnight ] midnight Night, ] Night—		TT TT
13	The ] the		TT
14	Built ] built		TT
15	After ] after courtiers, ] courtiers ^		TT TT
16	The ] the clown's ] clown'[s <i>over illegible character</i> ]		TT 98.82.15
17	Leaves ] leaves cobwebs ] co[b <i>over</i> n]webs cobwebs ] co[b <i>inserted by hand over illegible character</i> ]webs		TT 2002.41.3 98.82.14
18	Sort ] sort		TT
19	Print ] print clean ] clea[n <i>over</i> j]		TT 475/3
20	With ] with ridge ] r[i <i>over illegible character</i> ]dge uncouth ] hairy		TT 98.82.14 TT
21	To ] to		TT
22	mine ] mine, ^ roaming? ] roaming—	TT, NSAW, MBZ, 98.82.15, 475/3	
24	Within ] within		TT
25	ditties out of the ] ditties from the		TT
26	Wind ] wind clean ] clea[n <i>inserted by hand over m</i> ] clean ] cleam		TT 2002.41.3 98.4.2
27	That ] that through ] from	CSAP, PSAV, S&P, SGS, 98.82.14	TT
28	To ] to		TT
29	To ] to fiddle: ] fiddle,		TT TT
30	Each ] each toy; ] toy.	TT, NSAW, MBZ, 98.82.15	TT
32	Keep ] keep thing you ] thing that you were ] were, ^		TT MBZ TT
33	When ] when		TT
35	Into ] into		TT
36	Can ] can		TT

*Variant information continued on facing page*

Boy now no longer. Eye for eye we stare  
 Into the dark that tilts towards some dawn. 35  
 Can we accept these half-surmised replies,  
 That benign irony that still could make  
 Its chorus of the necessary clown,  
 Strolling aloof through knot-garden and gallery,  
 Accosting duke and dunce indifferently— 40  
 Accept the final self-withdrawn surrender,  
 The grim staff snap, the ruthless hands recall,  
 The god-like hands that jerked the puppet strings;  
 Could you, or I, with honesty endure  
 That golden franchise that embraced them all— 45  
 The knave, the gull, the Jew, the blackamoor?

- 37 That ] that TT  
 make ] [m *over* t]ake 2002.41.3  
 38 Its ] its TT  
 39 Strolling ] strolling TT  
 gallery, ] gallery TT, NSAW, MBZ, 98.82.15, 475/3  
 ^  
 40 Accosting ] accosting TT  
 41 Accept ] accept TT  
 42 The ] the TT  
 43 The ] the TT  
 god-like ] godlike TT  
 44 Could ] could TT  
 you ] [yo *over* oy]u 98.82.14  
 45 That ] that TT  
 all— ] all: TT, NSAW, MBZ, 98.82.15, 475/3  
 46 The ] the TT  
 blackamoor? TT, NSAW, MBZ, 98.82.15, S&P, SGS: blackamoor. 2002.41.3, 475/3  
 blackamoor? ] blackamoor[? *inserted over* . by H. Finn] 98.82.14

## THE CABBAGE SELLER

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 7, 1964. 18.

**C:** *Chirimo* (1), June 1968. 18-19.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 22-23.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 87-88.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 34-35.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col (except for handwritten emendation to lines 15 of NELM MS 98.82.20); NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

1	I'm ] I[ <sup>o</sup> over 8]m ]	98.82.20
	cabbages: ] cabbages;	RP, C, MBZ, SP, 98.82.20
2	Two— ] Two— <del>B</del>	2002.41.3
	Two— ] Two.—	SP, 98.82.20
3	the morning ] the mountain	RP, C, MBZ, SP, 98.82.20
	breeze ] bre[e over z]ze	475/3
7	savoys ] s[a over illegible character]voys	475/3
	world ] world,	RP
	^	
11	toes ] toes)	C
12	Caught ] C[au over ua]ght	98.82.20
13	pencil ] pe[n over h]cil	475/3
14	colours ] [c over v]olours	475/3
15	withhold RP, C, S&P, SP: withhold	MBZ, 2002.41.3, 475/3, 2001.1.3.4
	withold ] [withold altered to withhold by H. Finn]	98.82.20, 98.82.14
	moral.) ] moral)[. inserted by hand]	98.82.14
	moral.) ] moral).	S&P
17	painter ] [pa over ap]inter	2002.41.3, 475/3
19	blurring ] blurred	RP
20	stultify ] stutify	2002.41.3
	stultify ] stu[ <sup>l</sup> inserted by hand]tify	98.4.2

*Variant information continued over the page*

## THE CABBAGE SELLER

Sir, I'm selling cabbages: will you buy some, please?  
We grow them in our garden, Standard Two—  
Bright morning piccanin, how the morning breeze  
Glanced on your hawker's basket, and the dew  
Tossed sixpences unheeded on the grass. 5

I can remember cabbages, gross and crass,  
Portly and succulent savoy, cut in my childhood's world  
All dew and chaffering larks: in each wrinkled leaf  
Pearls in sow's ears, and (slice the heart) curled  
Petticoat on petticoat archly tinged with rose. 10

(See the petticoats toss with the kicking toes  
Caught by the ruthless finger of Lautrec,  
The skirts in disarray, the pencil in repose,  
And cabbage colours, turquoise and chartreuse,  
Define the attitude, withhold the moral.) 15

They took a scrannel seakale sour as sorrel,  
Harsh with the salt and dwarf as any painter,  
In alien loams, hedged close with may and laurel,  
Crossing and culling, blurring the archetype fainter,  
To bloat the bud and stultify the flower. 20

Will they take you, my merry little scholar,  
Pinch back your buds of love, trim your green wits,  
And tinge your inner heart with bitter colour?  
Will you wax gross on turning of the pits,  
Mould of an antique school that ripens and rots, 25  
The moist accumulation of decay:  
Or cringe with the wilting of your root's disease,  
The furtive animalcule in the guts  
That sucks the soul away?

And in the end, demagogue, advocate, 30  
Climbing the rungs each brief occasion brings,  
Not now the blue and green, but black and white,  
Black silk, white bands, white smile and cobra-black  
The oiled eloquence that slides and stings:  
On the night's rostrum, the spotlights on you fawning, 35  
Will you, in pause of your intent attack  
—Flint-edged polemic slash down all the weed—  
Give a thought for me, acquaintance of your morning,  
Old brassica whose fancies run to seed?





23	heart ] ear	RP
27	wilting ] wil[t <i>over</i> r]ing	475/3
	root's ] roots'	RP
33	smile ] smile, ^	RP, C, MBZ, SP, 98.82.20
34	oiled ] oil[è <i>accent inserted by hand</i> ]d	98.82.14
	stings: ] stings;	RP, C, MBZ, SP, 98.82.20
35	rostrum ] r[o <i>over</i> i]strum	98.82.14
	you ] your	RP
35-36	<i>no stanza break ] stanza break</i>	MBZ
36	attack ] attack[— <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.14
	attack ] attack—	S&P
37	—Flint ] [— <i>deleted by H. Finn</i> ]Flint	98.82.14
	—Flint ] Flint	S&P

## OUTSIDE KIMBERLEY

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 5, 1959. 11.

**BSAV:** *A Book of South African Verse*. Selected by Guy Butler. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. 88-89.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 27.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 200-201.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 85-86.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2 (except for line 2 which is emended by hand in 2002.41.3); NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3**

### Variant Readings:

2	bickering ] [b over l]ickering	2002.41.3
	bickering ] lickering	98.4.2
3	eye ] eye,	RP
	^	
7	eyeball ] e[y over u]eball	475/3
	fins; ] fins:	BSAV, RP, S&P, SGS, RB Col, 98.82.14
9	Each ] Eac[h over g]	475/3
10	And ] Aand	98.82.14
	pricking at ] pricking[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]at	98.82.14
	at ] [a over q]t	475/3
17	fetid doss ] fetid[ <i>illegible character deleted</i> ]doss	RB Col
19	screeching ] screechi[n over i]g	2002.41.3
21	Indignant ] Indigna[n over t]t	2002.41.3
	Indignant ] In[d over g]ignant	98.82.14
23	bronze. ] bronze:	475/3
	bronze ] [b inserted by hand over h by H. Finn]ronze	98.82.14
25	desecrated ] dese[c over r]rated	475/3
	desecrated ] des[ec over cr]rat	2002.41.3
27	and grey ] and ñg grey	475/3
	grey ] [g over f]rey	2002.41.3
30	solitary ] s[o over i]litary	98.82.14

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## OUTSIDE KIMBERLEY

So, sick at heart, we watched the piccanins,  
 The sparrows bickering round our waiting train,  
 With thin capering shanks and cocked cunning eye  
 Waiting the casual scraps of charity,  
 The broken biscuit, half-smoked cigarette, 5  
 As restless minnows worry around the bait,  
 Glint of white eyeball, hungry flurry of fins;  
 What urchin avarice, goblin and devilish,  
 Each for himself, soul-less as bird or fish—  
 And, pricking at our scalp, the vague alarms, 10  
 Surprising inner pink of apish palms  
 And tongue and gaping gums.

There were the infamous slums,  
 The sprawling leprous lichens,  
 Battered tin roofs and corrugated shacks: 15  
 The leering door where scrap of sack discloses  
 The fetid doss-rooms and the stinking kitchens,  
 The heavy dust that lolled upon the air,  
 And the demented children screeching there,  
 While our defeated hearts stood reaching there: 20  
 Indignant of such things behind our backs,  
 Behind our backs, under our delicate noses,  
 Beneath the evening's avenues of bronze.

The train moved us on, we happy holiday ones,  
 Over the empty desecrated plain 25  
 Which the kind hour touched with pastel finger  
 Framing in level lines of mauve and grey  
 The path of one lost antelope—  
 Yes, with a gentle lifting of the heart, we saw him,  
 One solitary springbok, picking his way 30  
 With slow fastidious steps amid the dusty tufts:  
 Lovely lonely cousin,  
 Lonely survivor of the lovely herd  
 That once in white and chestnut multitude  
 In centuries and thousands fed and frolicked 35  
 And kicked the dust from off a million acres:  
 Now going sad and elegant, like us, doomed family.

34	That ] Who	RP, BSAV, RB Col
	multitude ] m[u over y]ltitude	98.82.14
35	frolicked ] fro[l over c]icked	RB Col
36	from ] [f over d]rom	475/3
37	going ] goin[g inserted by hand]	2002.41.3



## FROM A HOTEL WINDOW

### *East London*

- Over the rooftops, many a coign and angle,  
Tiles and shingles red and rusty iron,  
Over the crawling traffic, whine and grind and jangle,  
Between the quiet curtains, out of the empty room,  
I stand for this first hour watching the sea. 5
- Lovely it rises, remote and mindlessly,  
Above stark ridge and cube, between the pylons,  
Beyond the square backyard, the lawn, the tree;  
Over the grate of gears the deep receding boom,  
One white handful of foam thrown on the breakwater's back. 10
- Shapely you come across the blue-grey satin,  
Shearing the woof with imperial aquiline profile;  
Unflinchingly certain as a clause of Latin,  
Your delicate spars mounted the curved threshold  
Of the printless sea. I watched an hour while you strode 15
- Proudly, usurper, down the beacons sea-road,  
Contemptuous of time and space  
I watched you, lovely liner, as the slow tide flowed  
—As once, beneath these very floors, of old,  
And—yes, this selfsame Christmas time—some startled serf 20
- Stared through the sea-board trees, the gabled dunes,  
The mazy traffic-ways of ant and adder,  
And, on a breath indrawn, fell to the turf,  
And through the incredulous haze of afternoon  
Watched the deep-water wonder of the sea, enthralled— 25
- Great spread-winged albatross, and on it crawled  
The tiny lice-like men,  
Beetle and bug with burnished carapace,  
So flashed their cuirasses under the lavish sun,  
As they swung the yards aslant the baffling race, 30  
And leaning on the kicking tiller, sprawled  
To the swing and twist of unknown tide and run—
- Da Gama, beating his way out of the middle age  
And freighted with the doom of centuries.



20	startled ] st[ar <i>over</i> ra]tled	475/3
21	sea-board ] sea-b[oa <i>over illegible characters</i> ]rd	2002.41.3
	sea-board ] seboard	RB Col, 475/3, 98.4.10
22	traffic-ways ] trafficways	RB Col, 98.4.10
24	afternoon ] afternoon, ^	RB Col, 98.4.10
25	enthralled ] ent[h <i>over</i> r]ralled	98.4.10
26	albatross ] a[l <i>over</i> ;]batross	475/3
29	cuirasses ] helmets	RB Col, 98.4.10
30	As they ] And	98.4.10
	swung ] sw[u <i>over</i> i]ng	2002.41.3
	As they swung ] And <del>wing</del> swung	RB Col
31	on ] [o <i>over</i> i]n	2002.41.3
32	twist ] set	RB Col, 98.4.10
33	Da Gama, ... age ] Da Gama ... age, ^                  ^	RB Col, 98.4.10
	the ] t[h <i>over illegible character</i> ]e	98.4.10



## WALKING IN WOODS

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; RB Col 5 = NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2.

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 38 lines except NELM MS 98.82.18 which has 37 lines.

### Variant Readings:

1	Walking ] W[al <i>over</i> la]king	98.82.18
	spring ] Spring	RB Col
	above, ] above	RB Col, 98.82.18
	^	
2	And ] Ans	RB Col
	autumn ] [au <i>over illegible characters</i> ]tumn	98.82.18
	autumn ] Autumn	475/3
	underneath ] undern[e <i>over</i> r]ath	98.82.18
	our ] [o <i>over</i> p]ur	98.82.18
3	wild flower and wild fruit ] wild fruit and wild flower	98.82.18, 475/3
	wild flower ] w[i <i>over illegible character</i> ]ld flower	98.82.18
4	move, ] move	98.82.18
	^	
	move, ] move:	RB Col
5	As though with trudgeon flip or crawl ] <i>omitted</i>	98.82.18
6	We swim ] And swim	98.82.18
8	settle ] settle,	RB Col, 475/3
	^	
9	With ... atingle, ] Above the drift of leaf and shingle	98.82.18
	aglint ... atingle, ] a-glint ... a-tingle,	RB Col, 475/3
11	In ... chiaroscuro ] church In ... chiaroscuro chiroscuro [ <i>church &amp; chiroscuro</i> (sic) <i>are inserted by hand</i> ]	RB Col
	steady ] wavering	98.82.18
12	glow ] gl[o <i>over</i> e]w	98.82.18
13	cave ] cave,	RB Col
	^	
14	for ] f[o <i>over</i> i]r	98.82.18
	wave. ] wave;	RB Col
15	sprays ] sprays,	98.82.18
	^	
16	plays, ] plays	98.82.18
	^	

*Variant information continued over the page*

## WALKING IN WOODS

Walking in woods, the spring above,  
And autumn underneath our feet,  
The time wild flower and wild fruit meet,  
With slow intruding step we move,  
As though with trudgeon flip or crawl 5  
We swim through quiet palpable;  
With flirt of feather, gleam of petal,  
The pools of shadow stir and settle  
With scales aglint and fins atingle,  
Deeper than any deep-sea dingle. 10  
In steady chiaroscuro  
The tiny globes of cassia glow  
Like scraps of agate in a cave  
Too deep for drag of any wave.  
And shaken through the glowing sprays 15  
The coloured sunlight slants and plays,  
By mirrors flung, in prisms broken,  
And stained with all the colours woken  
In some queer underwater dream  
In the still depths below the stream. 20  
Although the tops are stripped and skinned  
And tousled with the romping wind,  
The pillared boles stand straight and still  
And drugged with seep of chlorophyll.  
With veils of rose and veils of green, 25  
Silent, translucent, submarine,  
The hours lapse:

What if, perhaps,  
Shearing the deeps with noses blunt,  
From some far eastern battlefront, 30  
Gulping the thousand miles between  
With monstrous thirst of the machine,  
The noon affrighted with their hum,  
The unsuspected warplanes come,  
With flashing belly, roaring snout, 35  
To seek our hidden corners out,  
And even our quiet waters swish  
With plunge of pike or tiger-fish.





## AFRICAN AFTERNOON

### Publication History:

**PEN:** *P.E.N. 1960: New South African Writing and a Survey of Fifty Years of Creative Achievement.* Johannesburg: The South African P.E.N. Centre, 1960. 62.

**C:** *Chirimo 2*, Festival Leaflet, September 1970. 11.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2 (except for line 24 which has been emended by hand in 2002.41.3).

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

**Note:** In *Chirimo* the whole poem, except the subtitle, is in uppercase lettering. This has not been reproduced below.

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle:	Echo from Bikini ] in the distance, an explosion on Bikini	PEN
	Echo from Bikini ] at the time of the atomic tests	RB Col
2	of] pf	RB Col
3	lift] lifts	2002.41.3
	troubled ] anxious	RB Col
4	argues ] arg[u over i]es	RB Col
5	steenbok ] stee[n <i>inserted by hand</i> ]bok	RB Col
	runs— ] runs - - -	C
6	startled ] startle[d over e]	475/3
8	ears ] with ears	PEN, RB Col
9	arcady: ] Arcady:	PEN
10	raggedly ] ra[g over d]gedly	475/3
	by ] by,	PEN
	^	
11	sleeping-matt ] sleeping mat	PEN
14	waterhole ] water-hole	PEN
	grazing ] gra[z over <i>illegible character</i> ]ing	RB Col
15	spleen, PEN, RB Col, 475/3: spleen	C, 2002.41.3
	^	
	up-raising ] upraising	RB Col
17	—As ] - - - As	C
	for ] fo[r over e]	RB Col
22	dragon ] drago[n over h]	2002.41.3
	slink, ] slink	PEN
	^	
24	harvest ] h[a over rar]arvest	2002.41.3
	harvest ] hharvest	98.4.2

*Variant information continued on facing page*





## FANTASIA IN PSEUDO-TUDOR

- I build: under plumb, mattock, mallet  
My affectations saunter, free of fashion.  
Plans toy with periods, pigments on a palette;  
The empty landscape spreads its generous ration  
Of light and space to invite the gay intruder, 5  
Innocent harlequin, Plantagenet or Tudor.
- Slim sly Plantagenet simper in the oriel,  
Farthingale of Tudor flaunt across the floor:  
What does it matter if the roof keeps out the weather,  
What matter if the chimneys draw? 10
- After the downright axe, the eloquent adze  
Persuades to shape woods with the uncouth names,  
Felled in dank fastnesses of tree-ferns and cycads,  
Assume the antique forms, the beams, the joists, the frames,  
Tinker with tradesman terms, mortise, purlin, corbel, 15  
To make a merit of a foolish foible—
- Meranti and panga, sneezewood and eucalypt,  
Consent to the edge of profiles never known:  
What does it matter if the dowel holds the tenon,  
The resolute cement grouts in the tilted stone? 20  
(My cheerful jerry-built, for fond future planned,  
You will outlast my time, fall to what other hand?)
- To have seen grace in slums strumpeted,  
Elegant yesterdays drab with dirty nows,  
Georgian cornices with grape-swags targeted 25  
Bleared with the smells of cabbage and carouse;  
Plain-leaf shadows thrusting claws and snouts,  
And heavy weather hanging out its clouts.
- Slut from the belvedere tossing out the tealeaves,  
Groundsel burgeoning from urn and parapet: 30  
What did it matter with the lust and laugh repeated,  
What matter if the old ghosts forget?



34	lord ] lords	98.82.20
35	and ] a[n <i>over</i> h]d	2002.41.3
36	clown; ] clown.	98.82.20
37	and ] a[n <i>over</i> b]d	475/3
42	haunted ] [h <i>over</i> a]aunted	2002.41.3
46	kitchen ] [k <i>over</i> l]itchen	2002.41.3
56	matter ] matter, ^	475/3
	wild ] w[il <i>over</i> ho]d	475/3

To have seen children in the ruins shouting,  
Cock of the castle, lord of the tumbled town,  
By bomb and blast into quaint mazes shaken, 35  
Cave for the bandit, trapeze for clambering clown;  
Willowherb and coltsfoot in the rubbles sprouting,  
Rearguard of rags by springtime overtaken,  
And through the splintered clavicles of beam and girder,  
Playing their parodies of love and murder, 40  
Casual as perching birds, the children shouting.

I found an empty house in a haunted kloof,  
Consoled by waterfalls, by hasp and hinge forgotten:  
Claimed by what quaint interlopers: dam and boar  
And squealing sounder pounded their frantic hoof 45  
Through echoing cavernous kitchen, jostling the rotten  
Ant-mumbled jambs of the yawning door,  
Aroun in the scampered bracken. Beguiled  
By the wide-windowed view they were not; all they wanted  
Harbourage from the weather, luck that granted 50  
Privacy in a corner, the dung tidily piled.

(My modest honest folly, built in cloud-cuckoo land,  
You will outlive my time, fall to what other hand?)

Piglet and sibling, ragwort and rosebay,  
Sports of the centuries, white, black, vair: 55  
What does it matter if the wild swine find their lair,  
What matter, if the children play?



## WEATHERCOCK

*The Cathedral of St Mary and All Saints  
in Salisbury is now surrounded by sky-  
scrapers*

- Thwarted and craven, the lost winds jostle in the alleys  
In the chill gulfs between the tenements;  
    The frozen concrete fountains rise,  
    Rank above rank of loveless eyes  
The insolent windows pry the sediments 5  
In the drained basin of the cloistered peace.
- Shied from his course, the masterful south-east,  
Lord of the morning, checks on the new white towers;  
    Baffled by plane and angle  
    Deafened by grind and jangle, 10  
Changes his view-halloo to snarls and whimpers  
And cringes tail-down round the skyscrapers.
- Dwarf on his once-high coign of vantage,  
Poor Peter's cock veers on the squeaking spindle;  
    Teased by the sneaking gust 15  
    Badgered by nudge and thrust,  
Elate on the rising draughts, limp when they dwindle,  
Denies the hint and justifies the adage.
- In the bleak treason of the year, poor Peters all  
We veer and flinch and hedge the consequence; 20  
    Fashions inveigle, assurances recede.  
    Shut ears as the cockcrows quicken,  
    Shut hearts as compassions sicken,  
No love, no hate, but slug indifference,  
The easy hopes that bubble, sloths that thicken 25  
Glutinous round the edge of act and creed.
- But faith outlives its fashions.  
See the brave cypress on the cloister lawn—  
It knows the way to go.  
Yearly it thrusts its perpendicular spear 30  
Up past the storeyed sills.  
Phoenix talons clench in the secret soil  
Phoenix plumes flare green against the blue.  
The faith outlives its fashions,  
Megalith, pinnacle, cupola, cube, 35  
Beams of the cedar, ribs of the oolite,  
    Skeleton of steel—

19	all ] all, ^	NSAW
21	<i>line is indented ] no indentation</i> recede. ] recede, recede. ] recede:	SP, 98.82.20, 475/3 RP NSAW
22	quicken, ] quicken ^	SP, 98.82.20, 475/3
26	Glutinous ] Glutin[o <i>over illegible character</i> ]us	98.82.20
28	cypress ] c[y <i>over u</i> ]press	2002.41.3
32	soil ] soil;	SP
34	outlives ] [o <i>over p</i> ]utlives fashions, ] fashions.	475/3 S&P
37	<i>line is indented ] no indentation</i> Skeleton ] S[k <i>over j</i> ]eleton	SP, 98.82.20, 475/3 98.82.14
38	contour ] contours	S&P
41	ancient ] ancients salts: ] salt,	98.82.14 SP, 98.82.20, 475/3

The flesh asserts its contour, and the tree  
Snatches the challenge of the fleeing winds,  
Tosses its cockcry up the cornices,  
Fed with metabolism of the ancient salts:  
The fire, the spire, the faith, the evergreen.

40

## MARONDA MASHANU REVISITED IN TIME OF CRISIS

### Publication History:

**ICZ:** *Insights: Criticism of Zimbabwean and Other Poetry*. 1984. T. O. McLoughlin and F. R. Mhonyera. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1994. 90-91.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 83-84.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 210-211.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col (except for a handwritten emendation to the subtitle of RH Col); NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2.

### Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

Title:	of crisis ] [o over i]f crisis	475/3
Subtitle:	of crisis ] [o over i]f crisis	98.82.20
	Maronda ] [M inserted by hand over m][a over illegible character]ronda	98.82.20
	Maronda ] maronda	RH.Col
	Wounds, Mashonaland, ] Wounds—near Enkeld[oor over rro]n, Mashonaland,	98.82.20
	Wounds, Mashonaland, where ] Wounds—near Enkeldoorn, where	SGS
	Wounds, Mashonaland, ] Wounds—near Chivhu, Mashonaland,	ICZ, MBZ
	lived, SGS, ICZ, MBZ: lived	98.82.20, 475/3, 2002.41.3
	lived worked ] lived, and worked	MBZ
	wrote, ] wrote	ICZ, 98.82.20
2	place; ] place:	MBZ
3	Leaving ] Leavi[n over i]g	2002.41.3
4	wolds ] wo lds	2002.41.3
7	round ] [r over t]ound	2002.41.3
8	thatch ] th[a over t]tch	475/3
12	Above the ] Above [t over h]he	2002.41.3
15	fingers ] finger	SGS
16	observer ] obser[v over b]er	475/3
16-17	stanza break ] no stanza break	98.82.20
22	flurry us, ] flurry [u over d]s,	2002.41.3
26	purposes; ] purposes.	ICZ, 98.82.20
27	off, ] off.	SGS, MBZ
	Arcady ] Arcady <i>footnote</i> : “Arcady - an imaginary paradise where rural people live in perfect happiness.”	ICZ







## THE OWL AND THE IVY



## THE OWL AND THE IVY

Toss for a totem:

What shall I choose?

Little to squander,

Nothing much to lose.

Not the lily of flame

5

Nor rose imperial,

Not flight of falcon

Contemptuous, aetherial.

The soldier's pole is fallen,

The tabard hangs in rags,

10

Caesar and Crusader lie

Supine on the crags.

Watcher on the roof-tree,

Creeper on the stone:

The owl and the ivy,

15

Aloof, alone.

Eye-glint and claw-glint,

Smoulder of green,

Wedge-shape, shield-shape,

Secure, serene.

20

Silence of wing, stealth of stem,

Feet in the dark;

We heed the hint of the worm,

But not the lark.

So—toss with a guinea

25

Toss with a penny:

The owl and the ivy

Will serve as well as any.

## ELEPHANT

### Publication History:

**PRS:** *Poetry Review Salisbury*, 3, December 1954. 8.

**STD:** *Standpunte* 12 (1), 1958. 32.

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 5, 1959. 10.

**BSAV:** *A Book of South African Verse*. Selected by Guy Butler. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. 86-87.

**CPT:** *Commonwealth Poems of Today*. Ed. Sergeant, Howard. London: John Murray for the English Association, 1967. 231-232.

**PR:** *Poetry in Rhodesia: 75 Years*. Ed. D. E. Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The College Press (Private) Limited, 1968. 13.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 34.

**BRS:** *Beneath a Rhodesian Sky*. 1972. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Graham Publishing Company (Pvt) Ltd, 1980. 51 (lines 1-10 only; also reproduced at back of book).

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 191.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 80-81.

**OAA:** *Out of the African Ark*. Ed. David and Guy Butler. Craighall: Ad. Donker, 1988. 60-61.

**B:** *Birthright: A Selection of Poems from Southern Africa*. Ed. Musaemura Zimunya. Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited, 1989. 29.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 7.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

Title: Elephant ] Giants of Africa *footnote*: From "Elephant", by N. H. Brettell.

BRS

## ELEPHANT

Slowly the great head turned,  
 And the late sunlight slept on massive flanks  
 Like the flat slabs of riven krantz,  
 Immovable, and nonchalantly bearing  
 The burden of the old enormous lies, 5  
 The monstrous turtle and the seas of milk  
 On which the old World swam:  
 Slowly the great head turned  
 And slowly folded back the fluted ears  
 Like pterodactyl wings drooping to roost. 10

Slowly the great limbs moved:  
 The monstrous pistons in the wrinkled sheath,  
 Unflurried and unhesitating, lift  
 The huge façade across the afternoon:  
 Like a great engine headed north 15  
 With the deliberation of the six-foot wheels  
 Glides from the vaulted terminus  
 Down miles of metals through a continent;  
 Behemoth, baron, lord—  
 In trigger-fingered world, one creature left unscathed; 20  
 Away from us, over the burnt earth, under the prostrate branches,  
 Casually stripping the green crown from a tree,  
 Goes oblivious, the invulnerable beast.

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | great ] grea[t over l]<br>turned, ] turned<br>^  | 475/3<br>STD  |
| 2 | flanks ] [flanks <i>inserted by hand</i> ]<br>flanks ] flanks,<br>^  | RB Col<br>PRS   |
| 3 | flat slabs ] still slabs<br><br>krantz ] krantz <i>footnote</i> : Krantz: cliff.<br>krantz ] krantz <i>footnote</i> : (krantz=cliff)<br>krantz ] k[r over t]antz | RB Col, 98.82.14, STD, RP, BSAV, CPT, PR, S&P,<br>BRS,SGS, MBZ, OAA, B, SP<br>BSAV<br>CPT<br>RB Col |

*Variant information continued over the page*







## GIRAFFES

### Publication History:

**BSAV:** *A Book of South African Verse*. Selected by Guy Butler. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. 87-88.

**VRY:** *Verse for You Book Three: A Collection of Verse for Senior Forms*. 1958. J. G. Brown. London: Longmans, Green & Co Ltd 1966. 270-271.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 35.

**CSAP:** *A Century of South African Poetry*. Ed. Michael Chapman. Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1981. 188-189.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 81-82.

**OAA:** *Out of the African Ark*. Ed. David and Guy Butler. Craighall: Ad. Donker, 1988. 60-61.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

2	interest ] [i <i>over</i> u]nterest green— ] green	RB Col BSAV, VRY, RB Col
3	Fringed ] [F <i>over</i> r]ringed Fringed ] Fringe[d <i>over</i> e]	98.82.14 475/3
4	places ] places, ^	BSAV, VRY, RB Col
5	between. ] between[. <i>over</i> ,]	2002.41.3
7	intercrossing ] inter-crossing	BSAV, VRY, S&P, CSAP, MBZ, OAA, RB Col, 98.82.14
8	Serpentine ] Serpenti[n <i>over</i> i]e	2002.41.3
9	topped, ] t[o <i>over</i> i]pped , ^	98.82.14
10	Innocent, ] Innocent ^	CSAP
	epicene. ] epicene:	BSAV, VRY, RB Col
11	limbs ] limbs, ^	BSAV, VRY, RB Col
14	synonyms ] syno[n <i>over illegible character</i> ]yms	98.82.14
17	lamp-light ] lamplight	BSAV, VRY, RB Col

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## GIRAFFES

Framed in the sedan windows, the tall triangular faces  
Watched us with distant interest above the green—  
Fringed parasols of the immense acacias  
That scattered their point-de-vise in shady places  
And the heat shimmer lay between. 5

Out-focused through lorgnette or quizzing-glass,  
Neck intercrossing neck, glance backward from between  
Serpentine vertebrae, harmless and mild as doves,  
With velvet hornlets topped, leisured they pass,  
Innocent, epicene. 10

Till with their five attenuated limbs  
With gesture of a slowly geared machine,  
They pick up distance on an enormous hand,  
Outpacing my fantastic synonyms:  
The sedan windows quivered in between. 15

Slowly the sedans pass:  
With lamp-light and link-light bobbing on the strings  
Of smooth blond faces down the boulevards,  
And paint and patch behind the discreet glass  
Attend the whispered tryst, the slow pavane, the cards, 20  
The coy queens and complacent kings,  
All the brocaded faded go-betweens,  
And centuries remote beyond the sedan windows.

You grave quaint harlequins, to deceive us  
With the gay curves of kirtle and crinoline 25  
In a grey wilderness. Reluctantly leave us,  
While the incessant grasshoppers scissor away the minutes;  
O lost arcadian scene,

O happy groves: centaur and unicorn prances  
Across the hourless wastes that lie between 30  
Our watchful present and the wistful by-gones,  
When the bland century and our budding fancies  
Were both eighteen.

19	And ] With	S&P, CSAP, MBZ, OAA, 98.82.14
24	You ] Your	S&P, CSAP, MBZ, OAA
28	lost ] l[os <i>over</i> so]t	475/3
29	groves: ] groves,	CSAP

## DUIKER DOE

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 7, 1964. 10.

**TT:** *Two Tone* 2 (1) December 1965. 1-2.

**PR:** *Poetry in Rhodesia: 75 Years*. Ed. D. E. Finn. Salisbury; The College Press (Private) Limited, 1968. 14-15.

**ILR:** "Literary Oscar '72": supplement to *Illustrated Life Rhodesia*, 24 August, 1972. 3.

**RSN:** *The Rhodesia Science News*. Vol 9. no. 12. December, 1975 (lines 1-13 only).

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 36.

**WZ:** *Writing in Zimbabwe 1961-1979*. Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Centre of International PEN, 1981. 19.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 190.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 77-78.

**OAA:** *Out of the African Ark*. Ed. David and Guy Butler. Craighall: Ad. Donker, 1988. 60-61.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 22.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

1	one ] on	RSN
2	half lathered ] half-lathered	S&P, WZ, SGS, OOA, 98.82.14
5	left ] l[e over s]ft	475/3
	tidy ] t[i over d]dy	98.82.20
6	made ] made, ^	RP, ILR, PR, S&P, WZ, SGS, OOA, 98.82.14, RSN
7	planted, ] planted;	RP
10	overnight: ] overnight;	RP

*Variant information continued over the page*

## DUIKER DOE

An old half-pay sea captain, shaving one May morning,  
His flat brown cheeks half lathered, saw a mermaid  
Riding a unicorn across the satin bay,  
Across the empty sea beyond the esplanade;  
And left unbuttoned all his tidy day 5  
And left the little squiredom he had made  
Tomato tubs and melon frames he'd planted,  
Vanished into his future, sober, spry, enchanted,  
And left untenanted the vacant bright May morning.

I read this overnight: this morning I am shaving— 10  
And there, beyond my mirror, not a unicorn,  
But a duiker doe who primly prunes my roses,  
With sly prehensile lip fumbling the shoot and thorn:  
Ear-flick and nostril-twitch the lurking fear discloses  
With tight-strung nerves across composure drawn. 15  
Rosebud- and honeysuckle-fed, mild sybarite,  
Tiptoe between alarm and appetite—  
I watch her, and grimace, and go on shaving.

Quick flux of fear and feed, so odd assorting,  
Poised for the sidelong swerve or headlong leap. 20  
Instinct, hallucination—what is it comprehends  
Behind my still mirror while the shadows creep?  
To hold the timid minutes in close hands  
For truth: to love, to know—knowing, to keep:  
No subterfuge nor fable to invent, 25  
Unicorn, beast of the virgin girl, guard of the innocent,  
On silver snaffle down the morning snorting.



11	my ] the mirror ] m[i over o]rror unicorn, ] unicorn ^	RSN 98.82.20 RP, TT, PR, ILR, S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ, OOA, SP, 98.82.20, RSN
12	roses ] r[o over i]ses	98.82.14
15	drawn. ] draw[n over h]. drawn. ] drawn ^	475/3 TT
16	Rosebud- ] Rosebud ^ honeysuckle-fed ] honeysuckle fed	RP, TT, PR, ILR, S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ, OOA, SP, 98.82.20 SGS, 98.82.20
18	her, ] her ^	WZ
22	mirror ] m[i over o]rror	2002.41.3
27	silver snaffle ] silversnaffle	98.82.20

## HOOPOE

### Publication History:

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 38-39.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

1	Hoop, hoop, 98.82.20: Hoop hoop ^     ^	S&P, 2002.41.3, 475/3, 98.82.14
4	on ] o[n over illegible character] gust, ] gusts	475/3
5	ecstasies ] ecs[t over r]a[s over illegible character]ies	98.82.14
8	Peep, peep, ] Peep peep, ^	98.82.20
12	once- ] o[n over l]ce-	475/3
13	rocks ] r[o over i]cks	2002.41.3
15	Fool, fool, ] Fool fool, ^	98.82.20
16	You ] Your	S&P
18	wasted ] was[t over r]ed	98.82.14
22	Shut, shut, ] Shut shut, ^	98.82.20
	Shut, shut, ] Shut shut ^     ^	475/3
29	Hoop, hoop, ] Hoop hoop ^     ^	98.82.20, 475/3
31	spring ] s[p over illegible character]ring	2002.41.3

## HOOPOE

### *After a veld fire*

Hoop, hoop,  
Hoop poop poop—  
Over the burnt earth, through the skeleton trees,  
Tossed up, flung down, on the hot devil gust,  
Hollow lament for blackened ecstasies, 5  
The roasted grub, the scorched and crumbled crust—  
Hoop, hoop, calls the bird.

Peep, peep,  
Peeping Tom—  
Pull the covers off, shrivel the vanities, 10  
Spatter with ash the shamefaced and the nude;  
Through once-gold grass, now dust's inanities,  
The starveling elbows of the rocks protrude—  
Peep, peep, shrieks the bird.

Fool, fool, 15  
You poor fool—  
High hopes toppled, harvest sheaf and bale  
Gone for the wasted seasons to condemn;  
Scorn's austere spires of flame blister and scale  
From purblind eyes the fondest stratagem— 20  
Fool, fool, mocks the bird.

Shut, shut,  
Shut up shop—  
Bow your charred heart beneath the hour's disaster;  
Bootless the shrill revolt or sour retreat, 25  
Slower the burgeoning as the years turn faster;  
Sloth waits the trumpet, fainthearts the paraclete—  
Wait, wait, says the bird.

Hoop, hoop,  
Hoop poop poop— 30  
The spring is fingering the world's cold shoulder,  
In the bruised root the sap is stirring,  
In veins as blind as worms love kindles bolder  
To split the buds of faith. With wildwit policies  
Haphazard spurts the flowers' bright occurring, 35  
Gold cup, pink mouth, blue candid eyes—  
Hope, calls the bird.





## WAGTAIL

### *At Pungwe Falls*

- Dapper little dilettante,  
Flirt with the skirts of death;  
Bright confidence, like breath  
That never quicks with danger, but can still  
Above the white commotion toss a descant. 5
- Pert flick of lifted tail-end, wink  
Of spry white linen, sable lawn,  
Across the eyesight deftly drawn,  
Trip on the perilous raft of driftwood  
Held by the backwash bobbing on the brink. 10
- Give me the quieter flume,  
Sliding slow over pattern of gold  
Fantail flute and linenfold—  
Not your insane marriage of tailrace, and  
The unseen torrent of air spun with the spume. 15
- Give me a thing to lean against,  
All my timid wishes set  
Along the basalt parapet,  
No head for height, no longer heart for venture,  
By cautious time indifferently fenced. 20
- Play on, fool on, merry little clown:  
Trip with your blithe unconcern  
Above the verge of no-return;  
I cannot follow you: I have no saving  
Skill of wings: and if I slip I drown. 25

## DIKKOP

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 8, 1966. 9-10.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-Ian Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 76-77.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.15 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 = RH Col 1; RB Col 3; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 2002.41.6; NELM MS 98.82.25.3

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

Title:	DIKKOP ] DIKKOP <i>footnote</i> : from “Zimbabwean Verse”	2002.41.6
1	Bird, ] Bi[r <i>over</i> d]d,	RB Col 3
2	culvert ] culver[t <i>over</i> y] of ] [o <i>over</i> p]f	2002.41.6 2002.41.6
2-3	<i>no line break</i> ] <i>line break</i>	98.82.25.3
8	spinning ] sp[i <i>over</i> r]nning	2002.41.6
9	moon ] moon, ^	RP
11	calling ] c[a <i>over</i> o]lling	98.82.15
12	wings ] wings, ^	RP
15	dwindle ] [d <i>over</i> s]windle	RB Col 3
16	Harsh ] [H <i>over illegible character</i> ]arsh rapidly ] ra[p <i>over</i> i]idly	98.82.25.3 98.82.15
18	Can ] C[a <i>over illegible character</i> ]n	98.82.15
	<i>footnote dikkop: the African stone curlew ] omitted</i>	RP, RB Col 3, 98.82.15, 98.82.25.3, 2002.41.6

## DIKKOP\*

- Bird, wild bird, draining your lamentable cry  
Under the culvert of stars  
Into the flood of dark,  
Wrench out of the apprehensive heart  
The leaden stop of flat satiety. 5
- Calling, calling, keeping touch with mate,  
Across the solitude  
Spinning the clews of truth,  
Where hours are less than drift of moon  
Encounters more than date. 10
- Bird calling bird into the vibrant night:  
Vanishing glimpse of wings  
Sense of flicker and glint  
Lost in the hinterland of half-intent  
Where revelations dwindle on the sight. 15
- Harsh crochet and quaver rapidly falling after,  
Tearing the tight nerve:  
Can not the hidden hurt  
Through any chemistry of lymph or word  
Be cauterised by laughter? 20

\*dikkop: the African stone curlew

## CROWNED CRANES

### Publication History:

NC: *New Coin* 3 (4), December 1967. 13.

C: *Chirimo* (2), October 1968. 10-11.

S&P: *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 40-41.

MBZ: *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 75-76.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.15 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 = RH Col 1; RB Col 3; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 6, 22, 41 of NELM MS 2002.41.3); NELM MS 2002.41.6; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 41 lines except for RB Col 3 and NELM MS 2002.41.6 which have 33 lines.

### Variant Readings:

Title: CROWNED CRANES ] CROWNED CRANES *footnote*: (from "Season and Pretext")

		2002.41.6
1	Was ] W[a over s]s	2002.41.3
2	you ] [y over t]ou	98.82.15
3	shadows ] shadow[s over illegible character]	98.82.15
6	tips, ] tips	2002.41.6
	^	
	gesture ] ge[st inserted by hand over ts]ure	2002.41.3
	gesture ] getsure	98.4.2
8	you ] yo[u over o]	98.82.15
22	you ] yo[u over o]	98.82.15
	plane ] pla[n inserted by hand over v]e	2002.41.3
	plane ] plave	98.4.2
24	secure, ] secure	475/3
	^	
26	sophistication: ] sophistication;	98.82.15
	sophistication: ] s[o over i]p[h over j]istication:	RB Col 3
27	a-kimbo ] akimbo	S&P, MBZ, 475/3
	a-kimbo ] [a-kimbo altered to akimbo by H. Finn]	98.82.14
	pousette S&P, MBZ, 2002.41.6: pousette	NC, C, 2002.41.3, 98.82.15, RB Col 3, 475/3
28	pousette ] [pousette altered to pousette by H. Finn]	98.82.14
	grave ] grace	NC

*Variant information continued over the page*

## CROWNED CRANES

Was not the empty morning big enough  
To hold you, lovely birds, and me—  
You should so deftly snatch your profiles from their shadows,  
Hoist in an air of pearl,  
And, with a wrist-like twirl 5  
Of the taut primary tips, gesture a cold goodbye  
Down steep diminishings of grey and blue.  
How I would follow you:  
Over the eastern brim of seven centuries,  
See you alight 10  
Rippling the bright  
And tranquil sheen of some old Chinese silk,  
Where, reaching your eager stilts  
Into the clean dry mindless monochrome,  
You find your shadows again 15  
Amid the springing rice and drooping conifers;  
Pace with pert elegance  
Through shuttered booths where once  
The quaint painter borrowed twig and crag  
On which his thoughts might roost. 20

Or, I there before you, beyond the verge of men,  
To watch you plane down unimagined winds  
To some green dancing floor,  
Where, unperturbed, secure,  
And ancients than all our subtlest brushes, 25  
You exercise your pure sophistication:  
With wings a-kimbo, lazy-tongs of legs,  
Set and poussette, mincing in grave pavane,  
Bubbles of lust so graciously expand  
Into the crescents of a sarabande: 30  
Grey thoughts folded, firecrest of pride and spleen,  
Sidle and circle, Biron to Rosaline.  
There I may borrow wit enough to see  
Within the ritual the comedy,  
Suaver transcription of the ancient itches 35  
Ape-tail bunched beneath the satin breeches:  
Lampoon and dithyrambic reconcile  
Within the cool assurance of a smile;  
So that the mind,  
Leaning from pride and stress, 40  
Sits quietly back in its own quietness.



30	sarabande ] saraband[ <i>e deleted and then reinserted by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
31	Grey ... spleen, ] <i>omitted</i>	RB Col, 2002.41.6
	folded, ] folded[, <i>over</i> ;]	2002.41.3
	firecrest ] firecres[t <i>over illegible character</i> ]	2002.41.3
	spleen ] spl[e <i>over l</i> ]en	2002.41.3
32	Sidle ... Rosaline. ] <i>omitted</i>	RB Col, 2002.41.6
	circle, ] circle[, <i>over</i> .]	2002.41.3
32-33	<i>no stanza break ] stanza break</i>	S&P, MBZ
33	There ... see ] <i>omitted</i>	RB Col, 2002.41.6
34	Within ... comedy, ] <i>omitted</i>	RB Col, 2002.41.6
	ritual ] ri[t <i>over r</i> ]ual	2002.41.3
35	Suaver ... itches ] <i>omitted</i>	RB Col, 2002.41.6
	ancient ] an[c <i>over f</i> ]ient	475/3
36	Ape-tail ... breeches: ] <i>omitted</i>	RB Col, 2002.41.6
37	Lampoon ... reconcile ] <i>omitted</i>	RB Col, 2002.41.6
38	Within ... smile; ] <i>omitted</i>	RB Col, 2002.41.6
39	So ] ... So	RB Col 3, 2002.41.6
	mind, ] mind[, <i>over</i> !]	2002.41.3
41	own ] o[wn <i>inserted by hand over nw</i> ]	2002.41.3
	own ] onw	98.4.2



## THE NAMELESS BIRD

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 7, 1964. 11.

**TT:** *Two Tone* 2 (1) December 1965. 1.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2.

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

2	stranger ] stranger, <sup>^</sup>	RP
	roost, ] roost <sup>^</sup>	RP, 98.82.20, 475/3
3	recognize: ] recognise; recognize: ] recognise:	RP RP, TT, 98.82.20, 475/3
5	bat-like ] batlike wings, ] wings <sup>^</sup>	RP, TT, 98.82.20 98.82.20, 475/3
8	forefinger, ] forefinger <sup>^</sup>	98.82.20
9	Broad ] B[r <i>over</i> o]oad	475/3
13	The ] [T <i>over</i> t]he beckoned. ] beckoned,	98.82.20 RP
14	stopped ] st[o <i>over</i> i]pped	98.82.20
16	unappeased ] unappeas[è <i>accent inserted by hand</i> ]d	475/3

## THE NAMELESS BIRD

I thought I knew the birds that haunt the hills.  
This was a stranger winging late to roost,  
And in the greening light too late to recognize:  
Round clumsy body and thin outstretched neck  
With tattered flapping bat-like beat of wings, 5  
But sure, oh very sure, of the way it meant to go.  
No crane, no stork, with high disdainful gesture,  
No wild duck, bunched fist and pointing forefinger,  
Broad bill shovelling up the wind.  
Bustard it might have been, or hammerkop, 10  
Timid deadenders half on their way out of life.  
I too was in a hurry up the hill;  
The yellow eyelids of my windows, blinking, beckoned.  
I should have stopped to look;  
I should not then have stumbled on the stony slope 15  
From the dead west to the unappeased east.  
The nameless bird flapped on, leaving me where I was.

## THE WHITE HARRIER

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 8, 1966. 12.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 38.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 23

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.15 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 = RH Col 1; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

3	guilt ] gu[i over u]lt	98.82.15
6	merciless ] merciful	RP, SP, 98.82.15, 475/3
9	Lean ] Lea[n over j]	475/3
12	Cat-foot ] Cat-f[o over f]ot	2002.41.3, 475/3, 98.82.14
16	kills ] [k over i]ills	2002.41.3

## THE WHITE HARRIER

Whiter than squall on a white sky of storm,  
Silent of quill, hesitant, swift, forlorn,  
Immaculate of guilt, ruthless as innocent  
(What thrilling stroke through sloth and terror went?)

You who have searched so long, intent, indifferent, 5  
Savage and merciless, on the wind urgent  
Or indolent floating on eddies endlessly  
(Will all the cowering indecisions die?)

Lean taper of wing shearing through grey and blue, 10  
One touch on my sauntering shoulder under the shadow  
Slews the amorphous thoughts to vivid shape  
(Cat-foot evasions, will they all escape?)

Down soft as deceit, flint eye, and hooks of steel  
Honed by the wind to rip through snarl or squeal:  
Plumb from the zenith drop, clenched hiss of quills 15  
(Is it the truth, that dives, and blinds, and kills?)



## SEASON AND FESTIVAL



NEW YEAR

To gauge the flow, they threw a weir across  
 The petulant stream. Between the geometric piers  
 Across the horizontal bar, the river slides,  
 With all-but-voiceless lapse feeding the glutted pool.  
 James the water clerk comes down with casual saunter, 5  
 Reads through the yellow mesh of ripple-shadows,  
 Makes his due note, and pauses half-contemplative  
 To shoot his gob into the thwarted water.

But you can only tame a mountain river  
 For a few yards. After an olive sliding, 10  
 Sleek as an eel-skin, over the basalt shelf,  
 Flexing of shoulder muscles for the eager wrestle,  
 Against the random barriers of the gorge  
 It leaps, splits, foams, and overcomes  
 The haphazard fashion of the broken bed; 15  
 Finding its voice again,  
 One booming drone bearing the undertone  
 High oversprinkled with a spray of trebles,  
 Thunders among the boulders.  
 Along the verge, the nervous reeds 20  
 Chafe with the urgent hurrying at the foot.

Between the green pool and the cataract,  
 I wait with Janus, chameleon, the swivel-eyed:  
 Before, the savage catclaws of the rapids,  
 Behind, the sullen measurable flow. 25

14	foams, and ] foams and ^	BRS
	and ] [a over illegible character]nd	98.82.15
15	broken ] br[o over p]ken	2002.41.3
18	High ] mHigh	2002.41.3
	oversprinkled ] over-sprinkled	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
	trebles ] t[r over e]ebles	98.82.14
21	urgent ] ur[g over d]ent	98.82.15
22	<i>line indented ] no indentation</i>	S&P, SGS, SP, 98.82.14
25	measurable RP, S&P, SGS, SP: measureable	2002.41.3, 475/3
	measurable ] measureable	98.82.15, 98.82.14



## SPRING SONG

### Publication History:

TT: *Two Tone* 3 (1), December 1966. 4-5.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.15 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 = RH Col 1; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2.

Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

1	Shadow ] Shad[o <i>over</i> w]w	2002.41.3
2	up ] u[p <i>over illegible character</i> ] up	98.82.15
	bolder: ] bolder;	TT
5	come soon ] some soon	98.82.15
	come soon ] [c <i>over</i> s]ome soon	475/3
12	rim ] rim,	TT
	^	
14	patrol ] [p <i>over</i> a]atrol	2002.41.3
16	blandishment: ] blandishment;	TT
17	eyebrow ] [E <i>over illegible character</i> ]yebrow	2002.41.3
21	prisoned ] p[r <i>over</i> t]isoned	98.82.15
28	horn ] horn,	TT, 98.82.15, 475/3
	^	
29	withdrawn ] withdrwan	98.82.15
30	ear: ] ear;	TT
34	whorls, ] whorls	TT
	^	

## SPRING SONG

*For a hypertensive*

Shadow across my shoulder  
Throw up the colours bolder:  
Now, for the first of any spring,  
I wonder what the next might bring.

This time twelvemonths, come late come soon,  
The hollow ear of afternoon,  
Aloof indifferent saturnine,  
May hear through husks of autumn strewn  
Some other foot than mine.

5

The auburn pelt is maned with red  
Across the flanks of watershed,  
And flares against the eastern rim  
With the plumes of seraphim.

10

The colours of the sly patrol  
The thin fifes of the barcarolle  
Assail with their high blandishment:  
Eyebrow-high the petiole  
Nostril-high the scent.

15

Pick your footsteps through the mast,  
Rest your brow against the bole,  
Feel the restless prisoned soul  
Through the thrumming of the blood  
With the outward surge and thud  
Splitting the lesions of the bud  
To break the spring at last.

20

25

Take the snail's deserted shell  
Empty of the muscle's swell,  
The striving gut, the questing horn  
For ever from the leaf withdrawn.  
Press it to an anxious ear:  
Through the strangled atmosphere  
For the lucky now and then  
Catch the wild and vanished calls  
Coiling in the brittle whorls,  
And the sere and calcined cell  
Squirm with lust again.

30

35

39	screens ] s[cr <i>over</i> re]ess	2002.41.3
40	daft ] deft	TT
45	dark? TT, 475/3, 98.82.15: dark.	2002.41.3
46	haze: ] [h <i>over</i> H]aze:	2002.41.3
	haze: ] haze;	TT
	smoulder, ] smoulder	98.82.15
	^	
47	leaf ] le[a <i>over illegible character</i> ]f	98.82.15
49	the ] th e	98.82.15
	^	

Will my own abandoned husk,  
Carapace or skeleton,  
On the white screes cracked and strown  
The daft wind piping through the bone, 40  
Catch the steaming hint of musk  
Of the spatter on the dust,  
Or underneath the flinty crust  
In the maze of rootlets mark  
The feeling fingers in the dark? 45

Dusk and haze: the portents smoulder,  
Hieroglyph on leaf and boulder  
Footfall of the random ranger  
In the pulse the stress of danger  
In the cup the tealeaf stranger, 50

Next year's shadow across my shoulder.

## QUARTET: EX LIBRIS: I. SUMMER

### Publication History:

**TT:** *Two Tone* 3 (2), March 1967. 4.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 47-48.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 193-194.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 24-25.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.15 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 = RH Col 1; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

3	and ] an[d over f]	2002.41.3
5	of the ] of[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]the	98.82.14
6	ear ] e[a over illegible character]r	98.82.14
9	anticipation ] anticipatio[n over j]	475/3
10	javelin ] javeli[n over j]	475/3
11	dragon ] dr[a over illegible character]gon	98.82.14
13	the ] th[e over illegible character]	475/3
16	<i>no indentation ] line indented</i>	TT
17	time ] ti[m over i]e	2002.41.3
18	jurassic ] Jurassic	SP
21	<i>no indentation ] line indented [handwritten emendations indicate indentation is erroneous]</i>	475/3
21	Skulks ] [S over s]kulks	475/3
	not ] fnot	98.82.14
24	Waits ] W[a over q]its	98.82.14
	concern ] [c over d]oncern	98.82.14
35	up ] [u over y]p	475/3, 98.82.14

## QUARTET: EX LIBRIS

### I. SUMMER

Planned, preordained, and with no fuss completed,  
The summer spreads itself around my book,  
All the slow arguments of drought and flood  
Resolved into its pattern, sketched, repeated,  
Uncontradicted coda of the day 5  
No ear denies, no critics overlook.

Frozen among the catstail and mariscus,  
Dwarf surrogate of the old forgotten forest,  
The lizard waits in sly anticipation,  
Blithely archaic as javelin or discus, 10  
The stripe from tail to eye, the dragon crest,  
That underlines his liquid undulation;

Timid conclusion of the vast events,  
Mild dunderheaded titans of the dawn,  
Accepting aeons on a casual scale 15  
To dawdle down in huge experiments,  
Concede to time the irredeemable pawn,  
The old jurassic spectre in the shale.

Shy, furtive, obscurantist, glum,  
Gauche stump and tattered fronds, the dark tree-fern 20  
Skulks in the hunched gully: not to become  
The concise fuel for future hearths to burn,  
But for the verdict of the last millenium  
Waits in dumb patience, hugging its own concern.

I turn my page from Bannockburn to Blenheim, 25  
Impatient answers to the lengthy questions.

Hidalgo, mandarin, or commissar,  
Inscrutable in saffron silk or denim,  
Faceless in visors, stuffed in taffeta,  
Pry in the mould beneath the dead suggestions 30  
To find the answers in their short decades—

Quicksilver acclamations in the Hall of Mirrors  
On shot-split decks the proud surrendered blades  
The posting of the furious couriers  
From windy Richmond up to Holyrood 35  
Terms on the sedgy verge of Runnymede  
Flurry and fusillade at Lexington  
Impasse in dusty tents at Panmunjom—

And the long day goes effortlessly on and on.

## QUARTET: EX LIBRIS: II. AUTUMN, AFTER DROUGHT

### Publication History:

**NSAW:** *New South African Writing: the South African P.E.N. Centre Presents its Selection of the Best Original Writing of the Day* (3). Ed. Tony Fleischer, A. C. Partridge, Edgar Bernstein, Mary Morison Webster, Dolores Fleischer. Cape Town: Purnell, [196-]. 33.

**TT:** *Two Tone* 3 (2), March 1967. 5.

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 9, 1968/1969. 7-8.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 48-49.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 195.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 26.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.15 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 = RH Col 1; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

Title:	AUTUMN, ] Autumn	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
	AFTER DROUGHT ] <i>omitted</i>	TT
	DROUGHT ] Drought	SGS
2	the ] th e	98.82.15
	^	
3	Life's ] Light's	NSAW, TT, RP, SP, 475/3, 98.82.15
	withheld RP, S&P, SGS, SP: withel[d <i>over illegible character</i> ]	2002.41.3
	withheld ] withheld	NSAW, TT, 475/3, 98.82.15,
	withheld ] [withheld <i>altered to withheld by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
5	<i>no indent</i> ] <i>line indented</i>	SGS
	book ] b[o <i>over</i> p]ok	98.82.14
6	palimsest ] palumpsest	TT
7	shattered ] s[h <i>over</i> a]attered	2002.41.3
8	against ] a[g <i>over</i> f]ainst	2002.41.3
9	of ] [o <i>over</i> i]f	98.82.15
11	on ] [o <i>over</i> i]n	98.82.14
16	retrieves ] retr[ie <i>over</i> ei]ves	475/3
17	drains from ] drains <del>f</del> rains from	98.82.14
18	The ] [T <i>over</i> t]he	98.82.14
19	The words ] Thewords	2002.41.3

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## II. AUTUMN, AFTER DROUGHT

Too late the colours of autumn come  
 To solve the season's wry mischance,  
 Life's eager promises withheld,  
 The crooked moon that hangs askance.

With pipe and book I brood and watch 5  
 The ruin of the palimpsest,  
 The remnants of the shattered day  
 Piled high against the west.

The air is hung with hint of frost,  
 Tissue of opal, thread of mauve, 10  
 And on tremendous wings the peace descends  
 Like a bird from Jove.

The snake of wind alerts the dry  
 Bone-rattle of the shrivelled leaves,  
 To stir the furtive stratagems 15  
 No second thought retrieves.

The splendour drains from gold to dun,  
 The sap sinks shuddering from the bark,  
 The words link up to blur of grey,  
 The eye accepts the dark. 20

The first star stabs the west awake,  
 And day discards what the moon takes over,  
 Enormous murmurings that next year's seed  
 Can never again recover.

So shut the flap, erase the page, 25  
 Cancel the digits from the date:  
 Take awn and husk and crust, and know  
 The colours of autumn come too late.

- |    |  |                                   |
|----|--|-----------------------------------|
| 21 | awake, ] awake<br>^                              | RP, TT, NSAW, SP, 98.82.15, 475/3 |
| 24 | again ] agai[n over i]<br>again ] a[g over f]ain | 2002.41.3<br>98.82.14             |
| 27 | crust ] [crsut altered to crust by H. Finn]      | 98.82.14                          |



## QUARTET: EX LIBRIS: III. WINTER

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 8, 1966. 10-11.

**PR:** *Poetry in Rhodesia: 75 Years*. Ed. D. E. Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The College Press (Private) Limited, 1968. 15-17.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 49-50.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 196-197.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 27-28.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.15 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 = RH Col 1; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

1	had ] ha[s <i>inserted over d by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
	had ] has	S&P, SGS, SP
2	point, ] point;	SP
9	hawk ] [h <i>over H</i> ]awk	98.82.14
10	from ] fromm	2002.41.3
12	And ] With	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
13	sucked ] sucke[d <i>over e</i> ]	2002.41.3
14	the ] th e	98.82.15
	^	
15	Follows ] Foll[ow <i>over illegible character</i> ]s	98.82.14
24	pranced ] pra[n <i>over j</i> ]ced	2002.41.3
28	upon ] upo[n <i>over j</i> ]	475/3
33	draught's ] draughts'	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
34	rancid ] ranc[i <i>over u</i> ]d	98.82.14
	sleep ] [, <i>deleted</i> ]sleep	475/3

### III. WINTER

All day the wind had jostled with the sky,  
Straining the tight big-top to splitting point,  
Ripping long rents in the grey canopy  
Reveals the bitter arrogance behind. 5  
Before the ice-blue gritty indignation  
The last live creatures pelt in panic,  
Last leaves, snatched spray, hedgehog of tumbleweed,  
No sense or purpose left but one oblivion,  
The hawk knocked sideways, the petals  
Strewn from the cassia on the wind away; 10  
All daylight strung to screaming wires of sound,  
And with the lapse of day, the livid light,  
Last dregs of puce, sucked down the gullet of night.

Now, behind the dark, our comfortable fire  
Follows the winter's spiral up the flue. 15  
Fists of the south-east threaten all the windows.  
Chairs hunch their shoulders, cup their hands  
To shield the spark of life. We turn a page,  
Barter a look, a word. The cat  
Stares at the scripted embers, waits 20  
For Old Tom's death to become the king of cats.

We've come a long way, cat and we,  
He from the roaring forest, we from the cave  
Where once our fancies pranced across the walls  
In rust and ochre profile: primp of toe 25  
And pendulous of buttock, nimble as sparks,  
Dancers, hunters, mourners, stream across the frieze  
Imposed upon the eland's succulent bulk  
Target and tally of the lost venators.  
The tented stone heaves with the flicker and shadow 30  
As if it felt the wind. The bland artificers  
Lay by the careful style, the loaded quill,  
As on the floor the draught's long slavers sweep  
Pirouettes of dust, draw close the rancid pelt for sleep.

36	embers ] em[b over n]ers	2002.41.3
38	inspiration ] inspiration, ^	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
39	Flares ] F[la over al]res	98.82.14
40	sound— ] [s over c]ound—	475/3
41	shot—? ] shot[— <i>deleted by H. Finn</i> ? shot—? ] shot?	98.82.14
	Affair ] Affairs	S&P, SGS
		98.82.14
46	billowing ] bill[o over i]wing	475/3
	billowing ] billowing, ^	SGS
	split ] [s over x]plit	475/3

The last log shifts, topples, collapses 35  
Into a hundred many-faceted embers,  
Glow, fade, and glow, attentive to hint of wind,  
As apprehension, intuition, inspiration  
Flares and recoils, ecstasy, accidie.  
In lapse of the blast, a sudden crack of sound— 40  
Snap of a tortured branch—a poacher's shot—?  
The cat narrows his indolent stare;  
Easy to shrug back to our book: not yet  
Affair of ours, not yet: not till the ultimate wrench  
Snap the last guyrope, and 45  
The billowing bellowing canvas split  
Between us and the infinite.

## QUARTET: EX LIBRIS: IV. SPRING

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 9, 1968/1969. 8-9.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 50-52.

**BRS:** *Beneath a Rhodesian Sky*. 1972. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Graham Publishing Company (Pvt) Ltd, 1980. 43 (lines 9-16 & 21-24 only).

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 197-198.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 29-30.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.15 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 = RH Col 1; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

Title:	Spring ] Spring Song <i>footnote</i> : (From "Spring", by N. H. Brettell.)	BRS
1	Sensing ] Sensi[n over s]g	475/3
6	monologue ] colloquy	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
10	catlike ] cat-like	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
12	harvest ] harve[st over ts]	98.82.14
15	Nerve-end ] Nerve-ends	S&P, 98.82.14
16	Pricks ] Prick	SGS
17	shelf ] she[lf over fl]	2002.41.3
18	masonry ] mas[onr over ron with onry inserted by hand above]y	475/3
20	seventh ] sevent[h over j]	475/3
	skull, ] skull—	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
21	rests ] rest[s inserted by hand]	98.82.14
24	tradition's ] tradition[? inserted by hand]s	98.82.14
29	cower ] [c over v]ower	98.82.14
30	granary split ] granary [s over p]plit	2002.41.3
	and split ] and [s over p]plit	2002.41.3
31	rowelled ] r[ow over wo]elled	98.82.14
33	fox ] fo[x over o]	2002.41.3
34	eternity, ] eternity.	RP
35	subpoena RP, S&P, SGS, SP, 475/3, 98.82.15: subpoena	2002.41.3
	subpoena ] [subpoena altered to subpoena by H. Finn]	98.82.14
36	taciturnity ] tacitu[r over t]nity	98.82.14

#### IV. SPRING

Sensing the scents of spring, seated to read  
In a high solitude of leaf and bract,  
I hesitate among the curious words  
To sift the annotation from the fact.

Alone, I think: myself, Sir Thomas Browne, 5  
Hold amused monologue on a funerary urn;  
The spring lifts up its burnished fingertips  
One silent attitude of unconcern.

Tumbled in breach and heap, the voiceless past 10  
Sprawls catlike, demure, gives nothing away.  
The broken lynchets smothered up with grass  
Squander the last year's harvest of the vlei.

Vibrissa, catswhisker, hair in the nostril,  
Sixth-sense shadow steals across the stone;  
Nerve-ends in nape, between the shoulder blades, 15  
Pricks with the sudden sense of being not alone.

Behind my back, under the corniced shelf,  
The careful masonry all witness to annul,  
With quoin and spalling neatly pented in,  
And maybe with a seventh hole in the skull, 20

Within the cavernous grave, one rests and watches,  
Rests to forget or regret the ancient feud  
That broods on the valley yet in a blue  
Daze of tradition's inexactitude.

This, the legend goes, was an old battlefield, 25  
Some little old untold forgotten war  
That slashed through afternoons as sweet as mine:  
The hollow socket, wide with fear, that saw

The glad valley cower with clang and shout,  
Thatch flare, the granary split and spilt, 30  
Spirits sped screaming from the rowelled gut,  
"The Knife that Threatens"\* sunset to the hilt.

Remote from fox or antiquarian,  
The day respects the bone's eternity,  
And no subpoena of my odd surmise 35  
Will ever breach that taciturnity.

\* "The Knife that Threatens"—a granite hill in the Nyamazi valley

40	me. ] me,	SP
42	light ] li[g over h]ht	475/3
	on ] o[n over illegible character]	98.82.15
	long ] lo[n over m]g	2002.41.3
44	spring ] spri[n over i]g	2002.41.3
45	year ] year[— inserted by H. Finn]	98.82.14
	year ] year—	S&P, SGS
46	—“Some ] [— deleted by H. Finn]“Some	98.82.14
	—“Some ] “Some	S&P, SGS
	bone”—* RP, S&P, SGS bone”—	SP, 2002.41.3
	bone”—* ] bone”—[* inserted by hand]	98.82.15, 98.82.14, 475/3
48	peace ] peach	SP
	footnote: “The ... valley ] [( deleted by H. Finn]“The ... valley() deleted by H. Finn]	98.82.14
	“The ... valley ] omitted	SP
	“The ] Note.—“The	RP
	Knife ] Kn[i over o]fe	98.82.15
	valley ] valley[. inserted by H. Finn]	98.82.14
	^	
	valley ] valley.	SGS
	^	
	valley ] Valley.	RP, S&P
	^	
	*Hydriotaphia RP, S&P, SGS: Hydriotaphia	2002.41.3
	*Hydriotaphia ] [* inserted by hand]Hydriotaphia	98.82.14, 98.82.15, 475/3
	*Hydriotaphia, chapter 3 ] omitted	SP
	3 ] 3[. inserted by H. Finn]	98.82.14
	^	
	3 ] 3.	RP, S&P, SGS
	^	

Suborned with gourd and little drinking pot,  
Sit there and nudge your anxious heritage:  
Bland or malign, it cannot matter much,  
Not much to me. I turn the placid page. 40

Home from the hunt or felling in the woods,  
Against the level light on the long slopes  
Men trail their shadows like spears...  
Inscrutable, the spring renews its hopes:

Deep reach the sinews of the stirring year 45  
—“Some long roots of quitch wreathed round the bone”—\*  
But for me the leaf, token in the vivid air;  
Truepenny, peace: this is my afternoon.

\*Hydriotaphia, chapter 3



## EPIPHANY 1965

### Publication History:

NC: *New Coin* 2 (2), July 1966. 11. Published under the title "Epiphany 1964".

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.15 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 = RH Col 1; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2.

**Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3**

### Variant Readings:

Title:	Epiphany 1965 ] Epiphany 1964	NC, 98.82.15
1	difficult ] tortuous	NC, 98.82.15
4	frustrate ] fr[u <i>over</i> i]strate	475/3
11	someday ] some day	NC
12	shall ] s[h <i>over</i> g]all	2002.41.3
16	Astringed ] Astri[n <i>over</i> i]ged	2002.41.3
26	intolerable light ] intolerablelight	98.82.15
29	hands ] h[an <i>over</i> na]ds	475/3

## EPIPHANY 1965

*For Douglas Livingstone*

Reading a young man's difficult poetry  
Tossed at me from a quiet page,  
A magus gift of casual potency  
To captivate, frustrate, engage:  
Too late the craven brain sinks into sleep, 5  
As consciousness throws up the game;  
The bright revelations never keep  
Beyond the latching of the frame,  
And apprehension, as the sense malingers,  
Slips through the fingers. 10

But someday, I shall keep my toe in the door,  
The gleaming slit shall stay,  
The ache assuaged, the edges of the sore  
Crimped with the styptics of dismay,  
And every brittle bright pentameter 15  
Astringed with myrrh.

Posting alone through footfalls of the dust,  
Nightadder and bat to haunt the place,  
Tooth of terror, tatters of distrust,  
Sting the heel, brush the brow, hurry the pace— 20  
And the last subterfuge of innocence  
Startle with frankincense.

Under the crust thrusting with point and probe,  
Prizing the clean dream from the night,  
Through blinding grime and mildew's claustrophobe, 25  
At last, splitting like frost, the intolerable light  
Strikes the mole's eye, with the shadows rolled  
Back from the verge of day: at last I might  
In hands gnarled, clenched, cold,  
Bring back the gold. 30

## A BOY IS BORN

### Publication History:

**NSAW:** *New South African Writing: the South African P.E.N. Centre Presents its Selection of the Best Original Writing of the Day* (1). Ed. Mary Renault, Lewis Sowden, Edgar Bernstein, Tony Fleischer, A. C. Partridge, Dolores Fleischer. Cape Town: Purnell and Sons, [196-]. 67-68.

**TT:** *Two Tone* 3 (1), December 1966.1.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 56.

### Manuscript Copies

NELM MS 98.82.20 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.25.4; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

**Note:** Hugh Finn suggests in NELM MS 98.82.14 that stanza breaks should be removed between lines 4-5, 12-13, 20-21, 28-29.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	BORN ] BOR[N over illegible character]	98.82.25.4
Subtitle:	paean ] [paean inserted by H. Finn]	98.82.14
	Midsummer ] midsummer	S&P, 475/3, 98.82.25.4
	Midsummer ] [M in the margin H. Finn suggests m]idsummer	98.82.20
	Midsummer ] mi[d over s]summer	98.82.14
2	on ] [o over i]n	2002.41.3
3	virgin's ] virgin[ <sup>^</sup> inserted by hand]s	98.82.14
4-5	stanza break ] no stanza break	S&P, 98.82.25.4
5	frost, ] frost	S&P, 98.82.14
	^	
6	gleam ] g[l over ;]eam	98.82.25.4
	Pentecost: NSAW, S&P, 98.82.25.4: Pent[i over o]cost:	2002.41.3
	Pentecost: ] Penticost:	475/3
	Pentecost: ] Penticost;	TT
	Pentecost: ] Pent[i in the margin H. Finn suggests e]cost:	98.82.20
	Pentecost: ] Pent[e inserted over i by H. Finn]cost:	98.82.14
10	drowse: ] dr[o over illegible character]wse:	98.82.14
	drowse: ] drowse;	TT
11	sapling ] s[ap inserted by hand over pa]ling	98.82.14
12-13	stanza break ] no stanza break	S&P, 98.82.25.4
14	silk ] s[il over li]k	2002.41.3
	enflowered ] en[f over g]lowered	98.82.14

*Variant information continued over the page*

## A BOY IS BORN

### *Paeon for Midsummer Christmas*

The seed is split, the boy is born,  
The cradle tosses on the bough;  
In blue and silver, virgin's colour,  
The sky is steep with cloud.

No rasp of drought, no fang of frost, 5  
No bleary gleam of Pentecost:  
The tassel on the kaffircorn  
Is gold for prince or clown.

No bed of chaff, no manger cot, 10  
No homespun counterpane to drowse:  
The vehemence of sapling thews  
Kicks off the swaddling clothes.

No plush, no puce, with sequins set, 15  
No silk-enflowered coverlet,  
The bloom on plum and apricot  
Is richer woolf than those.

No blast to scourge, no hail to flay, 20  
No rods of scorn in storms that pass:  
The innocent fingers of the child  
Fondle the tongue of the asp.

No spite of nettle, prick of burr,  
Autumnal bitterness of myrrh:  
The thorn on the acacia spray  
Is green and soft with sap.

Peal then, voices, over the sun's glad span, 25  
Bell of petal, bleat of fawn:  
Toss, leaves, your garland's gold against  
The blue of capricorn.

The prince of plenty, lord of lust, 30  
Avatar of the sprouting dust,  
The king of leopard, moth and man,  
The boy, the boy, is born.





15	apricot ] [ap <i>inserted by hand over</i> pa]ricot	98.82.14
16	richer ] ric[h <i>over</i> j]er	475/3
	those ] t[h <i>over</i> j]ose	98.82.25.4
18	of ] o[f <i>over illegible character</i> ]	98.82.14
	scorn ] scor[n <i>over</i> m]	98.82.14
	storms ] st[o <i>over</i> l]rms	98.82.25.4
	pass: ] pass;	TT
20-21	<i>stanza break</i> ] <i>no stanza break</i>	S&P, 98.82.25.4
21	nettle ] nett[l <i>over</i> e]e	98.82.20
	prick ] p[r <i>over</i> p]ick	98.82.20
	of ] o[f <i>over</i> g]	98.82.20
22	myrrh ] myr[r <i>over</i> h]h	98.82.20
24	Is ] I[s <i>over</i> d]	475/3
25	Peal ] Peal, ^	98.82.14, S&P
	then ] the[n <i>over</i> m]	98.82.14
	voices ] v[o <i>over</i> p]ices	98.82.14
26	of fawn ] of v fawn	475/3
	fawn: ] fawn;	TT, NSAW, 98.82.20
27	garland's ] garland[ <i>' deleted</i> ]s[ <i>' inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.14
28	capricorn ] acapricorn ]	98.82.20
28-29	<i>stanza break</i> ] <i>no stanza break</i>	S&P, 98.82.25.4
29	prince ] [pr <i>over</i> rp]ince	475/3
31	leopard, <i>ed</i> : leopard	TT, NSAW, S&P, 98.82.20, 98.82.25.4 2002.41.3, 98.82.14, 475/3, 98.82.17

## SONG FOR SEVERN

### Publication History:

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 54.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 184.

**WSL:** *The Wilder Shores of Love*. Ed. Merna Wilson. Harare: Gemini, 1982, p.9-10.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 14.

**BC:** *The Blackcountryman* 25 (3), Summer 1992. 63.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col (except for a handwritten emendation to line 2 of 98.82.20); NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

2	the ] th e ] ^	2001.1.3.4
	the ] [th e altered to the by H. Finn] ^	98.82.20
5	wrangle, ] wrangle ^	WSL
15	woods ] words	SGS
18	scents ] s[c over e]ents	2002.41.3
19	man ] man <del>n</del>	98.82.14
20	tune: ] tune.	WSL
21	Hearts in tune, and ] Old enough, and	98.82.20
22	voice ] [v over s]o[i over n]ce	98.82.14





## SONG FOR APPLES

### Publication History:

**NSAW:** *New South African Writing: the South African P.E.N. Centre Presents its Selection of the Best Original Writing of the Day* (1). Ed. Renault, Mary, Lewis Sowden, Edgar Bernstein, Tony Fleischer, A. C. Partridge, Dolores Fleischer. Cape Town: Purnell and Sons, [196-]. 68.

**TT:** *Two Tone* 2 (1) December 1965. 2.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 55.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

Title:	[S <i>over</i> g]ONG ] SONG	98.82.20
5	token ] to[k <i>over</i> e]en	2002.41.3
7	of ] o[f <i>over</i> g]	2002.41.3
8	tartness ] tar[t <i>inserted by H. Finn</i> ]ness	98.82.14
10	As ] A[s <i>over illegible character</i> ]	98.82.14
12	bulging ] [b <i>over</i> g]ulging	475/3
	bushels ] b[u <i>over</i> i]shels	98.82.14
18	the ] [th e <i>altered to the by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
	^	

## SONG FOR APPLES

One apple on a sapling tree:  
All but this in random theft  
Winds the breaking spurs bereft  
Of all the blossom hoped to be.

One token of the future fare  
From harvestings more fortunate,  
Behind the clang of guarded gate  
Tasting the tartness of despair.

5

This spring or next, no matter when,  
As time neglects its urgency,  
Each calyx seals the agency  
Of all the bulging bushels then.

10

So, full with glut or glad with dearth,  
Our innocence can hold the trick  
To solve what odd arithmetic  
Spins the incalculable earth:

15

Eve, enchantress, reaching me  
Half your apple from the sapling tree.



## SONG FOR SILVER

Silver I bring you  
Graven in the gracious days:  
Burnish and damascene enhances  
The lost and shining praise  
Of the quaint memories and devices, 5  
The symbol and the token that suffices  
To keep on edge the savour of our senses.

Our love fed in the forest,  
By hare's path, glow-worm's link:  
Glance and touch the graver that enchases 10  
Winsome vessels for bread and drink:  
Characters of the timeless paradox  
That limbs and intuitions interlocks  
Beneath the benediction of the beeches.

Keeping the lonely heart 15  
In a loud room:  
Quip, opinion, pens and places  
Interwove on blindfold loom.  
Cool as chased silver your glances  
Meet mine through the glitter of glasses 20  
To say goodnight across a shoal of faces.

For sharp and homely spices  
The gracious lines engrail:  
That no mischance may pilfer,  
Nor custom ever stale 25  
The quiet patterns love deploys  
Within the evening's equipoise—  
And between our simple supper shines the silver.

## WINDOW IN BETWEEN

### Publication History:

**PRS:** *Poetry Review Salisbury* 2, December 1952. 3.

**STD:** *Standpunte* 8 (3), 1954. 52.

**NSAW:** *New South African Writing: the South African P.E.N. Centre Presents its Selection of the Best Original Writing of the Day* (1). Ed. Renault, Mary, Lewis Sowden, Edgar Bernstein, Tony Fleischer, A. C. Partridge, Dolores Fleischer. Cape Town: Purnell and Sons, [196-]. 153.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977: 61.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO56(7) = NELM MS PLO56(7“a”); RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3; NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn’s Editor’s Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3

**Note:** NELM MS PLO56(7“a”) is a carbon copy of NELM MS PLO56(7). I have appointed the accession number NELM MS PLO56(7“a”) to distinguish it from the original.

### Variant Readings:

2	said ] said, ^	PRS, NSAW, 475/3, 98.4.2
3	laughing ] happy children ] child[r <i>over</i> d]en	S&P, 98.82.14 98.82.14
4	waiting: ] waiting; waiting: does ] waiting-does	PRS, PLO56(7), RB Col NSAW
6	“Quit,” ] “Quit”, panic ] pani[c <i>over</i> r]	S&P, NSAW, 98.82.14 RB Col
7	“Wait,” ] “Wait”, replies, ] replies	S&P, NSAW, 98.82.14 PRS
9	throbs, ] throbs;	PLO56(7)
12	sunshine ] suns[h <i>over</i> j]ine waiting ] <del>shad</del> waiting	475/3 RB Col
14	Drops ] Dro[p <i>over</i> s]s	98.4.2
17	own bright identity ] own identity	PRS

## WINDOW IN BETWEEN

Don't even turn your head:  
Now the greetings are all said  
And the laughing children scatter,  
I am waiting: does it matter  
With the window in between? 5  
"Quit," the panic plover cries,  
"Wait," the strutting thrush replies,  
And his specked importance bobs;  
Still the ticking engine throbs,  
Shakes the sunlight on the screen 10  
And the window in between—  
You in sunshine, I in waiting,  
While the timepiece, hesitating,  
Drops a heartbeat, you within it  
Caught in this enduring minute— 15  
Keeping virginal from me  
Your own bright identity.

## SKID

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 7, 1964. 24.

**NC:** *New Coin* 1 (1), January 1965. 9.

**PR:** *Poetry in Rhodesia: 75 Years*. Ed. D. E. Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The College Press (Private) Limited, 1968. 14.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 53.

**NBSAV:** *A New Book of South African Verse in English*. Selected and Edited by Guy Butler and Chris Mann. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1979. 90-91.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 200.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-Ian Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 86-87.

**SAP25** *Twenty Five Years of English South African Poetry*. Ed. Bunyan, David. Grahamstown: ISEA, Rhodes University, 1989. 211-212.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 19.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 = NELM MS 98.82.17 = RH Col (except for a handwritten emendation to line 7 of 98.82.20); NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3**

### Variant Readings:

1	bank ] b[a over q]nk	98.82.14
2	to ] t[o over i]	98.82.14
7	old ] [( <i>deleted by H. Finn</i> )]old	98.82.20
	old ] (old	2001.1.3.4
	old ... ranging ] (old ... ranging)	RP, PR, SAP25, NC, SP
	century ] cent[u over r]ry	98.82.14
9	startled ] st[ar over ra]tled	475/3
	snared ] frozen	NBSAV, 475/3
11	bared ] bare[d over e]	2002.41.3

## SKID

The back wheels spun and the tall bank  
came suddenly to life and leapt upon us  
spouted above us like a mounting wave  
hung menacing for one congealed second  
horribly etched and bright 5

ragged heraldic clawed and dragon-angry  
old Hokusai in a second across league and century ranging  
all its eyes stared  
the startled martin hung there snared in flight  
we saw his bead of eye his sliver of beak 10  
the strata line of pebbles bared its teeth  
the harebell's nod clove frozen to its stem.

Such brightness only lives in ecstasy:  
the wheel responds  
and hearts slipped back again and grip went slack 15  
and the old ruts stretched out again before us.



## THE CHILDREN

### Publication History:

*RTA Journal*. November 1957. 20. [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 116.] *No copy located.*

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 6, 1961. 23.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 30.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

1	gillimienkies S&P: gillivinkies gillimienkies ] [gillivinkies <i>altered to gillimienkies by H. Finn</i> ]	RP, 2002.41.3, 475/3, RB Col, 98.82.14
3	bird ] bird, ^	RP, RB Col
	or ] and	475/3
5	crucible ] cr[u over i]cible	98.82.14
8	of ] [o over i]f	98.82.14
10	centuries: ] centuries,	RP, RB Col
11	moulted ] mou <del>nted</del> [moulted <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	RB Col
12	pair ] p[a over p]ir throstle's ] throstles'	2002.41.3 RP, RB Col
16	front ] front, ^	RP, RB Col
17	formulae— ] formulae,	RP, RB Col
18	French, and ] French, an[d over c] cowboys ] cowboys,	475/3 RP
19	three ] three, ^	RP, RB Col
21	Hare ] H <del>rae</del> [Hare <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.14
23	horse-coper ] horsecoper	475/3
24	powdered ] p[o over w]wdered	475/3
26	bright; ] bright,	RP, RB Col
28	ball, and ] ball and ^	475/3
	light ] li[g over h]ht	475/3

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## THE CHILDREN

See their bright eyes, like darting gillimienkies,  
With glint of fin into the green glooms beckoning,  
Bead eye of bird or wary stare of lizard,  
And quite insane by our staid reckoning.

Into the crucible with fact and fantasy: 5  
The furious chemistry of their urgent glands  
Melts every ore to goblin quicksilver  
That mocks the moulding of our steadier hands.

They bring their gleanings from the veld and forest,  
Bearing quaint sheaves across the centuries: 10  
A tuft of catkins and a moulted feather,  
A pair of pebbles bright as throstle's eyes.

Adding their fabulous eight and nine and ten,  
Tester and guinea and groat to buy the town,  
And all the figures wild and widdershins, 15  
Nine back to front and eight turned upside-down.

How easy come their double formulae—  
English and French, and cowboys cops and thugs,  
Where ten men do the work of three  
And bathroom taps run out through open plugs. 20

Kalulu the Hare, the wicked little hero,  
Leads the mad dance, loincloth and farthingale,  
Each Alexander a careless horse-coper,  
And Antoinette a powdered fairytale.

The boding storms of summer afternoon 25  
Surge to the zenith, and still the west is bright;  
And still they play, my happy cricketers,  
Ball after ball, and glancing blades of light: '

And still they play, as though it were tomorrow,  
Each crater sealed, and every timepiece stopped: 30  
As though there never towered over Hiroshima  
The monstrous mushroom, cauliflower-topped.

30 sealed, ] sealed  
^

S&P, 98.82.14

32 monstrous ] m[o *over* u]nstrous

98.82.14

## SCHOOLMASTER

### Publication History:

*RNTA Journal*. August 1958. 8. [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 117.] *No copy located*.

**TT:** *Two Tone* 3 (4), Sept [1967]. 8.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 31-32.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 205-206.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO56(13); RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

1	child, ] child <sup>^</sup>	S&P, SGS, RB Col
3	answer ] question	TT, PLO56(13), RB Col
6	the clock ] thee clock	475/3
8	I see ] —I see	TT, PLO56(13), RB Col
10	pain— ] pain pain— ] [p over <sup>3</sup> / <sub>8</sub> ]ain	TT, PLO56(13), RB Col 475/3
11	And ] —And	TT, PLO56(13), 475/3, RB Col
12	my ] m[y over t]	475/3
13	Against ] Agai[n over h]st	RB Col
15	belt, ] belt <sup>^</sup>	S&P, SGS
16	open ] op[e over n]n	98.82.14
17	Across ] Ac[ro over cp]ss	98.82.14
20	loneliness ] loneliness an	2002.41.3
23	The ] And	S&P, SGS
25	blind, ] blind[— inserted by H. Finn] blind, ] blind—	98.82.14 S&P, SGS
26	—And ] [— deleted by H. Finn]And —And ] And	98.82.14 S&P, SGS
27	when ] wh[en over ne]	475/3
29	harshly ] h[ar inserted by hand over ra]shly	98.82.14
30	floor: ] floor[— inserted by H. Finn] floor: ] floor—	98.82.14 S&P, SGS

*Variant information continued over the page*

## SCHOOLMASTER

At times, with a bewildered child,  
Opportunity has seen us,  
With point of answer neatly filed  
Burred against the stubborn rock,  
And in the silence in between us 5  
Fall the flat feet of the clock  
Clacking confidence away:  
I see the trustful sweet grimace  
Fade across the puzzled face  
With a sudden screw of pain— 10  
And know that I have failed again.

And when I pit my mild pretence  
Against their serried difference,  
Trying all the keys I know  
That jangle at the gaoler's belt, 15  
To open tracks that curve and go  
Across the forest and the veld  
Of that uncharted innocence:  
I feel the grey hiatus press  
Against my adult loneliness, 20  
And silence clamps the heavy air  
To leave my questions hanging there,  
The moth-weak words have glanced and gone  
To bruise their frantic wings upon  
The silent faces bright and blind, 25  
—And know that I am left behind.

And when my failures scamper out  
Along the echoing corridor,  
And points of sunlight harshly etch  
The jigsaw fragments on the floor: 30  
—I know the tide will turn about,  
The half-hour's windy ebb will fetch  
The romping breakers through the door:  
A tuft of flowers, a broken bird,  
Excitement of a curious word, 35  
A blundering beetle disinterred,  
And "have you heard, and have you heard?"  
—Pitching their spindrift innocence  
Upon my drenched omniscience.

31	—I ] [ <del>— deleted by H. Finn</del> ]I	98.82.14
	—I ] I	S&P, SGS
32	hour's ] hou[r <i>inserted by hand</i> ]'s	98.82.14
37	heard?" ] heard?" [ <del>— inserted by H. Finn</del> ]	98.82.14
	heard?" ] heard?"—	S&P, SGS
38	—Pitching ] [ <del>— deleted by H. Finn</del> ]Pitching	98.82.14
	—Pitching ] Pitching	S&P, SGS
	spindrift ] spin-drift	S&P, SGS
39	omniscience. ] omniscience:	PLO56(13), RB Col
40	mirrors ] m[i <i>over o</i> ]rrors	RB Col, 475/3, 98.82.14, RB Col
41	room, ] room.	PLO56(13)
43-44	run, // And ] run, // <del>And quick between us pause and run</del> // And	RB Col
44	pause and ] pause[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]and	475/3
	dart ] <del>run</del> [dart <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	RB Col
45	metaphors: ] metaphors	TT, PLO56(13), 475/3, RB Col
	^	
46	While ] —While	TT, RB Col, PLO56(13), 475/3
	unknowing, ] unknowing	PLO56(13), RB Col
	^	
47	The rat's ] The trapped rat's	TT
	envenomed ] desperate	TT

O how the mirrors catch the sun  
And toss the beams about the room,  
The spools between us whirl and run,  
And quick between the swinging loom  
The lizard answers pause and dart  
Among the merry metaphors:  
While their touch, unknowing, draws  
The rat's envenomed tooth that gnaws  
The strings of my unquiet heart.

40

45

## END OF YEAR RETURNS

### Publication History:

RP: *Rhodesian Poetry* 5, 1959. 17.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.26.4; RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3; NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.4.110.

### Text: NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

1	How ] Ho[w <i>over</i> o]	2002.41.3
2	absentees ] a[b <i>over</i> n]sentees, ^	98.82.26.4
3	Totals ] Total Totals ] To[t <i>over</i> r]als across ] across, ^	98.82.26.4 RB Col RP, 98.82.26.4
4	this and thus— ] pitch and toss	RP, 98.82.26.4
5	doors ] do[or <i>over</i> ro]s out doors ] out of doors wind's ] winds	2002.41.3 RP, 98.82.26.4 RP, 98.82.26.4
6	inside-out: ] inside-[o <i>over</i> O]ut: inside-out: ] inside-out; inside-out: ] inside out:	2002.41.3 RP, 98.82.26.4 98.4.110
8	Cerberus ] [C <i>over</i> S]erberus porch; ] porch,	98.82.26.4 98.4.110
9	sun ] sun, ^	98.4.110
10	lewd ] l[ew <i>over</i> we]d	2002.41.3
11	doppel-gänger <i>ed</i> : doppelganger	98.82.26.4, RB Col, 475/3, 2002.41.3, 98.4.2, 98.4.110
12	hanger— ] hanger[— <i>over</i> \$]	2002.41.3,
15	Three ] Two	98.4.110
16	—And ] [— <i>over</i> \$]And	475/3

## END OF YEAR RETURNS

How to make a song of these—	
Averages and absentees	
Totals down and sums across	
Analysis of this and thus—	
—While out doors, the wind's about	5
To blow December inside-out:	
Wink of leaf and beck of torch	
Beyond the Cerberus-guarded porch;	
Sprawling grass and sprouting sun	
Hairy, lewd, priapian;	10
Siren, satyr, doppel-gänger	
Leering through the tossing hanger—	
Conscience bounded by a bright	
Gesticulating square of light	
Three feet wide and six feet long	15
—And what's the use to make a song!	



## WIND AND AN EAGLE OWL

### Publication History:

**PRS:** *Poetry Review Salisbury* 1, January 1952. 2.

**STD:** *Standpunte* 8 (3), 1954. 52.

**BSAV:** *A Book of South African Verse*. Selected by Guy Butler. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. 85-86.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 60.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 89-90.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 187-188.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 20-21.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO56(8); RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 16 of 2002.41.3); NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2, NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

3	blew ] bl[e over d]w	RB Col
4	corner ] c[o over a]rner	RB Col
5	like sullen ] like a sullen	SGS
8	stealthily ] steadily	PRS
10	orthopaedic PRS, STD, BSAV, S&P, MBZ, SGS, SP, RB Col, PLO56(8), 475/3: orthopardic	2002.41.3
	orthopaedic ] orthopa[e inserted by hand over r]dic	98.82.14
12	finger ] shoulder,	STD, RB Col, PLO56(8)
	finger ] shoulder	PRS
	shouting, ] shouting.	PLO56(8)
14	To ] [T over t]o	RB Col
	wall ] w[a over l]ll	2002.41.3
16	counterchange ] co[u inserted by hand]nterchange	2002.41.3
	counterchange ] conterchange	98.4.2
18	And you were ] And you [w over e]ere	2002.41.3
	you were kind. ] you [w over e]ere kind.	475/3
22	world's doors ] world's sullen doors	PRS, STD, BSAV, RB Col, PLO56(8)
	blew ] flew	S&P, SGS

*Variant information continued over the page*

## WIND AND AN EAGLE OWL

We quarrelled overnight, about  
A blunted pin, a threadbare toy;  
I blew our timid candle out,  
And you to corner, I to wall,  
Turned like sullen girl and boy, 5  
Denying all, denying all.

And all the wakeful night, like bird or mouse,  
The wind went on its business stealthily  
And crept around the angles of our house,  
With cunning orthopaedic fingers flouting 10  
Malignant dreams. Till, lustily, healthily,  
Dawn came, with the cock on his finger shouting,

And brought each separate shadow back  
To vase and wardrobe on the wall,  
And doubled each familiar shape 15  
With counterchange of heart and mind,  
Colour and contour gave to all—  
And you were kind, and you were kind.

We rode out with the pealing day before us,  
Down plains all wind and woods in trouble, 20  
With the first tooth of winter in the air:  
All the world's doors blew open for us—  
Crippled and craven, the plovers scattered crying  
On the shouldering air, peevish, lamentable:  
And in a fence, the great bird trapped and dying 25  
With splintered scapulars spreadeagled there:  
You luckless fellow of our night of wind,  
Who through the breathing solitudes had hunted,  
And blindly struck like us, suddenly pinned  
And broken on the barbs that we had blunted. 30

I tie my timid filly up  
To get a stick to kill you with;  
With pity brimming like a cup  
I come your murderer in disguise: 35  
Your great beak gaped in savage grin,  
Your great stare narrowed to a frith  
Of gleaming horror and surprise—  
And oh the walls of hatred in  
Your wildwood eyes, your wildwood eyes.



26	there: ] there—	PRS, STD, BSAV, RB Col, PLO56(8)
	there: ] there.	S&P, MBZ, SGS, SP, 98.82.14
28	had ] has	PRS
29	struck ] struck,	S&P, MBZ, SGS, SP, 98.82.14
	^	
	us, suddenly pinned ] us, but not with us had sinned,	PRS, STD, BSAV, RB Col, PLO56(8)
30	And ] Now	PRS, STD, BSAV, RB Col, PLO56(8)
32	with; ] with,	PRS, STD
33	cup ] cup,	PRS, STD, BSAV, RB Col, PLO56(8)
	^	
34	I come your murderer ] I come deliverer	S&P, SGS
35	<i>line indented ] no indentation</i>	475/3
37	surprise— ] surprise,	PRS, STD, BSAV, PLO56(8), RB Col
38	walls ] wells	BSAV, STD, PLO56(8)
	walls ] w[e <i>over illegible character</i> ]lls	RB Col
39	Your wildwood ] Your w[i <i>over o</i> ]ldwood	2002.41.3
	Your wildwood ] Your w[i <i>over o</i> ]ldwood	RB Col
	your wildwood eyes. ] your wi[l <i>over n</i> ]dwood eyes.	RB Col

## AFTER PUBLISHED VERSE

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 4, 1957. 19.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 62.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196; NELM MS 2002.41.3 = NELM MS 98.4.2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.41.3

### Variant Readings:

Title:	AFTER PUBLISHED VERSE ] Envoi // (after published verse)	S&P
	AFTER ] [a <i>over</i> f]fter	98.82.14
1	out, ] out ^	RB Col
2	more ] do	RB Col
5	publicity ] pub[l <i>over</i> ;]i[c <i>over</i> l]ity	475/3
8	burns ] burn	RB Col
9	innocent desire ] breathless fresh desire	RB Col
12	restless ] sprouting	RB Col
15	mouths' ] mouths	RB Col
	beseeching, ] bes[e <i>over</i> s]eching,	2002.41.3
	beseeching, ] beseeching ^	RB Col
16	imperious moments come: ] imperious come, come: ] come,	RP RB Col
18	rain, ] rain:	RB Col
20	I'll never ] I cannot	RB Col

## AFTER PUBLISHED VERSE

Now the coat is inside-out,  
And no secrets more remain,  
And the ancient cobra, doubt,  
Puffs its sullen hood again.

Now the sun's publicity 5  
On the fallow tries its teeth,  
Fingers through the fissures dry  
And burns the bones beneath.

Every innocent desire 10  
Claims its image freshly drawn,  
And the mind's miasmatic mire  
Quivers with the restless spawn.

From brain and nerve and marrow reaching,  
Wry, ecstatic, moody, glum,  
With their dumb mouths' blind beseeching, 15  
Will the imperious moments come:

This year, next year, sometime, never,  
Unpredicted as the rain,  
Careless of that spent endeavour—  
Brave words I'll never use again. 20



# ONE YEAR

“Love’s not time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle’s compass come—”  
Shakespeare: Sonnet 116





## JANUARY

Easily, easily, turn your head: there is no need  
For haste, or subterfuge, still less for panic.  
Down east, down west, the slow perspectives close,  
Cloud in the kloof or sunlight on the granite,  
To mark our casual change of calendar— 5  
Not like the frantic hare, bulbs of eyes staring backwards,  
Runs tilt into the headlong ambushed hazard:  
No call for haruspex or avatar  
To plot or path that shredded blue of heaven;  
The green season gives us pause to hesitate 10  
And balance out our careless overtures.  
Brimmed with first storms, nor turbulent with spate,  
No fret of foam, no gossip bubbles even,  
Slips through its flume another of our years.

12	first ] fi[r over s]st	PLO85
	storms ] s[t over p]orms	98.82.16, 97.19
	storms, nor ] storms,nor	2000.18.6
	with ] w[i over u]th	97.19
	with ] w[i over o]th	RB Col: 2
	with spate, ] [with <i>inserted by hand</i> ] spate,	PLO85
	turbulent with spate ] turbulent spate	RH Col 2
14	flume ] [f over g]lume	98.82.16

## MANTIS AND MOTH

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 10, 1970/1971. 14.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 42-43.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 191-192.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 82-83.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 36-37.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85 = RH Col 2; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1; NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1; RB Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

**Text:** NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle:	Ferrier ] [F over f]errier	RB Col 1, 2002.41.1
	Das ] [D over d and an illegible character]	98.4.1
	von ] van	98.82.16
	von ] v[o inserted by hand over a]	RB Col 1
1	Clamped ] Cla[m over ,]ped	475/2
	aerial ] a[e over r]rial	RB Col: 2
3	hexapod RP, S&P, SGS, MBZ, SP: hexapod	PLO85, RB Col 1, RB Col 2, 98.4.1, 2002.41.1
	hexapod ] hex[a inserted over o by H. Finn]pod	98.82.14
	hexapod ] hexopod	98.82.16
	hexapod ] hexop[o over i]d	475/2
4	More ] [M over N]ore	98.4.1
	for ] fpr ]	98.82.16
	prey ] pr[e over a]y	475/2
5	spare ] spare, ^	RP, MBZ, SP, 98.82.16
7	wits' ] wits	SP, 98.82.16
	wits' ] w[i over t]ts'	475/2
10	Visage ] Vi[s over a]age	98.4.1
11	great ] [g over b]reat	PLO85
	astonishment ] astonis[h over j]ment	2002.41.1
12	and man ] and <del>moth</del> man	RB Col 1

*Variant information continued over the page*

## MANTIS AND MOTH

*Kathleen Ferrier in "Das Lied von der Erde"*

Clamped to the aerial wire, there  
Perched motionless the little monster god:  
The more than self-sufficient hexapod,  
More apt for prey than prayer,  
With two legs spare 5  
Raised in derisive supplication.  
With his six wits' sensation  
Can he feel through the thrilling wire  
The core of Mahler's sad experiment—  
Visage triangular holding in bulging stare 10  
The great round orbs of fixed astonishment?

Mantis and man, both at their wits' end,  
Wits checked at tips of groping antennae  
Or hungry fingers,  
Where, from the unembodied singers, 15  
Piccolo answers voice across a void of drums.

On the white wings of moth it comes,  
The doomed and perfect voice across the hesitant chords;  
Can it so delicately evade, frail mote,  
The saw-toothed trap ruthless as bitten words 20  
And clamped-up logic brutalised by rote?  
Or fluttering on window chink or keyhole, just  
Miss the tall menace of the candlelight,  
To leave as residue on the bruising night  
Smell of singed tissue, smear of silver dust? 25

To that absurd similitude of prayer,  
How can the thrice-translated melancholy  
Seep through the tingling valves, the singing wire—  
It does not shake the mantis,  
The aeons of the species' strict tradition, 30  
Indifferent to the yearning desperation,  
Knowing it all, once for all:

13	groping ] gropinga	RB Col 1
	antennae ] ante[n over e]nae	PLO85
15	unembodied ] u[n <i>inserted by hand over illegible character</i> ]embodied	RB Col 1
17	wings ] [w over illegible character]ings	RB Col 1
19	Can ] C[a <i>inserted by hand over n</i> ][n <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	RB Col 1
	evade, ] evadem[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.16
21	brutalised ] bruttalised	98.82.16
22	Or ] Or, ^	S&P, SGS, MBZ 98.82.14
	window chink ] window-chink	475/2, 98.4.1
23	candlelight ] candle-light	98.82.16, 475/2
	candlelight ] cand[l over e]e-light	98.4.1
27	melancholy ] [m over e]elancholy	98.82.16
28	through ] t[h over r]rough	98.82.16
29	mantis ] ma[n over t]tis	RB Col: 2
32	Knowing ] Kn[ow over wo]ing	RB Col 1
	for ] [f over o]or	98.82.16
32-33	<i>no stanza break ] stanza break</i>	SGS
36	Between ] Be[tw over wt]een	PLO85
	Between ] Be[tw over wt]een	RB Col 1, 2002.41.1
	Between ] Be[tw <i>inserted by hand over wt</i> ]een	98.82.16
36-37	<i>no stanza break ] stanza break</i>	MBZ
37	round ] roun[d over f]	98.82.16
	round ] [r over t]ound	98.4.1, RB Col: 2
	walls ] wall	RP, 98.82.16
39	Exquisites ] Exqu[i over s]sites	2002.41.1
	flasks ] flask	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
41	Cedes ] Cede[s <i>deleted by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
	Cedes ] Cede	S&P, SGS
43	mantis ] ma[n <i>inserted by hand</i> ]tis	98.4.1, RB Col: 2

He has no need for sweet regretful folly,  
The sad and naughty queens, the romping boys,  
The sombre burden and the winking scales. 35  
Between the hermit and the troubadours wells the chill  
Woodwind of autumn round the eyeless walls.  
Nothing avails:  
Exquisites in porcelain, flasks and flute and scroll,  
Coda or barcarolle 40  
Cedes to the last defiance of the voice  
That lingers on the last unanswerable word.

And the mantis has not stirred.

## FEBRUARY

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85 = RH Col 2; NELM MS PLO85“a” (this version occurs in NELM MS PLO85, typed on the reverse leaf of the poem “Cosmos”); NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.1; NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2000.18.6; NELM MS 2002.41.1; NELM MS 2002.41.8; NELM MS 2003.24; RB Col 1; RB Col 2.

**Text:** NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

1	How ] Ho[w over e]	RB Col 1
	times ] t[i over illegible character]mes	PLO85
	fourteen ] fourtee[n over m]	RB Col 2
	rhymes ] [r over t]hymes	98.4.1
2	long ] l[o over i]ng	PLO85“a”, RB Col 1
	self sufficiency ] self-sufficiency	97.19, 2002.41.8, 2000.18.6
	sufficiency ] sufficien[c over t]y	2003.24
3	into ] [i over o]nto	PLO85
	sonnets ] s[o over i]nnets	98.82.16
4	inflexions ] infle[x over c]ions	2002.41.1, RB Col 2
	felicity ] [f over l]elicity	98.82.16
5	witness: ] witness,	97.19, 2002.41.8
6	issueless ] issues[s over illegible character]	RB Col 1
9	too ] too[, deleted]	98.82.16
	too long ] too [, deleted]long	97.19
	long ] lo[n over m]g	97.19
10	must ] mus[t over r]	PLO85
	incising ] inci[s over illegible character]ing	PLO85
11	Like ] L ike	97.19
	^	
	leaves ] leaves,	97.19, 2002.41.8, 2000.18.6
	^	
12	pointed ] p[o over i]nted	2000.18.6
13	half-rhymes, ] half-rhymes	97.19, 2002.41.8
	^	
	rhymes ] rh[y over u]mes[, over m]	2000.18.6
	bright ] [b over r]right	2003.24
14	honed ] h[o over i]ned	PLO85“a”, RB Col 1
	wind ] winds	98.82.16
	hews ] strings	2003.24

## FEBRUARY

How shall I find the twelve times fourteen rhymes  
To tell our year-long self sufficiency—  
Constrict into a sonnet's paradigms  
The bland inflexions of felicity?

I am bemused by witness: crying tongues,  
Silence of touch, issueless mouths and fingers,  
Intimate flesh where the blurred sense malingers  
On verge and contour that but half belongs.

5

I have lain too long passive by your side.  
I must pick up the strict incising light,  
Like glint of moon on metal lemon leaves  
With hint of evil pointed, clarified—  
Stumble with half-rhymes, through the half-bright  
Dusk, into the steel-honed wind that hews and cleaves.

10



## COSMOS

### Publication History:

TT: *Two Tone* 17 (3), September 1981. 7.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85 = RH Col 2; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1; NELM MS 98.82.16 = NELM MS 98.82.26.5 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 19 of 98.82.16); NELM MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1; RB Col 2.

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Waist deep TT, 98.4.1, 98.82.16, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1, RB Col 2: Waistdeep PLO85, 475/2<br>in ] [i over o]n PLO85 |
| 2  | advance ] ad[va over av]nce 2002.41.1  |
| 3  | mulberry ] mulberry, TT, 98.82.16, 475/2, RB Col 2<br>^  |
| 4  | arrogance ] arrog[a over e]nce RB Col 1  |
| 6  | steel ] stee[l over ;] RB Col 1  |
| 8  | along ] lon RB Col 2<br>the ] th[e over r] 98.82.16  |
| 9  | waiting ] wai[t over r]ing RB Col 1<br>certitude ] certi[t over o]ude 98.4.1                                     |
| 10 | Ignored the ] They shun the 475/2<br>Ignored ] Ign[o over n]red 2002.41.1  |
| 12 | stubborn ] stu[b over d]born PLO85<br>flowers. ] flowers 2002.41.1<br>^  |
| 16 | hundred ] h[un over illegible characters]dred RB Col 1<br>hundred ] hundr[e over illegible character]d PLO85     |
| 17 | cohort ] coh[o over illegible character]rt 475/2   |
| 19 | their ] th[ie emended by hand to ei][r inserted by hand] 98.82.16<br>their ] thie[r inserted by hand] 98.82.26.5 |
| 20 | Advance ] Advan[c over v]e 98.4.1<br>modern phase ] moder <del>rn</del> [ern inserted by hand]phase PLO85<br>^   |
| 21 | first ] first, TT, 98.82.16, RB Col 1<br>^   |
| 22 | guarded ] gua[r over illegible character]ded 2002.41.1   |
| 27 | pylons ] p[y over u]lons RB Col 1  |

## COSMOS

Waist deep in foam along the verge  
The foreign flowers advance,  
Cerise and milk and mulberry  
In careless arrogance.

Tall signifers of pride and power 5  
In steel and silver mode,  
The pylons in their Roman way  
Deploy along the road.

The shy and waiting certitude 10  
Ignored the earlier showers,  
The furtive undefeated germ,  
The stubborn grace of flowers.

The image of the casual seed  
Rekurs and disappears 15  
In all the borrowed daisydom  
Of half a hundred years.

Legion, cohort, pioneer,  
Astride the lonely ways,  
The towers with their humming core  
Advance the modern phase. 20

And who, we hope, will reach us first  
Across the guarded plots—  
The sly invaders of the soil,  
The sky-hung kilowatts?

The frost will crimp, the sun will sear, 25  
The silent drought will parch:  
Surer than pylons through the years will go  
The flowers' stolen march.

## MARCH

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85 = RH Col 2; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.1; NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2000.18.6; NELM MS 2002.41.1; NELM MS 2002.41.8; NELM MS 2003.24; RB Col 1; RB Col 2.

**Text:** NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

1	our ] ou[r <i>inserted by hand over t</i> ]	98.82.16
3	unintelligible—" ] unintelligible"— unintelligible—" ] unintelli[g <i>over l</i> ]ible—"	98.82.16, 98.4.1 2002.41.1
4	the ] t[h <i>over y</i> ]e thirds ] thi[r <i>over i</i> ]ds	97.19 98.4.1
5	splutter ] splutter, ^	97.19, 98.82.16, 475/2, 2000.18.6, 2002.41.8, 2003.24, RB Col 2
6	wavering ] [w <i>over q</i> ]avering below ] belo[w <i>over e</i> ] below ] be[l <i>over e</i> ]ow treble ] t[r <i>over e</i> ]eble	2002.41.1 PLO85 97.19 98.4.1
7	reiteration ] rei[t <i>over r</i> ]eration reiteration ] rei[te <i>over rt</i> ]ration roof ] roo[f <i>over illegible character</i> ]	2003.24 RB Col 2 2002.41.1
10	"Joy of man's desiring": ] Joy of man's desiring: desiring": ] desiring:" desiring": ] desiring—"": purblind ] pur[b <i>over v</i> ]lind purblind blinking Bach ] purblind Bach	97.19 98.82.16 2002.41.8 98.82.16 97.19, 2002.41.8
11	his ] hi[s <i>inserted by hand over d</i> ] deep ] dee p ^	97.19 2003.24
	up with ] up in	97.19
12	pounding ] poundi[n <i>over g</i> ]g	98.82.16
13	past ] pas[t <i>inserted by hand over r</i> ]	98.82.16
15	legerdemain ] l[e <i>over g</i> ]gerdemain	98.82.16

.  
**MARCH**

The rain in the dark has two voices: our two voices—  
“You married lovers catch each other’s words  
To strangers just a murmur unintelligible—”  
In gutter and pipe, the hesitating thirds  
Spin, splutter and bubble into an intricate woof 5  
Of wavering counterpoint; below the treble  
The deep bass reiteration on the roof  
Blinds out the night and the time’s querulous noises,  
And shuts love in.

“Joy of man’s desiring”: old purblind blinking Bach 10  
Lifts his deep burden up with arabesques and curves:  
Over the pounding blood of drums, the thrilling nerves  
Stretch on and on, past listening’s utmost span.  
Lives laced together in the endless dark,  
We wonder by what serene legerdemain 15  
It can go on.

## CUCKOO

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85 = RH Col 2 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 18 and 43 of PLO85);  
NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1; NELM MS 98.82.16 = NELM MS 98.82.26.7; NELM  
MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1; RB Col 2.

**Text:** NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

Title:	Cuckoo ] [C <i>over</i> c]uckoo	475/2
2	topmost ] topm[os <i>over</i> no]t	475/2
5	Betraying ... ear, ] (Betraying ... ear,[]) <i>over</i> ,]	98.82.16
6	messengers, ] messengers)	98.82.16
9	bowels ] b[o <i>over</i> w]wels	98.82.16
10	pain ] [p <i>over</i> a]ain	98.4.1
11	lost, silver ] lost,silver ^	98.82.16
12	agate-edged ] agate edged	98.82.16
	agate-edged ] agate[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]edged	98.4.1
	rain ] [r <i>over</i> t]ain	2002.41.1
13	memories, ] memories ^	475/2
14	cuckoo cuckoo ] cuckoo, cuck[o <i>over</i> k]o ^	98.82.16
15	our stories ] our memories	475/2
18	Bird of ] Bird[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]of Bird of ] Birdof	PLO85 RH Col 2
19	slack ] slac[k <i>over</i> j]	2002.41.1
23	ribaldries ] ribald[ri <i>over</i> ir]es Benedick. ] Benedick;	475/2 475/2
24	Only ] O[n <i>over</i> j]ly Only ] Onl[y <i>over illegible character</i> ]	PLO85 98.82.16
25	Difficult to ] Difficult?%to	98.82.16
26	species; ] species,	98.82.16
27	there ] t[her <i>over illegible characters</i> ]e	RB Col 1
28	cuckoo: ] cuckoo;	98.82.16
30	perspectives ] per[sp <i>over</i> pe]ectives strung ] strun[g <i>over</i> d]	98.82.16 RB Col 1

## CUCKOO

After a night's rain, the wind had killed all distances:  
We could put a finger on the topmost crags  
And thumb the edge of all the crevices.

High on the singing wires  
Betraying long secrets to a humming ear, 5  
Striding the miles and times, those childhood messengers,

There was the large strange bird,  
Perched easily to stoop on grub or fly,  
Belly like butcher's apron, bowels barred

With the grey alternates of joy or pain, 10  
Or past or time lost, silver and lilac,  
Half-tones, agate-edged, malicious, after the night's rain.

. . . . .

You lift a face of happy memories,  
To call "cuckoo cuckoo",  
Searching our stories with your glad surmise. 15

Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuculus canorus canorus—  
But no, he has no languages in Africa;  
Bird of my boyhood, striking into chorus

All the slack strings of time and circumstance—  
Perdita in the wind-tousled daffodils, 20  
Poltroon or wit's grimace, askew, askance.

Don't call too loud: no need for you to trace  
The jaunty ribaldries of Benedick.  
Only remember, lifting your happy face.

. . . . .

Difficult to distinguish, says the book: 25  
A matter of greenish cere, northern or southern species;  
Here, there, says the bird: count up my feathers, look.

Cuckoo, cuckoo: hot blood of bird driving down paths  
To ends as little understood as mine.  
Through the unseen perspectives strung with myths, 30



Blank maps embellished with absurd chimera,  
Charted with instinct, backwards unerringly  
To the loved dingles, surer, clearer

Transcriptions past the scope of any linguist. 35  
North, south, the green, the gold—it needs  
No book to say it's difficult to distinguish.

. . . . .

Our long and many lives draw close together;  
The green and gold merge in a haze of bronze.  
The grass surges northwards under the south-east weather

To meet the dwarf procession of the crocuses, 40  
Our down-top raptures, all our careless fieldfaring;  
Where the sense stretches, memory focuses

Until the lost day at the last arrives  
Only fulfilled by present joy acknowledged, 45  
The deep dimensions of our many lives.



## APRIL

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.1; NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2000.18.6; NELM MS 2002.41.1; NELM MS 2002.41.8; NELM MS 2003.24; RB Col 1 = RH Col 2; RB Col 2.

**Text:** NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

2	negligent ] ne[g over r]ligent	97.19
	smothering ] smotherin[g <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.16
	auburn ] a[u over y]burn	2000.18.6
	hair ] [ha over ah]ir	2003.24
3	lost ] l[o <i>inserted by hand</i> ]st	2002.41.1
4	spiv ] spiv̄	PLO85
5	flourish ] [f over r]lourish	475/2
	on ] [o over i]n	98.82.16
	scraps ] sc[ra over ar]ps	2002.41.1
	of ] o[f over g and r]	RB Col 1
	sherd, ] sherd ^	97.19
6	The ] [T over t]he	97.19
	stinkweeds ] stin[k <i>inserted by hand</i> ]weeds	2003.24
7	wander ] w[an over na]der	98.82.16
8	hands ] h[an over <i>illegible characters</i> ]ds	RB Col 1
9	artlessly ] ar[t over r]lessl[y over l]	98.4.1
	artlessly ] ar[t over l]lessly	2000.18.6
	artlessly ] artlessl[y over l]	2002.41.1
13	stretched ] stretches	98.4.1
	simple ] simple, ^	97.19, 2002.41.8, 2000.18.6
	clothes, ] clothes ^	98.82.16
	like ] likes	2002.41.8
14	nakedness ] nake[d over e]ness	98.4.1

## APRIL

Pine needles drop in April, secretive  
And negligent grace smothering with auburn hair  
The broken shoulders of the lost village, where  
Slim in the alien style of dandy or spiv  
The trim trees flourish tall on scraps of sherd,  
The ancient middens where the stinkweeds fade.  
We wander over, casual as weed or bird,  
We holding hands along our colonnade.

5

Plant trees, build walls, so artlessly pretend  
That time will stop of its own pettiness.  
Green stealth, to us who listen, will disclose  
Close hints between our hands, longer than legend,  
Sense stretched beyond words: simple like clothes,  
Or hair, or leaves: deeper than nakedness.

10

## TRAVELLER'S JOY

### Publication History:

TT: *Two Tone* 8 (2), June 1972. 5-6.

RP: *Rhodesian Poetry* 12, 1974-75. 10-11.

SGS: *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 193.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1; NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1 = RH Col 2; RB Col 2.

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

Title:	TRAVELLERS JOY ] Travl[ <i>l over illegible character</i> ]er's Joy	475/2
3	rock ] rook	TT
4	climbs and breaks ] climbs and flings	SGS, RP, 98.82.16, 475/2, RB Col: 2
	foam. ] foam:	SGS, 98.82.16
5	hedges ] headges	98.82.16
	hedges ] hedgerows	SGS
6	barley awn ] barley-awn	475/2
7	boyhood's ] bo[ <i>y over t</i> ]hood's	PLO85
	joy ] pride	RP, SGS, 475/2, 98.4.1, 98.82.16, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1, RB Col 2
	atop ] atopa	2002.41.1
8	Making ] Maki[ <i>n over illegible character</i> ]g	PLO85
9	same season ] s[ <i>a inserted by hand</i> ]me season	98.82.16
10	granges ] [g <i>over t</i> ]ranges	PLO85
11	Autumn ] Au[ <i>t over r</i> ]umn	RB Col 1
12	what ] wh[ <i>at inserted by hand over ta</i> ]	98.82.16
	changes ] ch[ <i>a over n</i> ]nges	98.82.16
13	memories, ] memories	98.82.16, 475/2, RB Col: 2, RP, SGS
	^	
16	ecstasies ] e[ <i>c over x</i> ]stasies	2002.41.1
	tasted ] taested	2002.41.1
17	snow, ] snow[, <i>over m</i> ]	98.82.16
	burst ] bur[ <i>s over d</i> ]t	2002.41.1
18	Waves ] Wave	98.82.16, 475/2, SGS
19	tendrils ] tendri[ <i>l over i</i> ]s	98.4.1
	my ] [m <i>over v</i> ]y	98.4.1
	my ] m[ <i>y over u</i> ]	2002.41.1

## TRAVELLER'S JOY

Enough to drink, sighs the sodden earth.  
The grass sprawls clotted on the tired loam,  
And over bush and rock, above the marshes,  
The blond clematis climbs and breaks in foam.

The Traveller's Joy that tangled harvest hedges 5  
And caught the wisps of barley awn and hay,  
All boyhood's joy atop a jolting wagon  
Making a pageant of the common day.

The same flower in the same season, turned 10  
Widdershins in farms and quiet granges,  
Autumn in April, Spring in mid-September:  
By what odd counterpoint it binds the changes

Weaving its harmony through twisted memories,  
Through seasons changed and latitudes reversed, 15  
The perfume sweet and tart as farmhouse cider,  
The heady ecstasies I tasted first.

The gold foam turns to snow, the fluffed tufts burst,  
Waves of spent sweetness on the dry anthills reared;  
The tendrils clutch the lanes my fancies nursed,  
While nesting Africa is plucking Old Man's Beard. 20



## MAY

After the easy unencumbered motion,  
Through seven same days of sea, indifferent, cool,  
The hills stand fixed, the timeless tideless ocean.  
We were bemused with flux, wild with plover,  
Grotesque with pelicans, magic with flamingoes,  
Where the great undulation of the flows  
Shoulders through satin, curving so slowly over  
With the incised decision of a graving tool.

5

This is our earnest of eternity:

Solid as crag, as the grey waves expanding  
Through the hills' still profile, furthering  
Rapture, despair, misunderstanding,  
Into our love, one cool identity:  
Fixed, free—silent and ever murmuring.

10

## IRONWORKERS

### Publication History:

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 28.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 202.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1 = RH Col 2 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 8 and 23); NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1; RB Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: The ... torso ] [the old Mashona iron furnaces were often moulded in the shape of a		
female torso <i>altered to</i> Old Mashona Furnaces were often shaped like a		
female Torso <i>by H. Finn</i> ]		98.82.14
	The ... torso ] Old Mashona Furnaces were often shaped like a Female Torso	S&P, SGS
	furnaces ] f[u over i]rnaces	2002.41.1
	in the ] in n the	2002.41.1
	shape ] sh[a over p]pe	98.82.16
	torso ] t[o over p]rso	98.82.16
4	the ] t[h over y]e	98.4.1
5	tuyere's ] tu[y over t]ere's	98.4.1
7	sounding-board ] sounding board	98.82.16, 475/2, 98.4.1, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1, RB Col 2
8	exultation; ] exul[t <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ation;	98.4.1
	exultation; ] exulation;	RH.Col 2
	exultation; ] exult[a over t]tion;	2002.41.1
	exultation; ] exultation.	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
9	syncopation ] syn[c over o]opation	98.4.1
10	Hephaestus, the sour <i>ed</i> : Hephaestion, the sour	PLO85, 475/2, 98.4.1, 98.82.16, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1, RB Col 2
	Hephaestus, the sour ] Hephaestus, sour	S&P, SGS:
	Hephaestus, sour ] [Hephaestion, the sour <i>altered to</i> Hephaestus, sour <i>by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
11	mbira ] m[b over v]ira	98.82.16
12	tampered ] t[e <i>inserted over a by H. Finn</i> ]mpered	98.82.14
	tampered ] tempered	S&P, SGS
17	then ] the[n over r]	98.82.16
19	horse-shoes ] horse shoes	98.82.16
21	forge fires ] forge-fires	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14

*Variant information continued over the page*

## IRONWORKERS

*The old Mashona iron furnaces  
were often moulded in the shape  
of a female torso*

Here, in the falling season,  
I too saw the sea-born goddess strumpeted,  
Where never remote sea-whisper stirs the listless leaves;  
Here in the broken forge  
(The tuyere's gaping gorge 5  
Still black and crimson with the extinct fires)  
The sounding-board of precipice receives  
On draughts forlorn the long-dead exultation;  
Setting his game leg to the syncopation,  
Hephaestus, the sour club-footed artisan, 10  
With drub of drum and mincing of mbira  
Plucked string and tampered tang,  
The hammer's tink and clang  
Stamping the curve of dance on axe and knife—  
The fiery-headed godling hauled from the sighing loins 15  
And beaten into life.

And then, across the falling years, I saw  
My old great-uncle, gently bearded, spectacled,  
Beating out nails for horse-shoes.  
The bellows sigh into the flues, 20  
The forge fires fawn along the raw brick walls,  
The hammers sing like bells:  
And up he throws his innocent incantation,  
The dreary words, the tenor-high elation,  
Of the old Methodist hymns. 25  
In memory's casual whims  
The brasses flame on martingale and blinkers,  
Remembered glories and forgotten smells,  
Horse-sweat, bespattered dust, harsh reek of clinkers.

Mystery of craft behind the tumbled walls, 30  
The tumbled years.  
The bleached bones once so deft,  
Legends and ululating catcalls,  
Dreary or jaunty airs that drag  
A tattered blur across accustomed ears; 35  
To the eye's alien curiosity left  
Only an obscene lump of clay, obliterated slag.





23	throws ] thr[o <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ws	98.4.1
	incantation ] incaantation	98.4.1
	innocent ] [in <i>inserted by hand</i> ]nocent	98.82.16
	incantation ] incaantation	RH.Col 2
25	Methodist ] Methodistn	98.82.16
27	martingale ] ma[rt <i>over</i> ti]ingale	RB Col 2
28	glories ] gloriesa	98.82.16
29	clinkers ] cli[n <i>over</i> l]kers	RB Col 1
30	walls, ] walls	98.82.16
	^	
33	ululating ] undulating	98.82.16
	catcalls ] cat-calls	S&P, SGS, RB Col 2, 98.82.14
35	blur ] [b <i>over</i> v]lur	2002.41.1
	accustomed ] accus[t <i>over</i> y]omed	98.82.16
36	eye's ] eyes'	98.82.16
37	obscene ] [o <i>over</i> a]bsce[n <i>over illegible character</i> ]e	2002.41.1
	lump ] l[u <i>over</i> i]mp	98.82.16



## JUNE

Will it be easier, I asked, when heart is older?  
Easy as sliding water, heart rejoins;  
When rheumatism has assailed the shoulder,  
The stab of passion will not pierce the loins  
When it has proved itself in sons and daughters 5  
And spilled itself into a dozen sonnets.  
—But still the million-journeyed sunlight, on its  
Twice-day-repeated path engilds the waters  
As on the first day's so incredulous creation.  
Ah still, each time you enter, the old theme tingles, 10  
After I'd heard the drumming chords resolve it  
With storm of brass and bass in midnight dingles  
Hunting its course through shadowy variations:  
Now so light poised,  
One touch of your hand, like a flute, will solve it. 15

## FELLED WATTLE

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 11, 1972/1973. 10-11.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 59.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 42.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85 = RH Col 2 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 14 and 24 NELM MS PLO85); NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1; NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1; RB Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

4	or ] o[r <i>over</i> t]	2002.41.1
5	anybody's ] [a <i>inserted by hand over</i> e]nybody's	98.82.16
	anybody's ] anybody'[s <i>inserted by hand over</i> d]	98.4.1
6	Nor span] No[r <i>inserted by hand</i> ] span	2002.41.1
8	portent ] p[o <i>over</i> r]rtent	98.4.1
9	flame, ] flame ^	RP, S&P, 98.82.16, 475/2, 98.82.14
11	sympathy ] sy[m <i>over</i> n]pathy	RB Col 2
12	presence ] presence, ^	98.82.16, 475/2, 98.82.14
	presence ] preseence, ^	RP, S&P, SP, RB Col 2
13	The lank-eared ] The sprawling lank-eared	RP, S&P, SP, 98.82.16, 475/2, 98.82.14, RB Col 2
	indigo ] ind[i <i>over</i> o]go	98.82.16
14	Withdraw ] Withdawaw	PLO85
	Withdraw ] Withdawaw	RH.Col
15	smoke ] sm[o <i>over</i> i]ke	98.82.16
16	hands ] [hnads <i>altered to</i> hands]	98.82.16
	hands ] h[an <i>inserted by hand over</i> na]ds	98.82.14
17	Only ] [On <i>over</i> om]ly	RB Col 2
21	of ] [o <i>over</i> p]f	RB Col 2
	of ] o[f <i>over</i> d]	98.82.14
22	trunks ] tru[n <i>over</i> m]ks	RB Col 1
	tangled trash ] tumbled trash	98.82.16, 475/2

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## FELLED WATTLE

On the raw edge of a ravine  
Where the torn roots clench their desperate sphincters,  
The stripped logs lie far beyond haulage,  
Too strict a risk for mule-team or tractor.

So they'll never burn on anybody's hearth 5  
Nor span a lintel nor fence in an acre,  
Nor spin in churning miles of newsprint  
The strident lies of portent or disaster.

Only the lobelia's ice-blue flame,  
The red-hot-poker's heatless incandescence 10  
Carry from bole to bole the sympathy of warmth.  
Before the censure of the valley's presence

The lank-eared indigo and stinkblaar  
Withdraw the hint of insult and extinction.  
Silent as smoke, the croziers of the bracken 15  
Uncurl in hands spread out for benediction.

Only the reiteration of the cataract  
Plunges its hundred feet of paradox,  
Betrays the void with wordless imprecation  
Tossing its spume of rumour to the rocks. 20

Heedless of winter or the spring's crescendo,  
The prone trunks and the tangled trash lie quiet,  
To split and crumble to their slow decay;  
No fire, no frenzy, no fume of innuendo,  
But with the cold hurtless fire of corruption 25  
Smoulder in innocence away.

- 23 crumble ] c[r over illegible character]umble 2002.41.1  
their slow ] their ~~decay~~ slow RB Col 2  
decay; ] decay, SP, 98.82.16
- 24 fume of ] fume of ¾ of PLO85  
fume of ] fume [o over &] ¾ of RH Col 2

## JULY

### Publication History:

TT: *Two Tone* 9, June 1973. 24.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.1 = RH Col 2;  
NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2000.18.6; NELM MS 2002.41.1; NELM MS 2002.41.8;  
NELM MS 2003.24; RB Col 1; RB Col 2.

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 14 lines except NELM MS 97.19 and NELM MS 2002.41.8 which have 13 lines.

### Variant Readings:

2	angular ] a[n <i>over</i> m]gular	98.82.16
3	and ] a nd ^	2000.18.6
4	Mica and rime glint faint, ] The curlew and the plovers rising ] r[i <i>over</i> o]sing faint, ] faint ^	97.19, 2002.41.8 475/2 2000.18.6
5	Pointing ... plovers ] <i>omitted</i> Pointing the flints ] Fall grey to dew	97.19, 2002.41.8 98.82.16
6	speckled ] spackled stones; ] stones:	475/2 97.19, 2002.41.8
7	Edge ] [E <i>over</i> e]dge sand, ] sand ^	2000.18.6 97.19
	bleach ] [b <i>over</i> v]leach	RB Col 2
	owlet ] owl	TT, 475/2, 97.19, 98.4.1, 2002.41.1, 2002.41.8, 2003.24, 2000.18.6
	spraint ] spra[i <i>over</i> n]nt	98.82.16
8	jackal ] Jackal	TT
	shadow ] sh[a <i>over illegible character</i> ]dow	2002.41.1
9	other's ] others	2003.24
11	Have ] Ha[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ve their ] thei[r <i>over illegible character</i> ] nightlong ] night[l <i>over</i> o]ong acquiescence ] acquie[s <i>over</i> n]cence	2003.24 2002.41.8 2002.41.8 98.82.16, RB Col 1
12	In ] [I <i>over</i> i]n tranquil: ] tranq[u <i>over</i> i]il: tranquil: ] tranquil—	RB Col 2 RB Col 2 97.19, 2002.41.8, 2000.18.6
13	trample ] trample, ^	2003.24
	blind ] blin[d <i>over</i> f]	98.4.1
	tyre ] [t <i>over</i> r]yre	PLO85

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## JULY

Let us grope out into the winter frost  
Hitting one's head against the angular dark.  
Splinters of myth, the last stars wink and spark  
Against the rising light. Mica and rime glint faint,  
Pointing the flints. The curlew and the plovers 5  
Freeze to their speckled stones; on the crossed  
Edge of the freshet's sand, bleach owlet and otter spraint.  
The jackal hunts his shadow to its covers.  
Through all the night we breathed each other's presence:  
My love, we know each other, but these others 10  
Have their own nightlong purposes, acquiescence  
In the deep patterns, fixed and tranquil:  
Before the feet trample and the blind tyre smothers  
The hints of rabbitdrop and porcuquill.



## ANTBEAR

### Publication History:

**TT:** *Two Tone* 8 (2), June 1972. 6-7.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 37.

**OAA:** *Out of the African Ark*. Ed. by David and Guy Butler. Craighall: Ad. Donker, 1988. 60-61.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 189.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 39.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1 = RH Col 2 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 12 in NELM MS 98.4.1 and the addition of a footnote to RH Col 2); NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2002.41.1; NELM MS 2003.24; RB Col 1; RB Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

1	halfhour ] halffhour	98.82.16
	halfhour ] half-hour	S&P, OAA, SGS, SP, 98.82.14
6	Of ] [O <i>over</i> g]f	RB Col 2
	appetite, ] appetite.	OAA
7	snuffle ] [s <i>over</i> d]nuffle	PLO85
8	over-busy ] over busy	SP, 98.82.16, 475/2, RB Col 2
9	lust ] lus[t <i>over</i> y]	RB Col 1
11	brainbox, ] bra[i <i>over</i> o]nbox,	RB Col 1
12	Dim ] Dimm	98.4.1
	Dim ] Dimm	RH Col 2
13	to nip ] t[o <i>over</i> i] nip	2002.41.1
	only ] [o <i>over</i> ,]nly	RB Col: 1
14	Mars'. ] Mars'—	475/2
16	Like ] L[i <i>over</i> o]ke	98.82.16
18	worthwhile ] worth-while	SP, 98.82.16, RB Col 2
19	with ] wit[h <i>over</i> y]	2002.41.1
20	Flap ... ears ] [Flap <i>inserted by hand</i> ] Snuff of the batlike ears	PLO85
	Flap ... ears] Snuff of the quivering snout	S&P, OAA, SGS, SP, 98.82.16, 475/2, 98.4.1, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1, RB Col 2, 98.82.14
	Flap ] Snuff	TT
	of ] [o <i>inserted by hand over</i> p]f	98.4.1

*Variant information continued over the page*

## ANTBEAR

Filching an odd halfhour of winter light  
The queer clown of a beast strolled on my afternoon,  
You ancient tenant of my red soil under—  
Am I your guest, or are you mine, I wonder?  
I am your debtor, that is certain, with your boon 5  
Of licking appetite,  
Mousing and miching, snuffle and flurry of dust,  
Busy, but not over-busy, ambling and shambling,  
Content to satisfy your yokel's lust  
On earthy foraging. 10  
Small brainbox, slender snout, powerful behind,  
Dim eyes to blink only at the lonely stars,  
No teeth to nip, only to squash and grind,  
And claws only for Adam's task, not Mars'.  
Innocent, with no guile, 15  
Like all surly wits, hermits, world-forsakers,  
Surviving, they say, only in our warm acres,  
To make my day worthwhile.

He scents my nearness with a sudden start—  
Flap of the batlike ears 20  
Snuff of the quivering snout.  
Yes, shuffle off. The farewell of the winter sun  
Throws its wan aureole not on your head but on your bum:  
That's where your treasure is.  
In gross ungracious haste, yes, take your flight, 25  
In cavernous setts delved down to the rocks  
Squirm through the labyrinth of your dusty den:

But keep the man far hence that's kin to fox,  
For with his lust, he'll dig you up again.



21	Snuff ... snout. ] Flap of the bat-like ears.	S&P, OAA, SGS, SP, 98.82.16, 475/2, 98.4.1, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1, RB Col 2, 98.82.14
	quivering ] quiveri[n over g]g	98.4.1
	snout ] s[n over b]out	98.82.14
23	aureole ] aereole	2002.41.1
24	where ] w[h over j]ere	475/2
27	Squirm ] S[q over illegible character]uirm	98.82.14
28	fox, ] fox, <i>footnote</i> : [*(see Webster: "Duchess of Malfi") <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	RH Col 2
29	with ] w[i over t]th	RB Col: 1
	he'll ] he[' over (]ll	98.82.16

## AUGUST

### Publication History:

TT: *Two Tone* 9, June 1973. 24-25.

NCT: *New Contrast* 20 (4), December 1992. 38.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85 = RH Col 2; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.1; NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2000.18.6; NELM MS 2002.41.1; NELM MS 2002.41.8; NELM MS 2003.24; RB Col 1; RB Col 2.

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

1	in your ] in[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]your	475/2
3	park ] par[k <i>over illegible character</i> ]	2002.41.1
5	drop its ] drop ,its	PLO85
6	window ] windows	NCT, 97.19
7	Then, ] Then ^	NCT, 475/2, 97.19
	light, ] light ^	98.82.16
	light, ] li[g <i>over f</i> ]ht,	97.19
	come ] c[o <i>over a</i> ]me	2002.41.1
	come ] c[o <i>inserted by hand</i> ]me	RB Col 1
8	despair ] des[p <i>over ¾</i> ]air	98.4.1
9	bitter ] b[i <i>over u</i> ]tter	97.19
	furze, ] furze ^	TT, NCT, 98.82.16, 475/2, 98.4.1, 97.19, 2002.41.1, 2002.41.8, RB Col 1, RB Col 2, 2000.18.6
11	splintered ] splintere[d <i>over e</i> ]	PLO85
	faith ] fai[t <i>over i</i> ]h	98.4.1
13	sleep, deeper ] sleep, [d <i>over s</i> ]eeper]	98.82.16

## AUGUST

You turn and murmur in your lonely sleep  
While I in barren pastures keep my sheep,  
My dun thoughts grazing in their threadbare park  
And fenceless meadows of perplexity,  
Hear the clock drop its plummets in the dark 5  
And watch the window fade from black to grey.

Then, with the first light, they come, the hunting curs,  
Lean questing whelps of unresolved despair,  
Scatter the panic flock through bitter furze,  
Through tearing briars and imprecating air 10  
Down blackened tors of splintered faith and creed,  
To leave my toe upon the last abyss,  
Deeper than sleep, deeper than any need,  
No need of you, my sleeping shepherdess.

## IN THE WATTLE

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 12, 1974-75. 12.

**ICZ:** *Insights: Criticism of Zimbabwean and other Poetry*. 1984. T. O. McLoughlin and F. R. Mhonyera. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1994. 24-25.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1; RH Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.16 = NELM MS 98.82.26.6; NELM MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1; RB Col 2.

**Text:** NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: Frankly an idyll RP, ICZ, 98.82.16, 98.4.1, 2002.41.1, RB Col 2: <i>none</i>	PLO85, RB Col 1
Frankly an idyll ] an idyll	475/2
Frankly an idyll ] [fr over FR]ankly an idyll	RB Col 2
1 boughs ] bough[s over d]	475/2
3 beads ] bead[s over illegible character]	98.82.16
7 dropped ] droppe[d over e]	2002.41.1
8 loitering ] loi[t inserted by hand]ering	475/2
loitering ] loi[t over i]ering	RB Col 1
9 shaken ] s[h over k]aken	98.82.16
10 glade ] [g over r]lade	98.4.1
15 the green ] thegreen	RB Col 2
^	
18 With ] W[i over r]th	98.4.1
19 Lulled ] And	98.4.1, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1
21 alien ] ali[e over r]n	RB Col 2
day, ] day	98.4.1, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1
^	
22 coup d'etat ] coupd'etat	RB Col 2
^	
23 Palter ] Falter	475/2
24 ajar ] ajsr	475/2
24-25 stanza break ] no stanza break	ICZ
29 falter ] fa[l over t]ter	RB Col 2
30 minute seeps ] minutes seep	ICZ
seeps into ] seeps from into	475/2

## IN THE WATTLE

### *Frankly an idyll*

The stillness drowsed beneath the boughs,  
The seasons hung in equipoise,  
The minutes dropped like casual beads  
Hung on a string of toys.

The dripping curds of saffron spray 5  
Smother the word we waited for,  
The dropped mast blurs the manuscript  
Of loitering slot and claw.

Noosed in a shaken pool of sun,  
The duiker pauses in the glade, 10  
The liquid eye, the princely pose,  
Alert and unafraid.

And like the twitching of a thought  
That slews the solemn to absurd,  
Flits through the green interstices 15  
The flurry of a bird.

From fern and nook we pause and look,  
With all the spendthrift day before us,  
Lulled in our drowsy beating ears  
The woodland's muted chorus. 20

The alien goings-on of day,  
The ploy, the scoop, the coup d'etat,  
Palter beyond the iron door  
A finger's breadth ajar.

The sullen tick of the machine 25  
That adds its two and two and two  
Fades to an insect's peevish whine  
Along the avenue.

The shadows falter on the wind,  
The minute seeps into the hour, 30  
Enmeshing there in strands of gold  
The standing duiker and the hanging flower.



SEPTEMBER

Publication History:

TT: *Two Tone* 8 (3), September 1972. 5.

Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.1 = RH Col 2;  
 NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2000.18.6; NELM MS 2002.41.1; NELM MS 2002.41.8;  
 NELM MS 2003.24; RB Col 1; RB Col 2.

Text: NELM MS PLO85

Variant Readings:

Title:	September ] <del>October</del> September	475/2
1	These ] Those	TT
	trees, ] trees	TT
	^	
	their twin intertwisting ] their intertwisting	98.82.16
	intertwisting ] intertwisted	97.19
2	Sprung ] Spr[u over i]ng	475/2
	parable ] par[a over r]ble	97.19
3	explosion ] [e over illegible character]xplosion	2002.41.1
	mast, ] mast	TT
	^	
4	saplings ] s[ap over pa]llings	2002.41.1
	sinuous ] sin[u inserted by hand]ous	RB Col 1
	shoots ] sh[oo over ee]ts	2003.24
5	scarcely ] sc[ar over ra]cely	2000.18.6
	scarcely ] scarecely	98.82.16, 475/2
	scarcely ] scar[c over e]ely	2003.24
	scarcely ] scar[ce over ec]ly	2002.41.1, 2002.41.8
6	adze ] a[d over s]ze	97.19
8	Following ] Foll[ow inserted by hand over wo]ing	RB Col 2
	intricate ] intricat[e over t]	2003.24
9	lives ] li[v over e]es	PLO85
10	interaction ] in[t over e]eraction	98.4.1
12	apocalypse: ] apocalypse,	97.19, 2002.41.8
13	ecstasy ] ec[s over t]tasy	98.82.16
	be ] b[e over r]	RB Col 2
	borne ] borne,	98.82.16
	^	
14	and ] a nd	2000.18.6
	^	

## SEPTEMBER

These trees, with their twin intertwisting growth,  
Make our neat parable. Sprung from two roots  
Set by the explosion of the careless mast,  
The saplings twined each other; the sinuous shoots  
Now scarcely tell which goes to each or both. 5  
Who knows some unknown axe or adze may trace  
In the eternal timber at the last,  
Following the grain, that intricate embrace.  
Sap swells in more than trees: through our twined lives  
With subtle interaction of the sun, 10  
Where through the veins the secret impulse drives  
In maze and blaze of bright apocalypse:  
As if our ecstasy could not be borne  
But burst out in our hair and fingertips.

## THE SUMMIT

### Publication History:

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 10, 1970/1971. 15.

**BRS:** *Beneath a Rhodesian Sky*. 1972. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Graham Publishing Company (Pvt) Ltd, 1980. 31 (lines 21-31 only).

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 40-41.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1 = RH Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1; RB Col 2.

**Text:** NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

Title:	The Summit ] The Ultimate Sky <i>footnote:</i> (From "The Summit", by N. H. Brettell.)	BNR
3	sun ] sun, ^	SP
4	of ] o[f <i>over</i> g]	RB Col 2
11	water ] wa[t <i>over</i> r]er	RB Col 2
12	To ] [T <i>over</i> t]o	98.82.16
13	dozen ] do[z <i>over</i> x]en	475/2
	hoarded ] hoarde[d <i>over</i> e]	2002.41.1
23	Our ] O[u <i>over</i> y]r	RB Col 2
	shadows ] shadows, ^	RP, SP, 98.82.16
27	Valley ] [V <i>over</i> X]alley	2002.41.1
28	decade; ] [d <i>over</i> e]ecade,	98.82.16
	decade; ] decade,	RP, BRS, SP, 98.4.1, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1, RB Col 2
	decade; ] decade.	475/2
31	hands ] h[an <i>over</i> na]ds	475/2
	knees ] knee[s <i>over illegible character</i> ]	2002.41.1
	drawn ] dr[a <i>inserted by hand</i> ]wn	475/2

## THE SUMMIT

So we come at last to what seemed  
The topmost ridge,  
Above the slap of sun  
The prick of midge.

There we will sit, we said, 5  
Breathless, serene,  
And watch the quiet day fold up  
Into what has been.

We have our bread to eat 10  
As white as peace,  
And dew, the water of life,  
To drink at ease.

Our dozen hoarded years  
Lie easily, 15  
No crag, no peak, between us  
And the sky.

This is our wanted world,  
Our guerdon, bliss,  
All we had hoped, contrived,  
Narrowed to this. 20

But, through the sentried rocks  
On the top crest,  
Our shadows thrown ahead  
From the red west,

Lean over a far gulf 25  
Unmapped, unmade,  
Valley of shadowy woods,  
The last decade;

And, catching the wild light 30  
Of day's overflows,  
Chins cupped in hands and knees drawn up,  
The ultimate hills.

## OCTOBER

### Publication History:

NCT: *New Contrast* 20 (4), December 1992. 38.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.1; NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2000.18.6; NELM MS 2002.41.1; NELM MS 2002.41.8; NELM MS 2003.24; RB Col 1 = RH Col 2; RB Col 2.

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

1	sun-dial ] sundial	NCT, 97.19, 2002.41.8
3	gnomons ] gn[o over i]mons	475/2
5	fonder, ] [f over F]onder,	PLO85, 2003.24
	fonder, ] fonder[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.16
	fonder, ] f[o over i]nder,	RB Col 2
6	cartographers, ] cartographers	98.82.16, 475/2, RB Col 2
		^
8	of neck ] of your neck	2003.24
9	subtlety ] subtelty	98.82.16, 97.19, 98.4.1, 2002.41.1
	subtlety ] subt[le <i>inserted by hand over el</i> ]ty	RB Col 1, RB Col 2
	subtlety ] subtalty	NCT
11	Eve's ] Eve'sc	2002.41.1
12	shall ] s[h over <i>illegible character</i> ]all	2002.41.1
13	And ] A[n <i>inserted by hand over d</i> ][d <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.16
14	time ] ð [time <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.16
	mistake? ] mi[s over t]take?	98.82.16

## OCTOBER

Our sun-dial plays with time—and keeps the rules  
Of play, or subterfuge, or strict arithmetic.  
The flux of light remains, the rigid gnomons tick  
And hurtle with us into endless spools  
Of space and age. I, fonder, older,  
Like the absurd cartographers, am able  
To plot the fact but limn the darling fable  
With every bend of neck or tilt of shoulder.

5

The bright air glides around your subtlety  
With the skin of the innocent snake  
That stroked Eve's limbs with mythic flattery.  
If the grey months shall cloud across the face  
And dim the truth into a commonplace,  
Shall we, finding time wrong, accept the glad mistake?

10

## DERI-DERI

### Publication History:

RP: *Rhodesian Poetry* 11, 1972/1973. 11-12.

S&P: *Season and Pretext*: Poems. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 58.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1 = RH Col 2 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 19 of 98.4.1); NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1; RB Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

Title:	Deri-Deri RP, S&P, 98.82.14, 98.82.16, 475/2: Deri Deri	PLO85, 98.4.1, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1, RB Col 2
1	Morose ] [M over m]orose sorts ] sorts, ^	RB Col 2 RP
2	Kneading ] [K over illegible character]neading	98.82.14
3	October ] Octo[b over v]er	RB Col 2
4	Came ] C[a inserted by hand]me	2002.41.1
6	tumbled ] tum[b inserted by hand over v]led	98.82.14
7	of sherd ] [o over p]f sherd debris ] de[b over o]ris kitchen ] [k over l]itchen	98.82.16, 2002.41.1, RB Col 2 RB Col 1 2002.41.1
8	lusts ] lust[s over l] compounded ] compo[u over n]nded	2002.41.1 RB Col 2
12	upward ] upwardw	98.82.16
14	rings, ] rings ^	98.82.16
16	knees ] kne[e inserted by hand over s]s with ] wit[h over y] bells; ] bells.	RB Col 1 2002.41.1 98.82.16
19	privilege ] privi[le inserted by hand over el]ge privilege ] privielge	98.4.1 RH Col 2
20	lackland ] lac[k over j]land greed ] gr[e over illegible character]ed broadcloth ] b[r over o]oadcloth	PLO85 475/2 RB Col 2
21	stale worts ] stale [worts inserted by hand]	PLO85
24	And ] A[n over d]d scent ] scen[illegible character deleted]t	475/2 98.82.14

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## DERI-DERI

Morose and out of breath and out of sorts  
Kneading the future like a dull lump of clay,  
I laboured up the long October slope,  
Came unawares on these high spires of daisies.

They flourished from the foot of broken wall, 5  
A tumbled stockpit rank with ancient rubbish,  
Cracked scraps of sherd, debris of slut and kitchen,  
Dead appetites, lost lusts, compounded into loam.

Called deri-deri: why, I wonder? 10  
Not the insistence of the old refrain,  
When the gay nonsense of the prancing blood  
Fumed upward through the crevices of words.

Derry derry down derry O

I think of people dancing in their rings, 15  
The girls with daisies at their ear, the men  
Gartered and gaitered, knees lifted with bells;  
I think of Chaucer and his meed of flowers

That clothed the glum erosion of his times, 20  
The plagues, the hates, the cruel privilege,  
The lackland greed, samite and broadcloth,  
Cold bacon and stale worts and wine in fountains.

Derry derry down derry O

I pluck the white stars and grey rags of leaf  
And sniff: scent velvet and fruity but with hidden edge,  
"Knyf under the cloke": wit under the bland words 25  
Outsnooking the familiar dilemmas.

The elvish eyes above the trim forked beard  
Reduce the clamour to a barnyard cackle:  
Poetry in pigs, music in quacking ducks,  
Oriflammes on a dunghill, joy in the flowering dirt. 30

Derry derry down derry O

26	dilemmas ] dil[e over l]mmas	RB Col 2
29	music ] m[u over s]sic	2002.41.1
	ducks ] duck[s over illegible character]	RB Col 2



## NOVEMBER

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.1 = RH Col 2 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 4 of RH Col 2); NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2000.18.6; NELM MS 2002.41.1; NELM MS 2002.41.8; NELM MS 2003.24; RB Col 1, RB Col 2.

**Text:** NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

Title:	NOVEMBER ] NOVE[M <i>over illegible character</i> ]BER	98.4.1
1	remembrance, ] remembrance[, <i>over m</i> ],	97.19
2	droughty ] drou[g <i>over h</i> ]hty	PLO85
	childhood's ] [c <i>over illegible character</i> ]hildhood's	2000.18.6
3	thumb's ] thumbs'	98.82.16
4	Now ] No[w <i>over a</i> ]	98.4.1
	Now ] N[ow <i>inserted by hand over ow</i> ]	RH Col 2
	thick ] nthick	98.4.1
	thick ] thi[c <i>over v</i> ]k	2000.18.6
5	those ] thos[e <i>over s</i> ]	2002.41.1
	winds pipe ] wi[nd <i>over dn</i> ] pipes	98.82.16
7	memory ] [m <i>over illegible character</i> ]emory	98.4.1
8	breast ] brea[s <i>over t</i> ]t	98.82.16
9	children, ] children	2003.24
	^	
	in a ] in the	97.19, 2002.41.8, 2000.18.6
10	knew ] [k <i>over v</i> ]new	97.19
	forsaken ] forgotten	RB Col 2
11	Call ] C[a <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ll	475/2
	while ] whi[le <i>inserted by hand over ch</i> ]	98.82.16
12	Listen: hear ] Listen, love: hear	2003.24
13	days, ] days	98.82.16
	^	
14	many-tributaried 475/2, 97.19, 98.4.1, 2000.18.6, 2002.41.1, 2002.41.8, 2003.24, RB Col 1, RB Col 2: many tributaried	PLO85
	many-tributaried ] many-tributa[r <i>over i</i> ]ied	98.82.16
	river ] [r <i>over e</i> ]iver	475/2

## NOVEMBER

Rosemary's for remembrance, the fresh  
The droughty smell, childhood's dry caress,  
The warm soft clay that took our thumb's impress—  
Now faceless in crowds, blurred in thick flesh: 5  
And those for whom the winds pipe threnody  
Jerked from the sky, spattered in desert sand:  
And our dead infant, wordless memory,  
Shielded by curve of breast and crook of hand.  
Voices of children, hid in a garden maze, 10  
Children we knew, now men we have forsaken,  
Call in a wild excitement while the seared leaves shiver.  
Listen: hear through the dry valleys shaken,  
Running through all our quiet nights and days,  
Shrill-voiced, the many-tributaried river.

## KWASHIORKOR

### Publication History:

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 29.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 204.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1 = RH Col 2 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 10 in RH Col 2); NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1; RB Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 32 lines except S&P, SGS and NELM MS 98.82.14 which have 31 lines.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	KWASHIORKOR ] KWAS[ <i>H inserted by H. Finn</i> ]IORKOR	98.82.16
Dedication:	For ... Hospital ] For Dr Gerard Ballance	98.82.16, RB Col 2
	For ... Hospital ] Bonda Mission Hospital	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
2	and ] an[d <i>over e</i> ]	98.82.14
5	him; ] hi[m <i>over h</i> ];	RB Col 1
	him; ] him:	S&P, SGS, 98.82.16, 98.82.14
	hold up the heavy head, ] hold to the lips the cup,	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
6	Put to the lips the cup, ] <i>omitted</i>	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
7	limp ] lim[p <i>inserted by hand over l</i> ]	475/2
8	acres ] acres,	S&P, SGS, 98.82.16, 98.82.14
	^	
	give. ] give;	S&P, SGS, 98.82.16, 98.82.14
9	him; ] him:	S&P, SGS, 98.82.16, 98.82.14
10	secrets and your arcane ] secrets, your arcanic	98.82.16, 98.4.1,
	^	2002.41.1, RB Col 2
	secrets and your ] secrets, [ <i>and inserted by hand</i> ] your	RH Col 2
	^	
	arcane ] arcani[ <i>e inserted by hand over c</i> ]	RH Col 2
11	the casual ease ] the ease	475/2, 2002.41.1, RB Col 2
	the casual ease ] the <del>casual</del> ease	98.4.1
	poverty, ] poverty	98.82.16, 98.4.1, 475/2
	^	
	poverty, ] poverty[— <i>inserted by hand by H. Finn</i> ]	98.82.14
	poverty, ] poverty—	S&P, SGS
13	twinge ] t[w <i>over illegible character</i> ]inge	PLO85

*Variant information continued over the page*

## KWASHIORKOR

*For Dr Gerard Ballance, Bonda Hospital*

Gently, so gently, lift the lolling head,  
Grave and concerned physician.  
The close ward reels in the November swelter,  
The flies stoop heavily to help themselves:  
Help him; hold up the heavy head, 5  
Put to the lips the cup,  
The brimming milk the limp and shrivelled dugs,  
The dust-blown acres could not ever give.  
Give to him; give with your intense heart,  
Your open secrets and your arcane spells— 10  
Not with the casual ease from glut to poverty,  
The casual ease that stultifies the gift—  
With charity, no twinge of expiation,  
With the deep aching of your patient skill,  
To make a man from those dissolving bones. 15

Outside, the wind is on the world.  
The bluff northeast clamours its news of rain.  
Between the leaning shoulders of the hills  
Great gravid swags and udders of cloud  
Hang swollen and bruised with food. 20  
Stinging the dust to life, the first wild drops  
Swirl with the hiss of quickening yeast,  
Revally of the lavish promises  
Of foison in bushel and vat to carry.

Carry him back to the world: 25  
The green, the loud, the resurrected,  
Where the lame dance, the dumb make merry,  
The meek sit in the tall thrones of the hills.  
Rinse out the rancid glut from spleen and liver,  
Rebuilding there the perfect synthesis: 30

There, where the spears of harvest rattle on their shields,  
Aim at our hearts, our craven incompassions.



14	aching ] a[ <i>c inserted by hand over x</i> ]hing	RB Col 1
16	wind ] wwind	2002.41.1
17	northeast ] north-east	S&P, SGS, 475/2, 98.82.16, RB Col 1, RB Col 2, 98.82.14
18	Between ] Be[ <i>tw inserted by hand over wt</i> ]een	475/2
	Between ] Betwee[ <i>n over m</i> ]	RB Col 2
21	to ] t[ <i>o inserted by hand over i</i> ]	475/2, RB Col 2
	drops ] drop[ <i>s over d</i> ]	RB Col 2
22	Swirl with] Swirl[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]with	2002.41.1
23	lavish ] lavis[ <i>h over g</i> ]	PLO85, RB Col 1
24	in ] [i over o]n	RB Col 2
25	world ] [w over <i>illegible character</i> ]orld	98.82.16
28	thrones ] t[ <i>h over r</i> ]rones	RB Col 1
29	Rinse ] [R over <i>illegible character</i> ]inse	PLO85
	liver, ] liver	S&P, SGS, 98.82.14
	^	
31	where ] when	S&P, SGS, 98.82.16, 98.82.14
	shields ] sh[ <i>ie over ei</i> ]lds	98.82.14

## DECEMBER

### Publication History:

RP: *Rhodesian Poetry* 12, 1974-75. 11.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.1 = RH Col 2;  
NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2000.18.6; NELM MS 2002.41.1; NELM MS 2002.41.8;  
NELM MS 2003.24; RB Col 1; RB Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.25.2.

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

### Variant Readings:

Title:	December ] Advent in Africa	98.82.25.2
Dedication:	For ... Africa' ] for A. S. C. and E. G. B.	98.82.25.2
	Cripps, ] Cripps:	2003.24
1	Here our ways all ] Here all our ways	97.19, 2002.41.8, 98.82.25.2, 2000.18.6
2	Converge ] Co[n over j]verge	97.19
	his ] h[i over o]s	RB Col 1
	stony ] st[o over p]ny	98.82.25.2
3	Ours ] Our	475/2
	through the many ] through many	97.19
	byways ] byeways	98.4.1
	byways ] by-ways	98.82.25.2
	byways ] by-ways,	97.19, 2002.41.8
	^	
	petals ] p[e over illegible character]tals	97.19
4	From ] Fromm	RB Col 2
	From the erythrina's ] From erythrina's	98.82.25.2
	erythrina's 97.19, 2002.41.8, 2003.24, 98.82.25.2, 2000.18.6: erynthia's	RP, PLO85,
		475/2, 98.4.1, RB Col 2
	erythrina's ] [e over r]rynthia's	RB Col 1
	erythrina's ] er[y over n][n inserted by hand]thia's	98.82.16
	erythrina's ] er[y inserted by hand]nthia's	2002.41.1
	gold ] gol[d over e]	97.19
7	the ] t[h over y]e	98.82.16
8	stable, ] stable	RP, 475/2, 97.19, 98.4.1, 2000.18.6, 2002.41.1,
	^	2002.41.8, 2003.24, RB Col 1, RB Col 2, 98.82.25.2
	stable, ] st[a over b]ble	98.82.16
	^	
	fly ] f[l over ;]y	98.82.25.2
	stable ] stabl[e over r]	98.4.1
9	from ] fromm	98.82.16
	west ] [w over b]est	RB Col 1

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## DECEMBER

*For A. S. Cripps, "Advent in Africa"*

At the end is the centre. Here our ways all  
Converge, his over the stony wold,  
Ours through the many byways royal with petals  
From the erythrina's scarlet and the cassia's gold.  
With divinations dumb to our appeal,  
The rain-wet dust, fuming like incense, settles  
Where the pigs grovel, raw-boned oxen kneel,  
Not the white stable, but the fly-blown kraal.

5

The magus from the west has his own treasures:  
Gold of the deed, perfume of the word,  
Myrrh of the sacrifice; the common essences  
Transmute the filthy, sanctify the absurd;  
And here our love, our ordinary pleasures,  
Stand sightless as seraphim, robed as presences.

10

- |    |  |                         |
|----|--|-------------------------|
| 11 | Myrrh ] M[y over r]rrh                                   | PLO85, 98.82.16, 98.4.1 |
|    | sacrifice ] s[a over <i>illegible character</i> ]crifice | 98.82.25.2              |
|    | common ] commone   | PLO85                   |
| 12 | sanctify ] sanc[t over r]ify                             | 98.82.25.2              |
|    | sanctify ] sanc[t over i]ify                             | 2003.24                 |
| 13 | ordinary ] or[d over r]inary                             | PLO85                   |



## MOTHER AND CHILD

### Publication History:

**TT:** *Two Tone* 8 (2), June 1972. 5.

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 11, 1972/1973. 12-13.

**S&P:** *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury, Rhodesia: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977. 57.

**WZ:** *Writing in Zimbabwe 1961-1979*. Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Centre of International P.E.N., 1981. 19

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 203.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 84-85.

**B:** *Birthright: A Selection of Poems from Southern Africa*. Ed. Musaemura Zimunya. Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited, 1989. 7.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 32.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO85; NELM MS 475/2; NELM MS 98.4.1 = RH Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.16; NELM MS 2002.41.1; RB Col 1; RB Col 2; NELM MS 98.82.14 [Hugh Finn's Editor's Draft for *Season and Pretext*].

### Text: NELM MS PLO85

**Note:** S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ and NELM MS 98.82.14 have 25 lines as line 6 is split into 2 lines.

### Variant Readings:

Dedication: wood-carver ] wood[- over 0]carver	98.82.14
2 up-flung ] upflung	RP, S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ, SP, 98.4.1, 98.82.16, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1, 98.82.14
up-flung ] up[f over illegible character]lung	RB Col 2
3 This ] [T inserted over illegible character by H. Finn]his	98.82.14
earth, ] earth[, altered to ; by H. Finn]	98.82.14
earth, ] earth;	S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ
6 Falling ... breast, ] line 6 is split into 2 lines between doek and burgeoning at H. Finn's suggestion.	98.82.14
Falling ... breast, ] Falling ... doek,	S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ
burgeoning ] Burgeoning	S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ, 98.82.14
7 skull; ] skull.	S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ, 98.82.14

*Variant information continued over the page*

## MOTHER AND CHILD

*For Job Kekana, wood-carver*

He knew that haloes never grow from mukwa  
Nor wings sprout from any up-flung timber.  
This is a plain girl, sprung from the stubborn earth,  
Up from the splayed discarded roots, the pliant lines  
Follow the living grain through bend of shoulder, 5  
Falling through fold of doek, burgeoning through curve of breast,  
Smoothing with love the baby's pumpkin skull;  
The mother's lips and brooding frontal bar  
Swell with the veins that carried up the sap  
The milk of life. 10  
And that is all: the blunt annunciation,  
No cherubim to lackey this serf's daughter,  
This sturdy-ankled wife of carpenter—  
No portent, nothing holier than love.

Here, on this other bench, love moulded into man, 15  
Twisted and racked, but clean anatomised,  
Wrestles with all the might of perfect thews,  
The arc of ribs, the caved-in diaphragm,  
Arms spiked to a tree with knotted strength of tree,  
Joists to hold up the world. 20

God made flesh must keep the grace of flesh.  
So the strict chisel follows out the grain,  
Feels its way up through burr and whorl and flaw  
Till wood and flesh and god are one.



9	the veins ] [t <i>over</i> h]he veins	475/2
	the veins ] [the <i>inserted by hand</i> ] veins	98.4.1
11	all: ] all;	RB Col 2
	annunciation, ] annunciation.	S&P, SGS, WZ, MBZ, 98.82.14
12	cherubim ] c[h <i>inserted by hand</i> ]erubim	PLO85
	serf's ] serf'[s <i>inserted by hand over</i> d]	PLO85
	serf's ] serf'[s <i>over</i> d]	98.82.16
	daughter, ] daughter	RP, S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ, SP, 98.82.16,
	^ 475/2, 98.4.1, 2002.41.1, RB Col 1, RB Col 2, 98.82.14, RB Col 2	
13	of ] o[f <i>over</i> g]	RB Col 2
	carpenter— ] carpenter,	B
14	portent, ] portent:	RP, S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ, SP,
		98.82.16, 475/2, RB Col 2, 98.82.14, RB Col 2
19	spiked ] [s <i>over</i> p]piked	PLO85
21	flesh. ] flesh;	2002.41.1, RB Col 1
22	follows ] foll[ow <i>over</i> ws]s	98.82.14
	out ] up	S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ, B, 98.82.14
23	way ] vway	98.4.1
	and flaw ] a[n <i>over</i> d]d flaw	RB Col 1
	flaw ] flaw,	S&P, WZ, SGS, MBZ, 98.82.14
	^	



**LAKESIDE:  
WORD AND REVERIE:**  
Sebakwe and Ngezi

to the memory of William Wordsworth  
who has taught me most things

LAKESIDE: I

Publication History: *unpublished.*

Manuscript Copies:

RB Col 4; NELM MS 98.4.10; NELM MS 98.82.13; NELM MS 2000.18.7.1; NELM MS 2000.18.7.2; NELM MS 2001.1.3.5; NELM MS 2002.41.5; NELM MS 2004.24.1.

Text: NELM MS 2004.24.1

Variant Readings:

3	Or ] A onomatopeia, RB Col 4, 2000.18.7.2, 98.4.10, 98.82.13, 2002.41.5: onomatopeia ^	2000.18.7.1  2004.24.1, 2000.18.7.1, 2001.1.3.5
4	Fleeting ] F[l <i>over</i> e]eeting	2001.1.3.5
10	sound ] s[o <i>over</i> p]und	2000.18.7.1
11	mirror ] m[i <i>over</i> o]rror	2002.41.5, 2000.18.7.2
12	wavelets ] wa[v <i>over</i> b]elets	2000.18.7.1
18	indolent ] lazy on ] on, ^	98.82.13 RB Col 4, 98.82.13, 2002.41.5, 2000.18.7.1, 2001.1.3.5
20	shattered ] broken	98.82.13
21	drain ] [d <i>over</i> r]rain floodwater ] floodwater, ^	2000.18.7.1 98.82.13
22	myself ] myse[l <i>over</i> k]f	2001.1.3.5
23	the words ] the[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]words words ] word[s <i>over illegible character</i> ] worth ] wor[t <i>over</i> o]h without ] w[i <i>inserted by hand over</i> o]thout himself: ] him[se <i>over</i> ds]lf: himself: ] him[s <i>over</i> d]elf:	RB Col 4 2000.18.7.2 2000.18.7.1 2001.1.3.5 RB Col 4 98.82.13
25	him ] hi[m <i>over</i> ,]	2000.18.7.1
28	half-day's ] half day's	98.82.13
29	Creeping ... hedge, ] Tempting a trespasser's pasture: like a fox Creeping the ] Creeping[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]the Creeping ] Creepin[g <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	RB Col 4, 98.4.10, 98.82.13, 2002.41.5, 2000.18.7.1, 2001.1.3.5 RB Col 4 2002.41.5
30	Tempting ... fox ] Creeping the ditch below a splintered hedge, ^	RB Col 4, 98.4.10, 98.82.13, 2002.41.5, 2000.18.7.1, 2001.1.3.5
32	Down ] [D <i>over</i> F]own darkest ] dar[k <i>over</i> j]est darkest ] deepest dingle ] dingle. ^	RB Col 4 2004.24.1, 2000.18.7.2 2000.18.7.1 98.82.13
33	sense ] urchin	2000.18.7.1

I

- I lie and search the wind  
 To find the necessary word,  
 Or scrap of onomatopoeia,  
 Fleeting, inconsequent, absurd,  
 That might translate the mood, 5
- The broad and shining peace,  
 The placid ampersand  
 That links the last night's tumult  
 With spatters on the sand,  
 Hushes the trees with sound. 10
- The shadows sprawl across the mirror,  
 The wavelets lift and laze;  
 The sky and lake together  
 Reflect in merging haze  
 A diphthong's lazy grace. 15
- The far hills print their colophon  
 Across the final quarter;  
 My indolent fancies palter on  
 Across the waters loiter,  
 To join the ripples' shattered sherds 20  
 And drain away like floodwater  
 To ebb myself of words.
- What are the words worth without the man himself:  
 I sift my memories out, and through him  
 Re-cast the things I knew before I knew him. 25  
 I think of sixty years ago, another silence,  
 Not drugged with sunshine but annealed with frost,  
 And I, a pigmy Wordsworth on a half-day's holiday,  
 Creeping the ditch below a splintered hedge,  
 Tempting a trespasser's pasture; like a fox 30  
 Through the hissing "who is this?" of Scots pine coppice.  
 Down to the darkest dingle  
 With every sense a-tingle,  
 I found the hidden waterbreak  
 (A four foot drop was all our modest hills could make) 35  
 Always a filched delight, that day a wonder:



34	waterbreak water-break	98.82.13, 2000.18.7.1
	waterbreak ] [w <i>over</i> q]ater-break	98.4.10
35	four foot ] four-foot	RB Col 4, 98.4.10, 98.82.13, 2002.41.5, 2000.18.7.1, 2001.1.3.5
	drop ] fall	RB Col 4, 98.4.10, 98.82.13, 2002.41.5, 2001.1.3.5
36	day ] [d <i>over</i> s]ay	98.4.10
	wonder: ] wonder.	98.82.13
39	linenfold ] linenf[o <i>over</i> i]ld	98.4.10
40	midnight's ] midnight	98.82.13
42	white ] w[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]hite	98.82.13
	mid arpeggio ] mid-arpeggio	98.82.13, 2001.1.3.5
43	hush ] h[u <i>over</i> i]sh	2000.18.7.2
	sang ] san[g <i>over</i> f]	2002.41.5, 98.82.13
	sang ] san[g <i>over</i> d]	2000.18.7.1
44	Imprisoned ] Impr[i <i>over</i> s]soned	98.4.10
45	Elfin ] Goblin	RB Col 4, 2002.41.5, 2001.1.3.5
46	Cadenza] Ca[den <i>over</i> nds]za	2002.41.5
	of ] o[f <i>over</i> d]	2004.24.1
48	ecstatic. ] ecstatic;	98.82.13
49	still ] sti[l <i>over</i> o]l	RB Col 4
	desperate ] despe[r <i>over</i> e]ate	2000.18.7.1
50	his, ] his	98.82.13

^

The fall, clenched in the winter's vice,  
Was sculptured out of ice,  
Its gestures caught in crystal linenfold  
As if the midnight's cold 40  
The falling trebles of the little stream  
Had with white wand stilled in mid arpeggio.  
But in the hush, a thread of voice sang under:  
Imprisoned in the ice, the brook went on—  
Elfin, elusive, thin, 45  
Cadenza of a solitary violin.  
That was all then: the secret and the stealth  
And callow senses stirring to ecstatic.  
And still I've sought in desperate emphasis  
Interpreted by voices such as his, 50  
That frozen music.

## LAKESIDE: II

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col 4; NELM MS 98.4.10; NELM MS 98.82.13; NELM MS 2000.18.7.1; NELM MS 2000.18.7.2; NELM MS 2001.1.3.5; NELM MS 2002.41.5; NELM MS 2004.24.1.

**Text:** NELM MS 2004.24.1

### Variant Readings:

3	Along ] Across	98.82.13
6	Skirting, ] Skirting <sup>^</sup>	98.4.10, RB Col 4, 2002.41.5, 2000.18.7.1
	diminished ] diminis[h over n]ed	2000.18.7.1
	dot, ] dot <sup>^</sup>	98.4.10, RB Col 4, 2000.18.7.1
7	stony ] ston[y over t]	2002.41.5, 98.82.13
9	Whitewashed ] Whit[e over w]washed	2000.18.7.1
	Whitewashed ] Whitswashed	2000.18.7.2
	cormorants ] cormorants, <sup>^</sup>	RB Col 4, 2002.41.5, 98.82.13, 2000.18.7.1, 2001.1.3.5
11	Spatter ] [S over A]patter	RB Col 4
12	lip ] [l over illegible character]ip	2004.24.1
14	sculling ] scullin[g over f]	2001.1.3.5
15	my pen ] my sight pen	2001.1.3.5
16	sprawling ] sp[r inserted by hand over t]awling	2001.1.3.5
17	mud, ] mud <sup>^</sup>	98.82.13
	stagnant ] stag[n inserted by hand]ant	2001.1.3.5
19	stews ] st [ews over correction fluid] <sup>^</sup>	2000.18.7.1
	stews ] st[e over w]ws	RB Col 4
21	demagogues ] dem[a over illegible character]gogues	98.4.10
	demagogues ] demagogues	98.82.13
	demagogues ] demagogue	2002.41.5, 2000.18.7.1
22	return; ] return: <sup>^</sup>	98.4.10, 98.82.13, RB Col 4, 2002.41.5, 2001.1.3.5, 2000.18.7.1, 2000.18.7.2
24	rough ] rou[gh over correction fluid]	2000.18.7.1
29	pass ] pass, <sup>^</sup>	98.4.10, 98.82.13, 2000.18.7.1, 2002.41.5, 2001.1.3.5, 2000.18.7.2
32	twenty-one, ] twenty-[on over correction fluid]e <sup>^</sup>	2000.18.7.1
33	Suitably ] —Suitably	2000.18.7.1
	haggard, ] haggard <sup>^</sup>	98.82.13
	woe-begone, ] woe-begone—	2000.18.7.1
35	Among ] Amo[n over g]g	98.4.10

## II

That boy the waters of Winander knew,  
 I see him launch his purloined skiff  
 Along the pathways of my lake,  
 His dark adventure take  
 Beyond the frown of scarp and cliff, 5  
 Skirting, diminished to a dot,  
 The stony islets with their fronts  
 Blind and indifferent in the sun,  
 Whitewashed by cormorants  
 Bask of crocodiles, the raw 10  
 Spatter of insult, grin of tooth  
 In twisted lip, wry memory of  
 His furtive broken troth.  
 And sculling still beyond my sight,  
 Beyond the haze, beyond my pen, 15  
 He finds the raucous sprawling town,  
 The spawning mud, the stagnant fen,  
 And turned indignantly away  
 From mews and stews and glittering towers,  
 Where mountebanks prefigured then 20  
 Frog-throated demagogues of ours.  
 I see him now return; and then  
 The dot becomes the image of  
 The rough-cut lineaments to brood  
 Backwatered in the tranquil cove, 25  
 Where brandished fists of cumulus  
 Are levelled in the water's glass;  
 He through the intervening years  
 Watches the scalloped ripples pass  
 Too deep for tears. 30

Remote from sea or any inland water,  
 A spare square youth of twenty-one,  
 Suitably haggard, woe-begone,  
 A landless youth who kept the paths  
 Among the squired and moated garths, 35  
 I courted Nature's heartless love, and sought her  
 Casual favours in my blundering speech.  
 Now, while the level sunset lingers out,  
 From twilight vlei across the bream-ringed reach,  
 I hear a jackal's quavering shout. 40  
 A fox's bark: how once I hearkened  
 And wondered how the coverts darkened  
 About the vixen's guarded haunt  
 Where I had never trespassed yet  
 With keeper, poacher, leveret, 45

36	Nature's ] nature's	98.82.13
	Nature's ] Na ture's	2000.18.7.2
	^	
	and ] a[n over m]d	2001.1.3.5
39	twilight ] tw[i over l]light	2002.41.5
	twilight ] [tw over illegible characters]i[l over r]ight	98.82.13
	twilight ] darkening	2000.18.7.1
41	hearkened ] harkened	98.82.13
43	vixen's ] v[i over o]xen's	98.82.13
	vixen's ] vi[x over c]en's	2000.18.7.1
44	had ] ha[d over s]	2002.41.5
	had ] has	2000.18.7.2
	trespassed ] trespas[s over a]ed	2000.18.7.1
46	enigmatic ] enigma[t over illegible character]ic	2002.41.5
47	wished ] wishe[d over e]	2000.18.7.1
48	hedge ] hed[g over d]e	2002.41.5
	hedge ] hedge,	2000.18.7.2
	^	
	lapwings ] [l over p]apwings	98.4.10
	cried ] crie[d over s]	RB Col 4
49	mystery ] m[y over u]stery	2000.18.7.1
51	Then ] Then,	RB Col 4, 2002.41.5, 98.82.13
	^	
52	leant ] stood	98.82.13
54	bones ] b[o over b]nes	2000.18.7.1
	bones ] bo[n over h]es	2001.1.3.5
55	of ] [o over i]f	RB Col 4
56	serried ] serr[i over illegible character]ed	2004.24.1
	the towns ] the <del>twons</del> towns	98.4.10
57	west, ] west	98.4.10, 98.82.13, 2000.18.7.1, RB Col 4, 2000.18.7.1
	^	
62	never spread ] nev[er inserted by hand][virgule inserted by hand]spread	98.4.10
67	those ] these	98.82.13
	could choose ] could <del>fixd</del> choose	2002.41.5
	could ] might	2000.18.7.1

And with their enigmatic taunt,  
Denying all I wished to see,  
Beyond the hedge the lapwings cried  
And beckoned to a mystery  
A few dark yards the other side. 50  
Then from my stand, astride, askance,  
I leant and watched from out the east  
The draggled fume that sagged and fleeced  
From raw bones of the chimney stack  
And spines of saw-toothed foundry roof, 55  
The serried terraces of the towns.  
From the west, behind my back,  
Celestial, menacing, aloof,  
A summer-mounting thunderhead  
Above the loved and lonely downs— 60  
And frowning from my borrowed stance  
I knew my outstretched reach could never spread  
To reconcile them both.

Dumbfounded, tongue-tied, loth  
To leave the questions hanging loose, 65  
Reluctantly I shrugged away, and turned my prow  
To those blue latitudes where one could choose  
An own untroubled anchorage,  
Through the slow cumulative years to find  
From solitude and placid page, 70  
His philosophic mind.



### III

The concrete stands across the gorge,  
Grey Roman curve from sky to boulders,  
And on its elephantine shoulders  
The overspill slides lazy down.

The tumult of the cataract  
The outspread profile shreds and stipples,  
In lacing skeins of shallow ripples  
Makes a grace of turbulence.

Leagues downstream the trammelled river  
Through the humming turbines surges,  
Trapped the elemental urges  
Vibrating into modes of power.

As through the bar of weir and rapid,  
Gliding through the silent shallows  
Nosing shade of reeds and sallows,  
The urgent fish squirm up to spawn,

He turns his back on towns and men,  
Through the throat of narrowing valley,  
Till the mood and moment tally  
In the bright apocalypse,

At a high embrasured window  
Takes the threads of every passion  
Interlacing in his fashion,  
Motion and tranquillity.

I took the level of tranquillity  
And dropped a plumb down wells of solitude:  
Staring for days across the plains of sea  
Where the flat sheen of satin veiled the monster's brood,  
Only to see, hands clenched on the white rail,  
In the white sun the white spout of whale,  
Ejaculation on the level phrase;  
Sparkles of flying-fish flashed into sight  
And like an aching image hung in haze,  
Plunged in the wordless depths again.  
Then, from that cleanly planed-off mountain wall  
To see the blocks and cubes of important men  
Diminished to a playboard by the height,  
The mountainous combers just a lazy scrawl.



27	plains ] planes	98.82.13
	of ] o[f <i>over</i> d]	2000.18.7.1
28	satin ] sa[t <i>over illegible character</i> ]in	2000.18.7.2
29	Only ] On[l <i>over</i> y]y	98.4.10
	Only ] On[l <i>over</i> k]y	2000.18.7.1
	rail, ] rail	2000.18.7.1
	^	
30	sun ] s[u <i>inserted by hand over</i> i]n	RB Col 4
	white spout ] [w <i>over</i> s]hite spout	2000.18.7.1
31	phrase; ] phrase.	98.82.13
32	flying-fish ] flying fish	RB Col 4, 98.4.10, 2002.41.5, 98.82.13, 2000.18.7.1, 2000. 17.2, 2001.1.3.5
	flashed ] flash[e <i>over</i> 4]d	2000.18.7.1
33	haze, ] haze	98.82.13
	^	
35	Then, from ] Then,from	2000.18.7.2
	^	
	wall ] wall,	98.82.13
	^	
36	blocks ] bloacks	2004.24.1
	of ] o[f <i>over</i> g <i>and</i> r]	2000.18.7.2
37	Diminished ] D[i <i>over</i> o]minished	RB Col 4, 2002.41.5
	Diminished ] D[i <i>over</i> I]minished	2000.18.7.2
	playboard ] play-board	98.82.13, 2000.18.7.1, 2001.1.3.5
38	mountainous ] mou[n <i>over</i> t]tainous	2000.18.7.1
	mountainous ] mountain[o <i>over</i> i]us	2002.41.5
	lazy ] l[a <i>over</i> z]zy	RB Col 4
39	Then, ] Then	RB Col 4
	^	
	clanking ] clanki[n <i>over</i> b]g	2000.18.7.1
	train ] train,	98.82.13
	^	
40	Across ] [A <i>over illegible character</i> ]cross	98.82.13
	plain, ] plain	98.82.13
	^	
45	And ] An[d <i>over</i> f]	98.4.10
46	active ] a[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ctive	98.82.13
	active ] restless	2000.18.7.1
47	At last, where	RB Col 4, 98.4.10, 98.82.13, 2000.18.7.1, 2000.18.7.2, 2001.1.3.5,
	2002.41.5: At last, // Where	2004.24.1
	seasons sprawl and drowse and ] seasons drowse and	98.4.10
	seasons ] seas[o <i>over</i> s]ns	2001.1.3.5
	sprawl and ] sprawl a[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]nd	98.82.13
	drowse ] dr[o <i>over</i> w]wse	2000.18.7.1
49	Beneath ] Under	98.4.10, 98.82.13
	wind ] wind, .	98.82.13
	^	

*Variant information continued on facing page*

Then, through the hours of clanking train  
 Across the daylong leagues of plain, 40  
 With fascination of the speed  
 The steppe revolved around its epicentre  
 In endless circling whorls of grey and bronze  
 Upwelling from the depths of scrub and weed,  
 And I, shy interloper, circumventer, 45  
 Spinning my active thoughts from dormant ones.  
 At last, where the level seasons sprawl and drowse and dream  
 Beneath the domed sky's ever shifting brightness,  
 Beneath the scythe of wind the grasses mown  
 In intercombing waves of tawny ripeness 50  
 On desert beaches indolently seem  
 To fall, and break, and pause, and follow on.  
 With his wide vision and my narrow one conjoint,  
 Let the lines intersect in counterpoint,  
 Till through the horizontal monotone 55  
 Upspurts at last the vertical flame, the theme.

- 50 of ] [o over i]f RB Col 4  
 ripeness ] ripeness, 98.82.13  
 ^
- 52 To ... on.] To fa[- *inserted by hand*]ll, and never break, a[- *inserted*  
*by hand*]nd follow after. 98.82.13  
 break, and pause, and follow ] break, and follow 98.4.10, 2000.18.7.1  
 pause ] [p over illegible character]ause 2004.24.1
- 53 With ] Wit[h over y] 98.82.13  
 vision ] v[i over s]sion 98.4.10  
 my ] m[y over t] 2004.24.1  
 narrow ] na[r over t]row ] 98.4.10
- 55 Till ] And 98.82.13
- 56 Upspurts 98.4.10: Unspurts RB Col 4, 98.82.13,  
 2000.18.7.1, 2000.18.7.2, 2002.41.5, 2004.24.198.4.10  
 Upspurts ] Un-spurts 2001.1.3.5  
 horizontal ] ho[r over illegible character]izontal 2002.41.5  
 at ] a[- *inserted by hand*]t 98.82.13

## LAKESIDE: IV

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col 4; NELM MS 98.4.10; NELM MS 98.82.13; NELM MS 2000.18.7.1; NELM MS 2000.18.7.2; NELM MS 2001.1.3.5; NELM MS 2002.41.5; NELM MS 2004.24.1.

**Text:** NELM MS 2004.24.1

### Variant Readings:

1	dawn ] dawn, ^	RB Col 4, 2001.1.3.5
2	startled ] idle	2000.18.7.1
3	of ] [o <i>over</i> i]f stabbed ] stabb[e <i>over</i> 4]d	RB Col 4 2000.18.7.1
4	The ] ∓ The of ] o[f <i>over</i> g] quietude. ] quietude:	2004.24.1 2000.18.7.1 98.82.13
5	arrowing ] arr[ow <i>inserted by hand over illegible characters</i> ]ing light, ] light ^	2004.24.1 98.82.13
7	priapan, ] priapan ^	98.82.13
10	and blur ] and[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]blur	RB Col 4
11	Leaving ] Lea[v <i>over</i> b]ing transfixed ] tr[a <i>inserted by hand</i> ]nsfixed	RB Col 4 2004.24.1
12	nape ] anape chill ] ch[i <i>over</i> u]ll	2000.18.7.2 2000.18.7.1
16	Slowed ] Sl[o <i>over</i> I]wed	2004.24.1
17	An ] And	2004.24.1
18	To ] T[o <i>over</i> i] blood ] b[l <i>over</i> o]ood	2004.24.1 2000.18.7.1
19	sober ] s[o <i>over</i> i]ber sober ] s[o <i>inserted by hand over</i> i]ber hour ] hour, ^	RB Col 4 2001.1.3.5 98.4.10, RB Col 4, 2002.41.5, 2000.18.7.1, 2000.18.7.2
21	and ] [a <i>over</i> q]nd	RB Col 4
22	jealous ] [j <i>over</i> h]jealous jealous ] [j <i>over</i> i]jealous of ] [o <i>over</i> i]f town, ] tow[n <i>over</i> m], town, ] town ^	2004.24.1 2002.41.5 98.4.10 2002.41.5 2000.18.7.1
23	along ] a long ^ spools, ] spools ^	2000.18.7.2 2000.18.7.1

#### IV

Against the pallid front of dawn  
They stormed across my startled mood,  
A screaming vee of flight that stabbed  
The diaphragm of quietude.

Wild geese arrowing to the light, 5  
With strident fanfare of their sound,  
Stiff rods of necks priapian,  
Urgent as sperm to feeding ground.

Passed in a flash of white and bronze,  
With whirr and blur of frantic quill, 10  
Leaving my upturned chin transfixed  
And nape a-creep with chill.

A mile, a minute, down they wheel  
Along the level reach of light,  
Their squadron fury chastened, and 15  
Slowed by the distance on the sight.

An easy frieze, they disappear  
To still the clamour of the blood,  
And in mid-morning's sober hour  
Shovel and squatter in the mud. 20

Withdraw to Rydal: only time and miles  
Beyond the jealous limits of the town,  
Fanned out along the tarmac spools,  
Can concentrate the glory and the dream.  
The vision focuses, the ardour cools, 25  
And in the vat of memory simmered down  
Accepts the mould that poetry reconciles.  
Withdraw to Rydal: there distribute stamps—  
The concise indices etched with agate point  
That limn and clinch 30  
Profile of princes, cowlick of führer,  
Crown and cartel diminished to an inch.  
From some dim corner of a wayside joint,  
Behind the bales of truck and paraffin lamps,  
The letters urgent as birds, flutter and stir 35  
And rise in exploding circles through the void;

24	Can ] Ca[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]n	98.82.13
26	simmered ] rendered	98.82.13, 2000.18.7.1
27	Accepts ] [A <i>over</i> S]cepts	RB Col 4
	Accepts ] A[c <i>over illegible character</i> ]cepts	2000.18.7.2
28	stamps— ] stamps,	98.4.10, RB Col 4, 2002.41.5, 98.82.13, 2000.18.7.1, 2000.18.7.2
29	conise ] con[i <i>over illegible character</i> ]se	2000.18.7.2
	etched ] e[t <i>inserted by hand over e</i> ]ched	98.4.10
	agate point ] agate[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]point	2002.41.5
30	clinch ] cli[n <i>over illegible character</i> ]ch	2000.18.7.2
31	cowlick ] cow-lick	98.82.13
	führer <i>ed</i> : fuhrer	2004.24.1
	führer ] fuhrer	98.4.10, 2002.41.5, RB Col 4, 98.82.13, 2000.18.7.1, 2000.18.7.2, 2001.1.3.5
32	Crown ] Cr[ow <i>over</i> wo]n	2004.24.1
	Crown ] Cr[ow <i>over illegible characters</i> ]n	98.82.13
	inch. ] inch;	98.82.13
35	urgent ] urge[n <i>over</i> t]t	2000.18.7.1
	stir ] stir,	2000.18.7.2
	^	
36	void ] [v <i>over</i> y]oid	98.4.10
38	overtures ] overtures,	98.4.10, 2002.41.5, 2000.18.7.1
	^	
	overtures ] o[v <i>over</i> b]ertures	2001.1.3.5
39	oceans ] o[c <i>over</i> v]eans	98.4.10
41	anticipation ] anti[c <i>over</i> v]ipation	98.4.10
42	Into ] [I <i>over</i> i]nto	98.82.13
	harmony ] ha[r <i>over</i> t]mony	2000.18.7.1
44	circumference: ] circumference;	98.4.10, RB Col 4, 2002.41.5, 2000.18.7.1, 2000.18.7.2, 2001.1.3.5
46	concentrated ] concentration[ <i>ed inserted by hand</i> ]	2001.1.3.5
	of ] ofv	RB Col 4
47	curve ] curve,	98.4.10, RB Col 4, 2002.41.5
	^	
48	music's ] music	98.4.10
	arithmetic ] arith[ <i>me inserted by hand over illegible characters</i> ]tic	98.82.13
49	span ] s[p <i>over</i> o]an	98.4.10

Franked with these agile miniatures,  
Our loves, our boasts, our timid overtures  
Cross continents and oceans wide deployed. 40  
At that still centre, every alert nerve  
Awaits anticipation, quick  
Into the perfect harmony to slip  
The thrilling point, the finite line, the extreme  
Reach of the circumference:  
As from the needle's tip 45  
The concentrated passion of a theme  
In lovely spreading curve  
Expands with music's strict arithmetic  
Into the span of unimagined silence.

## ENVOI

### Publication History:

TT: *Two Tone* 13 (2), June 1977. 5.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col 4; NELM MS 98.4.10; NELM MS 98.82.13; NELM MS 2000.18.7.1;  
NELM MS 2000.18.7.2 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.5 (except for a handwritten emendation to line  
26 of NELM MS 2001.1.3.5); NELM MS 2002.41.5; NELM MS 2004.24.1.

Text: NELM MS 2004.24.1

### Variant Readings:

Title: ENVOI // For my wife ] ENVOI // to “Lakeside”, a sequence of poems at Sebakwe and Ngesi // For my wife		TT
1	Together ] TTogether	RB Col 4
2	That ] Tha[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]t	98.82.13
4	dicords ] disc[o <i>over</i> p]rds	2000.18.7.2
	doubt ] do ubt	2002.41.5
	^	
7	slug ] slu[g <i>over</i> b]	RB Col 4
	self ] s[el <i>over</i> le]f	RB Col 4
10	spell-tied ] frozen	98.82.13
	spell ] s[pe <i>over</i> ep]ll	2000.18.7.2
11	jewelled ] [j <i>over</i> f]jewelled	RB Col 4
12	likkewaan ] leguaan	TT
13	kudu’s ] Kudu’s	TT
	kudu’s ] ku[d <i>over</i> s]u’s	98.82.13
	lordly ] lo[r <i>over</i> d]dly	2000.18.7.2
15	have ] [h <i>over</i> j]ave	2000.18.7.1
	in ] iḥ[in <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.4.10
16	Two ] TTwo	98.82.13
16-20	Two ... passion. ] <i>omitted</i>	2000.18.7.1
18	window pane’s ] window-pane’s	98.4.10, 2000.18.7.1, 2002.41.5
	pane’s ] pan[e <i>over</i> E8]’s	RB Col 4
19	Writhing ] Writ[hi <i>over</i> ing]ng	RB Col 4
22	jargon ] ja[r <i>over</i> t]gon	2000.18.7.1
	caprice ] capri[c <i>over</i> f]e	2000.18.7.2
23	crak of ] cracking	98.82.13
26	cantilever ] ca ntilever	2000.18.7.2
	^	
	cantilever ] ca[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ntilever	2001.1.3.5
30	cupped ] c[u <i>over</i> y]pped	2000.18.7.1

## ENVOI

### *For my wife*

Together at the silent point  
That throws its deep vibrations out  
To span the quadrant of the day,  
Elides the harsh discords of doubt,  
We stand and watch the quiet interplay. 5

Through variations of the sense,  
The slug, the slick, the self-composed,  
In music's perfect numbers linked  
For our delight all nature posed  
In spell-tied moment vivid and distinct. 10

The otter's velvet jewelled dive,  
The clumsy plunge of likkewaan,  
The kudu's lordly poise of head,  
The clownish greed of pelican:  
Odd circumstance we have in love regarded. 15

Two lizards fighting for a fly,  
Their pigmy crests a dragon's thunder  
The window pane's cold lists to flash on,  
Writhing and lithe: we wonder  
How frigid blood could urge so fierce a passion. 20

No need for words: we understand  
Beyond all jargon, all caprice,  
The crack of bud, the chafer's champ,  
The termite's rasp, the creak of trees,  
The minute sounds that make a voice of silence. 25

The cantilever of our love  
Hangs poised above the last abyss,  
Above the dizzy flood, the spume,  
We reach across the verge for this,  
Catch in cupped hands that perilous largesse. 30





# ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS

## PERSONAE

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 4 and 10 of NELM MS 98.82.12).

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.12

### Variant Readings:

4	your ] you[ <i>r inserted by hand over t</i> ]	98.82.12
	your ] yout	2000.18.1
10	come free ] come[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]free	98.82.12
	come free ] comefree	2000.18.1

## PERSONAE

Tom, Dick, Harry, John,

Four plain men:

Come together again.

Print your thumbs upon

The vision and the gleam

5

The ruin and the dream.

Come together and sup

Pick the fragments up:

John, Harry, Dick and Tom

Take us back where you come from.

10

## LOCUS

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.12

**Variant Readings:** *none.*

## LOCUS

You could not tell if four ways met or two ways crossed  
Or even if there were really ways at all,  
Or only bush-tracks trod by pig or ghost-

Grey fox or otter loitering to waterfall  
And sleeping pool for offal of snail or crab, 5  
Or goatfoot nimbling up the granite wall.

Moon enough there was to guess it by. Slab  
And scree lay prone and white in solitude.  
The muted flowers anonymous and drab

Smouldered in moments like a night-ape's mood 10  
In midnight foliage. Bruised by hoofs and heels  
The blood-flower spreads its sultry gypsyhood.

Fawn-foot or tyre-tread, grass between the wheels:  
The expectations that the years have queried,  
The hesitations that the night conceals 15

Meet at the crossways where despair is buried.

**GENIUS LOCI**

**Publication History:**

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 13, 1976-1977. 10.

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.12

**Variant Readings:**

8 walled ] [w *over illegible character*]alled  
24 introspections ] introspectives

98.82.12  
RP

## GENIUS LOCI

Moonlight filtering in like loneliness of snow  
Etched the serrated rim of krantz and boulder.  
As from a lumpy pallet, stirred from stony sleep,  
One may glance across a leaning shoulder  
Over the bed's edge at goings-on of ant or worm, 5  
A huge and lubbard shape leaned on a languid limb:  
Hobgoblin, satyr, troll, or simple ghost  
That pries its way through walled-up crevice, slim  
Enough to slip through history's narrow term,  
Heraldic beast or dragon-spawning maps 10  
Where legends hesitate and the facts collapse.

I've stripped my torso to the stone,  
Flensed it clean with rain and hail;  
Haunch and whitened shoulder-bone  
Lift the granite vertebrae 15  
Above the tarsus of the shale.  
Rags of pelt, the tattered tree  
Drapes in groins of the ravine  
Hides my only reticence.  
Rust of blood and green of mould 20  
The lichen streaks the fissured face  
Above the hidden burial place.  
Bare your sternum to the cold,  
Strip your introspections clean,  
From the marl of might-have-been 25  
Inert lumps and orts of thought,  
Mould the shape of your pretence.  
I keep no secrets: lay yours out—  
In the naked moonlight shown  
Confront the candour of the stone. 30





[A DARK AND MIDNIGHT SHAPE]

A dark and midnight shape comes shambling to the crossway,  
From the north, black with trees under the moon.  
The shy light touches with a fingering ray

A spear tip, etches dark lineaments hewn  
From intertwined grain of ironwood. Anklet 5  
And neck-ring glint with the incised rune.

Laden with all things necessary: wallet,  
Rolled sleeping-mat and little cooking pot,  
Horn with the solace of snuff, clasped amulet,

The duiker skin draped from its shoulder knot, 10  
Smoke-scented, comfort of night and day:  
So little needed, no needful thing forgot—

He pauses hesitating at the crossway.

**ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS I: TOM**

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 3 of NELM MS 98.82.12).

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.12

**Variant Readings:**

3	faceless ] facesless	98.82.12
	faceless ] facesless	2000.18.1
24	acquiescence ] acqu[i <i>over</i> e]escence	98.82.12

## TOM

I was bred from this earth,  
Not from one acre but from claimless thousands  
Where the lean beasts, driven by drought, threaded the faceless lands  
That cowered with dearth.  
We wandered, as I wander now, with need 5  
Of nothing except this year's bread  
And next year's seed.  
Out of the haze of time  
The myths, the legends, climb.  
Across the sprawling swamps, through walls of forest, 10  
We followed the herds, the wrinkled visages,  
The slow wise bulls, the venturesome weaner  
That smelt the far leagues greener;  
Migrant as butterflies  
Weave their frail undulations on the wind, 15  
Season by season  
Vacant of reason,  
Into blind maze of instinct far retiring.  
We never planted trees: trees grew around us,  
Time held its hand, year folded into year, 20  
Green burnished into bronze, whitened to harvest,  
The thin smoke drifted over the mealtime firing.  
The wheeling centuries found us  
The acquiescence that confessed  
The reassurance of tradition's tether; 25  
Talk in the sun, quartering through hunting weather,  
Frog-time burden of the endless altercation  
On rock-top conclaves where the elders sat,  
Wisdom and troth pent up at the quiet end  
In burial crevices the lost winds sigh in: 30  
No needless change, no fashion's deviation,  
Contented, with no question, that  
Our boyhood's world would be the world we die in.

**ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS I: [SPEAR IN AN OLD MAN'S HAND]**

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 14 of NELM MS 98.82.12).

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.12

**Variant Readings:**

1	hand ] han[d <i>over f</i> ]	98.82.12
14	Like ] <del>With</del> [Like <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.12
	Like ] With	2000.18.1

[SPEAR IN AN OLD MAN'S HAND]

- Spear in an old man's hand,  
The edges red with rust,  
The sandals scuff the dust,  
The chase, the skirmish, still pursued  
The queries posed in solitude 5  
Of the wind and the scent and the intricate slot in the sand.
- Pot with an old wife's thumb  
To smooth the curve and lip,  
Indent the ochre slip  
With nail or quill or thorn, 10  
The narrow patterns drawn  
With the care and the love and the innocent mode of the dumb.
- Song in a young girl's mouth,  
Like rainwash seeping  
Like groundpeas creeping 15  
Like a bruise on the finger  
Low notes that linger  
On the fatness and flavour and apricot warmth of the south.
- Drum under a young man's fist  
Thumps the ribs of the night 20  
Spatters the sparks of the light,  
The sweat and the lust  
Stamps the receiving dust  
Slammed down to the flat of the earth, the sand and the flints and the schist.

## ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS II: [MUFFLE OF HOOF-BEATS]

### Publication History:

TT: *Two Tone* (12), September 1976. 10-11.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1 (except for handwritten emendations to line 10 of NELM MS 98.82.12).

Text: NELM MS 98.82.12

### Variant Readings:

Title:	“MUFFLE OF HOOF-BEATS” TT: <i>none</i>	98.82.12
1	crossing ] cross[ing <i>over</i> way]	98.82.12
9	curlicues TT: curlecues	98.82.12
	curlicues ] curlecues	2000.18.1
10	dead ] deadd	98.82.12
	dead ] deadd[d <i>over</i> e]	2000.18.1
12	gaiety ] [g <i>over illegible character</i> ]aiety	98.82.12

## [MUFFLE OF HOOF-BEATS]

Muffle of hoof-beats comes to the dark crossing,  
Mute sand and grating gravel quietly  
Spurned by the mincing fetlocks; the high mane tossing

Throws arrogant nonchalance across the sky.  
Startling the cringing dark, the ringing strike 5  
Of rifle butt on stirrup, iron to underlie

Suave negligence that mitigates the buff  
Of drab and khaki: helmet chain and spike,  
The corded curlicues on collar and cuff

All the sad elegance of a dead decade, 10  
The sunburnt merriment of a pose deceased  
In serious gaiety of gilt and braid.

Heraldic in silhouette against the east,  
The burnished steel, the polished brass embossing  
Haughty insignia of coronet and beast, 15

Halts in impatience at the doubtful crossing.



## ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS II: DICK

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 30 and 36 of NELM MS 98.82.12).

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.12

### Variant Readings:

7	page ] pag[e <i>over</i> g]	98.82.12
11	silver-chandeliered <i>ed:</i> silver-chandaliered	98.82.12
19	maze ] [m <i>over illegible character</i> ]aze	98.82.12
20	damascene <i>ed:</i> damescene	98.82.12
30	me, ] me[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.12
	me, ] me	2000.18.1
	^	
36	pinēs ] pi[n <i>inserted by hand over</i> b]es	98.82.12
	pinēs ] pibes	2000.18.1
41	hedge ] hed[g <i>over</i> h]e	98.82.12
42	seem ] see[m <i>over</i> ,]	98.82.12

## DICK

I am the sojourner, the conqueror.  
Leamington made me, Rugby schooled me,  
History bemused and fooled me,  
The armies of unalterable law  
Drilled me and clamped me in my studied poses. 5  
The lancet windows of my father's parsonage  
Looked up with aquiline eyebrows from the page  
Above the prim bib and apron of the lawn  
To the blown opulence of cabbage roses.  
Under the comfortable light, 10  
The candles, silver-chandeliered,  
The grave conventions shied and veered:  
The solemn port passed to the left  
The conversations to the right,  
Serene, assured, ironically deft. 15  
By boyish fancies drawn  
On daydream holidays  
I sculled my boat along the loitering Leam,  
Where hawthorn petals drifted backward through the maze  
Of pollened damascene, as if the stream 20  
Meant to creep back along its navel string  
To find the hidden spring,  
Where above elm and holm the low ridge stands  
Between the Avon and the Ouse  
And holds our midmost history in its hands. 25  
How could I choose  
When custom and convention had enrolled me,  
But think this reassurance of the centuries  
Could shape the map of unimagined lands,  
And, as the old wives told me, 30  
The wan gold of the winter aconite  
Sprang from the blood beneath the Roman heel,  
I dreamt my footprints might  
Print the imperial peace with point of steel  
On some blank folio Clio would never turn. 35  
I planted trees, pines black and taciturn  
Eucalypts lolling their windy heads together  
In aloof parliament of colloquy,  
Leaves in the breeze that curled the sibilants round a narrow tongue  
In the bright alien weather, 40  
To hedge the acres where my thoughts belong,  
Until the paradoxes only seem  
The indolent adagio of the dream.

**ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS II: [FROTH OF A YOUNG MAN'S DREAM]**

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.12

**Variant Readings:**

3	Spindriftig ] Sp[ <i>i over p</i> ]ndriftig	98.82.12
5	burgle ] burg[ <i>le inserted by hand over el</i> ]	98.82.12
	burgle ] burg[ <i>le inserted by hand over el</i> ]	2000.18.1

[FROTH OF A YOUNG MAN'S DREAM]

Froth of a young man's dream Blowing in every weather Spindrift on the hours When the bright blades foregather To burgle all the bowers Of beauty's rose and cream.	5
Lilt of a young man's song, The gay uplifted tenor To fill the sprawling acres To thrill the breezes' tremor To overbrim the beakers Of daybreak with its tongue.	10
Pride of a young man's thews, To try the fair adventure To vault the quickset hedges To challenge law and censure To trespass on the verges Of danger as I choose.	15
Sword in a young man's grip, To open every oyster Within the shoals of morning, And when the shadows wester To stake the red rewarding Perhaps on Eldorado, perhaps on Serendip.	20

## ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS III: [TWO GLEAMING WHEELS COME WESTWARD]

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### **Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 5 of NELM MS 98.82.12).

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.12

### **Variant Readings:**

2	harnessed ] ha[r <i>over illegible character</i> ]nessed	98.82.12
	neuter, ] neut[e[r <i>over</i> ,]	98.82.12
4	Coasting ] C[o <i>over</i> p]asting	98.82.12
	asphalt ] [a <i>over</i> s]spha[l <i>over</i> n]t	98.82.12
5	Or ] O[r <i>inserted by hand</i> <i>over</i> t]	98.82.12
	Or ] Ot	2000.18.1
11	point ] p[o <i>over</i> i]int	98.82.12
12	pantomime ] pant[o <i>over</i> i]mime	98.82.12

[TWO GLEAMING WHEELS COME WESTWARD]

Two gleaming wheels come westward to the crossroad:  
The chromium-harnessed mount, inert and neuter,  
Twenty miles covered since the last cock pheasant crowed,

Coasting down the asphalt to the future  
Or threading the silent past down sandy byways, 5  
Tying two worlds with a half-desperate suture,

He comes, slick poetaster from the alleyways;  
Coin in the poke to jingle out the rhyme  
That links two jarring lines in paraphrase.

Wristwatch as amulet to prink the dark with time, 10  
Smooth tailored shoes to point his jaunty mode—  
He, the third actor in the pantomime

Leans on his bike at the expectant crossroad.

## ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS III: HARRY

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 28 in NELM MS 98.82.12).

### Text: NELM MS 98.82.12

**Note:** Opposite lines 36-37 in NELM MS 98.82.12 Brettell wrote: “no-go area” indicating his inability to complete the poem and subsequently the collection.

### Variant Readings:

7	I've ] I[ <i>over</i> 8]ve	98.82.12
12	and sank ] and <del>sak-it</del> sank	98.82.12
14	swirling ] swirlingb	98.82.12
19	sycophants ] sychophants	98.82.12
28	every ] ev[ <i>e inserted by hand</i> ]ry	98.82.12
	every ] evry	2000.18.1
32	Waltz ] [Wal <i>over</i> wla]ltz	98.82.12
	marmalade ] m[ar <i>over</i> ra]malade	98.82.12
34	bean ] bea[n <i>over</i> f]	98.82.12
40	switchplate ] swit[c <i>over</i> ¾]hplate	98.82.12

## HARRY

Ruvavi, chameleon, one eye swivelled forward and one back, Treading my cautious way from here to there, With coiled-spring tongue to snap up every trifle, Take colour from each thing I sprawl upon. Into the snug compromise I stifle	5
The aching hole where love curls in its blanket. I've tasted enough of the new to know the lack Of sadza-substance in it; and I stare In Flat-land where the harsh flares shone On figures cut in tin, jiggle and nudge To show a thin bright edge.	10
I felt the cold unease, and sank it With splash of laughter in the muddy shoals In swirling pools of skirts and fancy pants. The potsherds of the shattered clans	15
Pile in the alleys with the corrupted cans, The idle stones lie in the six-lined holes, The nine-mens-morris is choked up with dust. My past is shouldered out by sycophants Cajoling to betray the ancient trust.	20
Not now for me the quiet shearing of the sod Collapsing like a wave without a voice Beneath the silent foam of toppled flowers. But, elate on a high lorry with its clanking load, Shearing a bow-wave through the frothing crowds, Or in the casual factories, where decibel Of streaming jazz and pop and whistling fans Makes dream a mock and every meaning throttles Makes talk a scream and thought impossible, Stick labels on the circulating cans Or tops on bottles.	25 30
Waltz of the marmalade Cans and the jamtins Baked bean and bullybeef Circling in widdershins	35
Swung on the disc, the Bottles jig in pirouette, Tomato sauce and lemonade	
Toe on the pedal and Fingers on the switchplate	40



## ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS IV: [CAR]

### Publication History:

TT: *Two Tone* (12), September 1976. 11.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.12 = NELM MS 2000.18.1 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 8 in NELM MS 98.82.12).

### Text: NELM MS 98.82.12

**Note:** At the bottom of the page in NELM MS 98.82.12 Brettell wrote: “(cul-de-sac, stocking-street- // pis aller (French or English pronunciation - // preferably the English)”.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	CAR TT: <i>none</i>	98.82.12
1	tracks ] tracks, ^	TT
2	eyes ] eyes, ^	TT
	bullfrog ] bullfro[g <i>inserted by hand over f</i> ]	98.82.12
8	vibrations ] v[i <i>inserted by hand over o</i> ]brations	98.82.12
	vibrations ] vobrations	2000.18.1
11	lictor’s ] victor’s	TT

[CAR]

With sly susurrus on the smothered tracks  
With swordfish snout and staring bullfrog eyes  
With gleam of plate and subtle sheen of wax,

The automobile glides along the policies.  
Like phosphorescence on a dolphin's fin  
The moonlight strokes its lines, and shies

5

Along its flanks in lithe and liquid skin.  
The wall of plate in soft vibrations shakes,  
Prisons its pale occupant within.

Insignia on the nose, it blandly takes  
Antique device of lion, crown, or lictor's axe;  
Reeling up its far-flung spool of light, it brakes

10

Plumb in the centre of the crossing tracks.



**...AND UNDERFOOT  
SEPTEMBER**



## I. PROEM

## SPRING IN THE AIR

### Publication History:

**ZPR:** *The Zimbabwe Poetry Review* (15), 1980. 3.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 216.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

7	Débâcle ] [Débâcle <i>accents inserted by hand</i> ]	98.4.5
	Débâcle ] Debacle	ZPR, 98.82.18
8	greedy ] greed[y <i>over t</i> ]	98.4.5
9	boyhood ] boyh[o <i>over p</i> ]o[d <i>over o</i> ]	98.82.18
11	gaslight ] gaslights	ZPR, 98.82.18
	suburbs: ] suburbs;	SGS
12	grimed ] g[r <i>over t</i> ]imed	98.82.18
13	them and ] them a[n <i>over illegible character</i> ]d	98.82.18
18	burst ] burst, ^	ZPR, 98.82.18

## SPRING IN THE AIR

Spring in the air, and underfoot September,  
The dead leaves shoved off by the surge of sap,  
Fire-red and orange, wind-enkindled embers,  
Before the urgent gust tatter and flap

Dry and effete, shouldered aside, forgotten  
The summer's glory and the autumn's splendour,  
Débâcle of the more than careless spender  
To feed the greedy microbes, mouldy, rotten.

5

And in my mind, the trees loved by my boyhood,  
Damp rags of leaves plastered on the pavements  
Under the gaslight of the discreet suburbs:  
Sycamore and plane, soot-grimed enslavements

10

For them and me in flagstones and asphalt; both decay  
And consummation, last gifts to slip in  
The Christmas memories of autumn shufflings,  
The sweetness of dry nut and withered pippin.

15

For these with roots can reach down to the water,  
Past circumstance of dust and stone to burst  
Week after leaf-fall, with their urgent thirst  
In shout of gold and rose in every quarter.

20

Last coin to squander, token to remember:  
Spring in the air and in my heart September.



## MOON

### Publication History:

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 216-217.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 43.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 21 of RB Col 5).

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

2	rising ] r[i over s]sing	98.4.5
3	weeks' ] weeks[' <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.4.5
	weeks' ] weeks	SP, 98.82.18
7	a timid ] the timid	SP, 98.82.18
8	of ] [o over i]f	98.4.5
9	Pathetic ] Pathe[t over r]ic	98.82.18
11	sickle ] sic[k over j]	98.4.5, 98.82.18
16	moment ] mome[n over t]t	98.4.5
18	purple ] p[u over <i>illegible character</i> ]rple	98.82.18
	purple ] purp[l <i>inserted by hand over k</i> ]e	98.4.5
20	galloping ] gallopi[n over j]g	98.4.5
	colts, ] colts	SP
	^	
21	Take ] Tek	98.82.18
	Take ] T[a <i>inserted by hand over e</i> ]k[e <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	RB Col 5
	Take ] To	SP

## MOON

At dawn, I saw the old moon in the east,  
Thin as a tendril in the rising light,  
Last gesture of the tenuous four-weeks' lease  
Foreclosed today: shy cenobite

Gracing the rule that spells its own extinction, 5  
Soon to be doused by radiance that it borrows,  
Turns with a timid shrug of resignation  
From promise of the bright tomorrows.

Pathetic somehow: emaciated age  
Clasping the vestige of its slender youth: 10  
That was a honed-edged sickle, this a shard,  
The last sad remnant of discarded truth.

Vicarious brilliance soon to be superseded  
By the real, the lusty sun. In expectation,  
The inexorable globe rolls down, the light upsurges, 15  
And in the moment of annunciation,

The withered shred shrinks faint and vanishes.  
Then, from the purple ambush of the clouds,  
Gun-toting gangs of wild dishevelled light  
Come galloping like a string of ragged colts, 20  
Take the surrendered pastures of the night.

## ARSON

### Publication History:

SGS: *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 217-218.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5.

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

Title:	ARSON ] [A RSON <i>space between A and R is deleted</i> ]	98.4.5
	^	
1	black ] b[l <i>over</i> ],jack	98.82.18
3	wisteria ] w[i <i>over</i> s]ste[a <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ria	98.4.5
5	armpit ] armpits	SGS
8	muted ] mut[e <i>over</i> 4]d	98.4.5
9	fins ] fin[s <i>inserted by hand over</i> d]	98.82.18
10	And ] A[n <i>over</i> b]d	98.4.5
	And ] [A <i>over</i> a]nd	98.82.18
10	sworded ] sw[o <i>over</i> i]rded	98.82.18
16	blackened ] blacke[n <i>over</i> d]ed	98.4.5
24	Portly ] [P <i>over</i> p]ortly	98.4.5
25	plaster ] pla[s <i>over illegible character</i> ]ter	98.4.5
37	Vergil ] Ve[i <i>inserted by hand</i> ]rgil	98.4.5
	Vergil ] [V <i>over</i> N]ergil	98.82.18
	Vergil ] Virgil	SGS
38	towers ] t[ow <i>over illegible characters</i> ]ers	98.82.18
39	theirs ] the[ir <i>over illegible characters</i> ]s	98.82.18
Footnote:	Journey From Obscurity <i>ed</i> : Voyage from Obscurity	<i>refer to notes on this poem</i>
		98.4.5
	Journey From Obscurity ] Voyage from Obscurity	SGS, 98.82.18

## ARSON

Before the black still fuming ruin  
The molten panes dripping hot icicles,  
The scorched wisteria draping  
Forlorn festoon of purple in the morning,  
We stand, guns useless under the armpit; 5  
Like mimic shots, the msasa pods split and burst,

Startling the green light seeping through the pines.  
The garden brook runs on its muted murmur,  
The gold fins wink—like Tennyson’s—in the concrete pond;  
And unperturbed amid the sworded iris, 10  
The fatuous plaster gnome  
Still trails his useless angle in the water,  
Lay figure of a tragedy unrehearsed  
Now in the chill pool of epilogue immersed.

And did they stand, the angry legionaries, 15  
Before some blackened steading outside Uricon,  
The slim pilasters shattered, the cracked arch  
Dropped in the scorched gullet of the hypocaust,  
And by the marble font  
A bronze nymph smiled her image in the fountain— 20  
Signifer and centurion with spears reversed  
When the barbarian had done his worst?

Naiad or gnome: which can we comprehend—  
Portly or slender, both reduced by time,  
The painted plaster flaking, verdigris 25  
Dimming the slim profile of the dream;  
The smouldering upholstery  
The twisted springs betray the snug evasions,  
The splintered glasses emptied of their thirst,  
Fond projects by reality dispersed. 30

Uriconium: where the young Wilfred Owen,\*  
With all the gravity of pedantic youth  
Pried curiously beneath the ash of time,  
His five-foot shadow spearing to the verge 35  
Of his more bloody war;  
Or, in a same aureate interlude,  
Vergil gazed pondering a more fabled ruin,  
Tall Troy’s towers toppled, such easy hopes we nursed:  
But not, like theirs, in noble numbers versed.

\* *Journey From Obscurity*: Harold Owen.



II

TRIUMVIRATE OF SILVER

*fuertque cinisculus arens*  
*minimi mensura pugilli*  
PRUDENTIUS

these few dry ashes are just  
a small handful in measure.

**TRIUMVIRATE OF SILVER**

**Publication History:**

**ZPR:** *The Zimbabwe Poetry Review* (15), 1980. 28.

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 220.

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.5

**Variant Readings:**

1	to Rome ] from Rome	98.82.18, ZPR
3	Each ] E[ac over illegible characters]h	98.4.5
6	stubborn ] st[u over i]bborn	98.82.18
7	Beneath the ] Beneath of the	98.82.18, ZPR
8	can in part ] can part	98.82.18, ZPR
9	Empire's ] empire's	98.82.18, ZPR
22	curse ] c[u over i]rse	98.82.18
23	stormtime, ] storm time	98.82.18, ZPR
	^ ^	

## TRIUMVIRATE OF SILVER

Three poplars on the road to Rome  
In the dry wind loll their silvern heads together,  
Each keeping stance, but ever alert to alter  
Shimmer of leaf in the shifting weather.

Slim lusty growers, quicker to decay 5  
Than oak or myrtle or the stubborn olive;  
Beneath the leafmould of the sifted years  
Our curiosity can in part re-live

Their casual doings in the Empire's lapse:  
Kingdoms collapsing inwards, elegant villas 10  
Deserted to the stealth of ant and adder,  
Brigand and sniper round the broken pillars.

All three assenting to the coin they borrow,  
The bribe of immortality to decline;  
Satisfied with today, fob off tomorrow, 15  
Content to plant a gourd but not a vine.

Ausonius, Claudian, Prudentius,  
White slender ghosts above the scurrying dust,  
Hearing beyond the hills the alien thunder,  
And from the lashing of the gust, 20

To shrug your foliage and recover,  
With no reaction but an urbane curse:  
Can we, in later stormtime, rediscover  
The tarnished silver leaflets of their verse?



## AUSONIUS

### Publication History:

SGS: *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 221.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 9 and 16 of NELM MS 98.82.18 and RB Col 5).

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

1	poetaster ] poeta[s <i>over</i> t]ter	98.82.18
	sergeant ] [s <i>over</i> r]ergeant	98.82.18
3	hexameters. SGS: hexameters,	98.4.5
	hexameters. ] hexameters,	98.82.18
7	attentive ] attent[i <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ve	98.4.5
9	of ] o[f <i>over</i> g]	98.82.18
	obsequious ] obsequesious	98.82.18
	obsequious ] obsequesious	2002.41.7
10	benignant ] ben[i <i>over</i> g]gnant	98.82.18
11	sycophants' ] sychophants'	98.4.5
	sycophants' ] sychophants'	98.82.18
13	time, ] time ^	98.82.18
14	toga ] tog[a <i>over</i> e]	98.4.5
16	bourgeois ] bourgeo[i <i>inserted by hand over</i> u]s	98.4.5, 98.82.18
	bourgeois ] bourgeois	2002.41.7

## AUSONIUS

*310-395 AD*

Ausonius, bland poetaster, sergeant of affairs,  
Through almost the whole fourth century lived and scribbled  
His reams of scholarly hexameters.  
Bland and indifferent, dignified and ribald,

He strolled his way from lecture room to senate, 5  
Noting the elegant trivia of his caste,  
Chat with the scribe, the attentive steward,  
Could turn a verse on any postulate.

Fond of his wife, obsequious to his sires,  
Trimmer of policies, benignant to consign 10  
With polished verse of thanks for sycophants'  
Barrel of oysters, amphorae of wine.

Through colonnades of time, I see him go,  
With twitch of toga, shrug of urbane pose,  
Adroitly dodging all the horned dilemmas, 15  
The complete bourgeois of Bordeaux.



## CLAUDIAN

*Flor. c. 400 AD*

Claudian, with slim Egyptian grace,  
Dropping with cat-foot on the right place,  
With gust of fashion trimmed and veered,  
Poeticised and disappeared,  
Following the splintered ranks 5  
Of generals and mountebanks,  
Into the dark fifth-century limbo.  
There he stood with arms akimbo,  
Pouring oil of panegyric  
Laced with piquant sauce satiric 10  
On menace of the lapping tide.  
He might have writ—impossible to decide—  
That lovely Eve of Venustide,  
First hinting from his alien shores  
The strumming of the troubadours; 15  
When, as for me, the spring for him  
Asserts its ancient paradigm  
Of lust in goat and sport of kid,  
Hoofprint of capering faun amid  
The shimmer of the breaking cover. 20  
Some bloody discord rolled him over,  
Tossed his last distich to the skies,  
His rotund measures and his cheerful lies.  
He fell before the assegais.

## PRUDENTIUS

### Publication History:

SGS: *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 223.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 21 of NELM MS 98.82.18).

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

3	moralist ] [m over l]oralist	98.82.18
8	peristyle ] per[i over o]style	98.4.5
9	shy ] s[h over illegible character]y	98.82.18
	Penates, SGS: penates,	98.4.5
	Penates, ] penates	98.82.18
	^	
10	outside, ] outside	98.82.18
	^	
12	clichéd ] clich[é accent inserted by hand]d	98.4.5, 98.82.18
13	Luxury ] [L inserted by hand]uxury	98.82.18
17	cherubs ] c[h over g]erubs	98.4.5
18	vine ] vine?	98.82.18
	^	
19	Or ] [O over o]r	98.82.18
	dimpled ] dimple[d over illegible character]	98.82.18
	ivy? ] ivy—	98.82.18
20	oaten ] [oa inserted by hand above oa which is typed over illegible characters]aten	98.4.5
		98.4.5
21	stereotype ] steri[e inserted by hand]otype	98.82.18
	stereotype ] s[t over illegible character]eri[e inserted by hand]otype	98.82.18
	stereotype ] steriotype	RB Col 5
22	consequence ] cons[e over illegible character]quence	98.82.18
24	slave's ] s[la over al]ve's	98.82.18

## PRUDENTIUS

*348-410 AD*

One foot in Eden, one in the Sabine farm,  
Safe, more or less, in his Iberian hills,  
Grave lawyer, bookish sage, suave moralist,  
He paused, like Janus, at his century's porch,  
Choosing between the steady lamp, the wind-flared torch. 5

Deceiving calm within his well-kept library  
Stretched on the tension of a tumbling world,  
And as the dawn steals through the peristyle,  
Christ of the cock-crow dumbs the shy Penates,  
And outside, Pan slinks timid to the trees. 10

Dressed vice and virtue in the accustomed robes,  
The clichéd couples: Patience stands calmly by  
While Anger rends itself; Luxury  
With perfumed curls, slant eyes and languid lisp,  
Ogles Austerity. The worn themes neatly click 15  
In the strait limits of his rhetoric.

Putti or cherubs: did it matter much  
Which elvish eyes peered through the clustering vine  
Or squirmed their dimpled bottoms through the ivy?  
Filling with antique squeak of oaten pipe 20  
The chill hiatus with a stereotype.

But never glimpsed the urgent consequence,  
The coat turned inside-out, the ranks reversed:  
The slave's son taking the imperial purple,  
New order from the East, the nameless underling 25  
Goes to seek asses, and comes back a king.



III

HEIRS TO THE KINGDOM



## AGRIPPA

### Publication History:

SGS: *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 225.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5.

Text: NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

1	your ] y[o <i>over</i> i]ur	98.82.18
3	flame ] [f <i>over</i> g]lame	98.82.18
8	damascene ] damescene	98.82.18
	days, ] days ^	98.82.18
9	When ] Wh[e <i>over</i> r]n	98.4.5
13	towers ] t[ow <i>over</i> wo]ers	98.4.5
14	fables ] fab[l <i>over</i> b]es	98.4.5
18	briar ] b[r <i>inserted by hand</i> ]iar	98.82.18
26	begets ] beg[e <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ts	98.4.5

## AGRIPPA

### *Tobacco Boss-boy*

What curious fancy gave your name—  
Your lineaments in bronze relief  
Highlighted by the furnace flame,  
Fixing the fragrance of the leaf?

You rake the ash and stoke the log, 5  
And see within the scripted blaze  
White-eyed as flamen, demagogue,  
The firelight's damascene of days,

When some forgot conquistador 10  
Begot your lineaments on the slave  
—The nostril curved as falcon's claw  
Lipline saturnine and grave—

Who built his walls and stacked his towers  
With rubble turned to fables since,  
Confounding surmises of ours 15  
With mystery that robes a prince.

The incense of your finished task,  
In whim of briar and cherrywood,  
Curls round your cold impassive mask  
To mock my ruminating mood. 20

See in the pattern of your smoke,  
When all the frantic passions cool,  
The franchise of a humble folk  
Plant you at last in the curule:

Assume the pride of your praenomen, 25  
As Africa begets her sons,  
The stoop of buzzard, augur's omen,  
Perpetuate in bronze.

## PETTY THIEF

### Publication History:

SGS: *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 226.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5.

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

2	of ] o[f <i>over</i> g]	98.4.5
9	avarice ] avari[c <i>over</i> v]e	98.82.18
16	naked ] [n <i>over</i> h]aked	98.82.18
17	To ] T[o <i>over</i> p]	98.82.18
27	Barabbas ] [B <i>over</i> b]arabbas	98.4.5
	upon ] upo[n <i>over</i> j]	98.82.18

## PETTY THIEF

In link-light and lamp-light on the dark verandah,  
Hedged in with glint of gun and edge of axe  
And faces crimson in the dark relief,  
You wait the tramp of boots, the clink  
Of handcuffs. Witness of your gimcrack spoil, 5  
Trinkets of glass, a broken shirt-link,  
Toe-gaping shoes, a tattered pair of slacks,  
A gaudy tie, an opened tin of beef—  
The prick of hunger or of avarice—  
Spread round you on the flagstones, coil 10  
Of the law to noose you at the last.

They'll take you by the scruff, to stand you dumb  
Before the emblazoned scutcheon of the law,  
The gown, the wig, the rod of the old caste, 15  
The passionless bowels and blindfolded head,  
She with the scales to weigh you naked there,  
To penter up your pilfering bill and claw  
Caged in the grille of iron, where,  
Drab magpie, you will at least be fed.

But expect no angel to unloose your shackles 20  
Between the snoring sentries, nor the iron doors  
The bolts in miracle withdrawn  
Swing back in silence to the draught of dawn;  
Only, prowling the foetid beats,  
The snarling whelps of riot raise their hackles, 25  
Smash the bastilles of concrete  
And let Barabbas loose upon the streets.

## THE BIRDS

### Publication History:

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 227.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 18 of NELM MS 98.82.18).

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

	Dedication: Nyamokondo ] Nyamokon[d <i>inserted by hand over</i> o][o <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.82.18
4	fancy ] [f <i>over</i> d]ancy	98.4.5
6	too ] t[o <i>over</i> i]o	98.4.5
12	curlicue ] curlecue [curlicue <i>inserted by hand in the margin</i> ] curlicue ] curlecue	98.4.5 98.82.18
18	unmurmuring ] unmurmuring ] unmurmuring ] unmurmuring ]	98.82.18 RB Col 5

## THE BIRDS

*For Judith Moyo  
who wrote a poem on Nyamakondo,  
river of the kingfishers*

With a shy tentative grace, you lift the lid  
Of your Pandora's box; with point of pen  
Splitting the brittle skin of chrysalid,  
Your fancy flutters through the library windows:  
    Come back, come back, chatters the guinea-hen. 5

Is it too late to pin the wistful dream,  
Inchoate, unapprehended, back beyond  
The formal limits of your borrowed theme,  
The innocent pleasures of your rustic home?  
    Too late, too late, the mourning doves respond. 10

You see the washing-pool beneath the shallows,  
The ladle with chevron and curlicue engraven,  
The shriek and splash of children in the shallows,  
The slap of laundry on the polished stones.  
    Hark, hark, says the cautious raven. 15

You come too late: the fashions veer and turn,  
The alerted greeds not now content to choose  
The girls un murmuring at the daily quern  
The old men rapt on intricate basketry  
The slow ploughs turning up their heritage: 20  
    Whose, whose, whose, ask the spreus.

The kingfishers have no voice to speak of,  
Just a thin twitter; but keep your fancies still,  
Trying nostalgic song with that dumb love  
Within the trammels of a foreign speech. 25

    Going home, home, home, booms the hornbill.

## SCHOOLGIRLS

### Publication History:

SGS: *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 228.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5.

Text: NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: “Othello” ] “Othell[o over 0]”	98.82.18
1 this is what ] this what	98.4.5
6 relief ] rel[ief over illegible characters]	98.82.18
7 With ] Wit[h over y]	98.82.18
10 tightened ] tautened	98.82.18
11 of ] [o over p]f	98.4.5
14 encausticised ] encau[s over t]ticised	98.4.5

## SCHOOLGIRLS

### *Reaction to "Othello"*

And can it be that this is what it comes to?  
All our tall passions with a giggle meted,  
The Moor's titanic anguish from a mere gland secreted,  
The nameless word a snook you put your thumbs to?

You slant the plot with your droll paradox, 5  
Ripple of scorn that brings a chill relief,  
With devastating commonsense that mocks  
The flimsy witness of a handkerchief.

Take your world lightly, all you shrill Emilias: 10  
Slacken the over-tightened nerve with dafter  
Philosophy of solecism, nor witless pause  
To trade your maidenhead to monarchy;  
Smudge the slip carelessly, until we see  
The tragic design encausticised in laughter.



## HUNCHBACK

### Publication History:

SGS: *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 228-229.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5.

Text: NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: 0-level ] [0 <i>over</i> )]-level	98.4.5
19 Gobbo ] [G <i>over</i> g]obbo	98.4.5
and lance ] and[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]Llance	98.4.5
21 master ] master, ^	SGS
28 applause ] appl[au <i>over</i> ua]se	98.4.5
Snout ] S[n <i>over</i> h]out	98.82.18
35 penny-a-time ] penny-a -time ^	98.82.18
36 Where ] Whe[r <i>over</i> n]e	98.82.18
37 fill, ] f[i <i>over illegible character</i> ]ll ^	98.82.18

## HUNCHBACK

*"A Midsummer Night's Dream" for 0-level*

I see from the register his name is Gumbo:  
Suits him, I think: lop-sided scapulas, Punchinello's hump,  
Butt of his fellows, stalking-horse of time.  
Over his page his heavy shoulders slump  
And almost like bruises his perceptions knock 5  
Against the edge of alien tongue and rhyme.  
He sits there glowering at his untouched scrip.

Then, of a sudden, a dredged-up recollection  
Illumes the lubbard visage with a grin,  
And fused with spark of some remembered quip  
He scribbles furiously against the clock. 10

What fingering ray lit up the dark recesses?  
Gleam that evades our civil condescension:  
Does he, across the centuries, smell the reek  
Civet and garlic in the gaudy dresses, 15  
Grandee and prentice crackling with applause  
For tumbling pun, the lewd and loutish glance,  
The pounded measures of the bergomask?

Gumbo and Gobbo, Dogberry and Lance,  
Cocking their heyday snook against the humdrum week: 20  
Ban, ban, Caliban, with his new master the new man:  
Go back to the earth for the good things you ask,  
The snug enticements of the hut,  
Three logs smouldering nose to nose  
The fluttering flames beneath the pot 25  
The firelight's caricature of shadow-shows.  
Infuse your pleasures while you can,  
With cue from Quince, applause from Snout  
For Puck's hobgoblin knockabout,  
The three-legged jest that from her bum 30  
Topples the beldame on the floor  
And sets the groundlings in a roar,  
The apprehension whence will come  
The last enfranchise of that commonweal,  
The penny-a-time uncensored show 35  
Where Falstaff cracks with Prospero,  
Where Snug, the slow of study, roars his fill,  
And glorious Bottom rolls in asphodel.

## GORSE

### Publication History:

SGS: *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 230.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

5	intruder ] instruder	98.4.5
10	favour ] <del>fashion</del> [favour <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.4.5
13	airs ] ai[r <i>inserted by hand over t</i> ]s	98.4.5
15	our ] [o <i>over i</i> ]ur	98.82.18
24	Waiting, perhaps, ] Waiting perhaps ^          ^	98.82.18

## GORSE

The pinch of seed brought by a stranger—  
Will it withstand where the long droughts harden,  
I wondered, the season's foreign anger,  
In the south-east corner of the garden?

It grew and flourished, as intruder could, 5  
Tousled by storm and tautened by the cold.  
The milky prickles toughened, the first bud  
Pouted and pointed with its pristine gold.

What was the old-wives' saw that I remember—  
"When gorse is out of flower, kissing's out of favour—"  
On sun-stroked downs it held the breath of summer, 10  
Suave as honey, sharp as cider, savour

Of all the airs that blustered up from Wales,  
When breathless we topped the windy ridge of youth  
And in our drumming ears love's fanfare pealed 15  
In gesture and embrace untaught, uncouth,

Set in high fastnesses of bilberry and whin,  
Bunkers of green dark just made for lovers,  
Guarded the endless hours of rapture, when  
Over his shadow the sentry kestrel hovers. 20

When, soon or late, I leave it there,  
Sweet witness for some future churl or master,  
Over these long acres the blank years will smear,  
Waiting, perhaps, on portents of disaster—

When the blade flashes and the rifles stutter 25  
And from the sky the screaming death will drop:  
The flower's shy innuendoes, will they matter,  
When, as Browning said, the kissing has to stop?

## SPIDERWEBS

### Publication History:

**SW:** *Shadows of War*. Badcock, Peter, and Robin Graham. Salisbury, Rhodesia: Galaxie Press, 1978. 49 (lines 13-27 only).

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 231.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 33.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 20, 21 and 22 of RB Col 5).

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

Title:	SPIDERWEBS ] <i>none</i> . In the index of <i>SW</i> this extract from the poem is referred to as "New Life // verse: N. H. Brettell"	SW
6	doppel-gänger ] doppel-g[ä <i>accent inserted by hand</i> ]nger doppel-gänger ] doppel-ganger	98.4.5 98.82.18
8	strode ] str[o <i>over</i> i]de before ] bef[o <i>over</i> i]re went ] [we <i>over</i> q3]nt	98.82.18 98.82.18 98.4.5
10	time ] [t <i>over</i> r]ime	98.82.18
14	luminous ] luminou[s <i>inserted by hand over</i> r] nowhere ] now[h <i>over</i> e]ere	98.4.5 98.4.5, 98.82.18
15	cobwebs ] co[b <i>over</i> n]webs burnt ] b[u <i>inserted by hand over</i> i]rnt	98.4.5 98.82.18
16	reaching ] reachin[g <i>over</i> f]	98.82.18
18	cerecloth ] cere-cloth	SP
20	gladiator's ] gladiator'[s <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	RB Col 5
21	relentless ] rele[n <i>over</i> t]tless carnivores ] car[ni <i>inserted by hand</i> ]vores carnivores, ] carnivores	98.4.5 RB Col 5 SW
	^	
22	holocaust ] ho[lo <i>inserted by hand</i> ]caust	RB Col 5
27	homespun. ] homespun?	SP

## SPIDERWEBS

Not even a shadow was given me that morning.  
The veld blackened where yesterday's rampage of fire  
roared through the clotted refuse of the past  
soaked up the bleary light like blotting-paper.  
Back to the east, I was bereft 5  
of that familiar doppel-gänger, double,  
the long man of the downs, the silent walker  
who beckoning strode before wherever I went  
riding elate on combers of the grass.  
I was alone at the cold end of time, 10  
no portent to the front, no retrospect behind,  
the naked rocks as stark as lunar beaches.

But, turn to the east: there is the glad surprise.  
In luminous perspective to the edge of nowhere,  
cobwebs, thousands of them, clothe the burnt tussocks, 15  
a gentle silken shimmer reaching for the sun:

gossamer, the silk of dreams,  
the stuff that wove the cerecloth sails  
of that black ship of death on Coleridge's ocean:  
but tough, tough as a gladiator's net, 20  
lifeline of relentless little carnivores,  
the troglodyte survivors of the holocaust.

Could they, perhaps,  
on the morning after the last of all our wars,  
emerge from their snug tunnels, 25  
cover the enormous poisoned desert  
with their pellucid woof of homespun.



IV

THE WALL  
a fable

“In this same interlude, it doth befall  
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall  
And such a wall, as I would have you think  
That had in it a crannied hole or chink—”



## THE WALL

### Publication History:

SGS: *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 232-237.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 10 and 108 of NELM MS 98.82.18 and RB Col 5).

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

3	Of ] O[f <i>over</i> d]	98.4.5
4	months' ] month[' <i>deleted</i> ]'s'	98.4.5
	months' ] months	98.82.18
9	shady ] [s <i>over</i> d]hady	98.4.5
	hollows ] holl[o <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ws	98.4.5
	thorn ] thor[n <i>over</i> m]	98.4.5
10	frolicsome ] frolicksome	98.4.5
	frolicsome ] fro[li <i>inserted by hand</i> ]cksome	98.82.18
	frolicsome ] frocksome	2002.41.7
11	Trying ] Tryi[n <i>over</i> g]g	98.4.5
12	pine-tree ] pine[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]tree	98.4.5
	pine-tree ] pine tree	98.82.18
16	horn-stubs ] horn stubs	98.82.18
19	foolish ] foolis[h <i>over</i> g]	98.82.18
23	Arcady ] [a <i>emended by hand to A</i> ]rcady	98.4.5
	Arcady ] arcady	98.82.18
28	Innocence ] Inn[o <i>over</i> i]cence	98.4.5
31	grass ] g[r <i>over</i> a]ass	98.82.18
34	crib and ] crib a[n <i>over</i> b]d	98.4.5
35	The ] the	98.82.18
	engrams ] en[g <i>over</i> b]rams	98.4.5
37	capilliaries ] capilliaries	98.4.5
44	Came ] €me [Came <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.4.5

## THE WALL

The year they finished the wall and shut the gates  
All the sperm died, foetus then curled in the womb  
Of man and beast the last of each its kind,  
After their few months' sleep, their greedy gulp  
Of light and air the last expectancy 5  
Of any new life to vivify the old.  
Through one last season, bland as milk, they played.  
Vixen and jackal-bitch suckled the blubbering mouths;  
In shady hollows pent with thorn and thicket  
The cubs in fluff and tooth frolicsome rolled, 10  
Trying their skill on twitch of ear and tail.  
In sandy armpits of the pine-tree roots  
The ratel whelps bickered with mimic snarls.  
The milk-toothed vipers basked them in the sun.  
With archetypal urgings of the galloping herds, 15  
Their horn-stubs sprouting, tails hoist like pennants,  
The calves chased their own shadows through the paddocks  
Bringing up sudden with their hoyden legs  
Stared at their foolish faces in the pond.  
Through the winds on the wolds, the spring lambs leapt 20  
The green fuse crackling through their pirouettes.  
All was innocence, hurtless,  
Through the long Arcady of one blessed year.

But that was all: the play became the trade.  
Tooth and claw toughened into talon and fang 25  
That prowled the pastures with their taut intent.  
The silly antics sobered to the plod,  
Innocence congealed into stupidity  
The snub-nosed faces lengthened into fiddles,  
With horned heads down and sidelong white of eyeball 30  
Afraid of every shadow in the grass.  
The tide of hate flowed coldly back again  
Where fierce eyes stare at timid eyes across the pools.

In croft and tower, the crib and cradle rocked  
The last dreams of innocence. The subtle engrams 35  
Weaving their secret patterns of the race  
In blind capillaries of the closing skull  
Sifted to the debris of the unplumbed pool.  
The few brief months of crying crowing crooning  
Lapsed in the tide of growing consciousness. 40  
And as the groping mouths  
Sucked the last droplets from the drying breasts  
Over half-doors, through curtained lattices,  
Came hauntingly the last sad lullaby.

49	trust ] tr[u <i>over</i> y]st	98.82.18
51	slumber ] slumber, ^	98.82.18
59	the ] th[e <i>over</i> r]	98.82.18
61	tippuping ] ti[tt <i>inserted by hand over</i> pp]uping	98.4.5
64	chorusing ] chorussing	98.4.5
	chorusing ] chorussing	98.82.18
69	nine men's morris 98.82.18: nine-mens-morris	SGS, 98.4.5
79	tossed ] t[o <i>over</i> i]ssed	98.4.5
86	common-rooms ] common[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]rooms	98.4.5

Sleep your body, sleep your spirit, Seal the past of your forefathers, All the seed your flesh inherits Buried in your deepest garner. Manhood, memory, childhood trust Will not flower from your dust.	45 45 50
Turn and murmur, settle, slumber While the gold year turns to umber: Sleep your crying, sleep your laughter, Leave to babblings of chance All the sweeter, all the defter Stratagems of innocence.	55
Cradle and pram stowed in the dusty attics, Childhood rode the saddle, on its slender snaffle Urging elate the wither-wrung traditions. The feathered head-dress, the ten-gallon stetson Went tippuping to oblivion in the final sunset. Train, fire-engine, every obsolete motor Ran clattering down the narrowing corridors. In one last pipe of chorusing, the antique songs, Ghosts of forgotten time-servers, pretenders, Topped from walls and fell from cracking boughs. Subsiding in its murmur, the top collapsed askew. The toe scuffed out the hopscotch curious maze, The nine men's morris was choked up with dust, Time-sealed, time-honoured, time-forgotten.	60 60 65 70
Ham, ham, pig's bum, If I have a party, you won't come, You won't come, no never again. No more summer, no more snow, The wolf's gone to Jericho; The door's slammed, the candle's out, The chairs are all turned round about, The snails crawl up the window pane.	75
Youth, heedless petulant youth, tossed by the cap and satchel; With sworded hip and blowing hair strode on On through the barren acres and the hollow squares To stub their glum resentments on the wall, Scanned through embrasures for the hints beyond To mellow the rawness of their gasconades. No sunburnt stranger leant his careless shoulders Against the mantelpieces of their common-rooms To fuse their fancies with his glorious lies Of grape-blue valleys and the wine-dark sea.	80 85

90	promise ] <del>pr</del> [ <i>pr inserted by hand</i> ]omise	98.4.5
96	years, ] years ^	98.82.18
97	masonry ] <del>masrɔn</del> [ <i>onr inserted by hand</i> ]y masonry ] masɔnry ] masonry	98.4.5 98.82.18
100	Behind ] [ <i>B over illegible character</i> ]ehind	98.82.18
103	Reached ] Rea[ <i>c over d</i> ]hed	98.4.5
106	Then ] Then,	98.82.18
108	freshets ] [ <i>f over d</i> ]reshets freshets ] dreshets	98.82.18 2002.41.7
109	submerged ] su[b <i>inserted by hand over n</i> ]merged submerged ] su[b <i>over n</i> ]merged	98.4.5 98.82.18
111	Art ] [ <i>A over illegible character</i> ]rt	98.82.18
115	wall ] wall, ^	98.82.18
116	of ] o[ <i>f over g</i> ]	98.4.5
117	bastard's hybrid ] hybrid's bastard	98.82.18
120	unrelieved bourdon ] unrelieved b[ <i>o inserted by hand</i> ]urdo <del>an</del> unrelieved bourdon ] unreleived burdoun	98.4.5 98.82.18
127	stumbled up ] stumbled on	98.82.18
132	Clichés ] Clich[ <i>é accent inserted by hand</i> ]s ear ] air	98.4.5, 98.82.18 98.82.18
135	tones ] t[ <i>o over i</i> ]nes on ] on <del>n</del>	98.82.18 98.82.18

Or coupled in high woods where the bays lay slashed,  
 Time held no promise to their desperate embraces, 90  
 No childhood to succeed, no rearguard coming up,  
 Their gay rebellion and frustrated visions  
 Teased by dim fancies in discarded texts,  
 Gone through the echoing glades of Arden  
 And left no singing on the air. 95

Across the rift of middle years, the grim dams flung,  
 Impounding fact and phantasy; blocks of masonry,  
 The slogan, shibboleth, the prejudice,  
 Set into concrete of unyielding levels.  
 Behind the wall, the floods of many years 100  
 Rose lucid and limpid, deep with accumulated truth,  
 Receiving all the wisdom of the sky  
 Reached the unalterable limits of the lake  
 And there stood still; remained the barren islets,  
 Protruding peaks of unresolved misgivings. 105  
 Then drought treading inexorable after drought,  
 The reaches shrank and narrowed; stagnant pools  
 Unfed by freshets of youth, mantled in slime  
 The submerged monsters of the furtive mind.  
 With tired variations, nothing ever new, 110  
 Art, theory, axiom constricted  
 Into a miniature, meticulous, exquisite,  
 With intricate engraving overwrought,  
 But like a bonsai treelet, potbound,  
 Starved of the sunlight from beyond the wall 115  
 Stood flowerless, with no potent dust of gold  
 To startle with the bastard's hybrid vigour.  
 No birdsong brought dawn music to the shuttered mind.  
 Only the surly frogs  
 Drooled on and on their unreleived bourdon. 120

Snow came upon quavering age  
 Hunched ever closer in its garments to the cold.  
 Friends fell like leaves to mould, the tenements  
 Stood vacant, windows blind, the owners gone,  
 Left no address. Only the faded photographs, 125  
 Whiskered and stiff-collared, hung skew upon the walls,  
 Where the illusion stumbled up the haunted stair  
 Sank to oblivion in the snoring dormers.  
 The cloistered coterie drew up the armchairs  
 In ever-narrowing circle round the hearth. 130  
 Next day a chair stood empty, and the next.  
 Clichés and precept fell deaf upon the ear  
 That had no heirs to hear. Muffled echoes  
 Gave no back answer to the argument  
 To senile tones droned on to blank estrangement. 135

141	convolvulus ] convolulus	98.82.18
153	detritus ] detritu[s <i>over d</i> ]	98.82.18
154	mouldboards ] <del>moull</del> [mould <i>inserted by hand</i> ]boards	98.4.5

Till at the end  
One pair of dim incurious eyes  
Saw the last sunset drain into the west.

Then through the crack of masonry, through loophole,  
Through rotting timbers, rust-encrusted hinges, 140  
Tongues of green life, ivy convolvulus and briar,  
Patrols of the invader, ventured in.

The birds' gay squadrons planed across the ramparts  
Dropping exploding seed from beak and vent.  
Rosebay and willowherb, loosestrife and goldenrod, 145  
Clambered like gamins, shouting in red and gold  
Over the shattered thresholds. Decade by decade,  
Dust from the plains, spores on the driven wind,  
Mantled the broken shoulders.

To end, a surly race of venturers 150  
Their columns wheeling over endless steppes,  
With minds indifferent to the buried day  
Quarried the blocks from the detritus  
And drove their mouldboards through the ancient middens.



## NOCTURNE

### Publication History:

**SGS:** *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1981. 238.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 63-64.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.5; NELM MS 2002.41.8; NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.5

### Variant Readings:

4	the old, the same ] the old the same, ^                  ^	98.82.18
7	lamp ] lam[p over o]	2002.41.8
16	with ] wi[t over h]h	98.4.5
24	Charon ] [C over c]haron	98.4.5





# RECESSIONAL

in memoriam

DLG, DAH., JNS., RAW., PB

Multas per gentes et multa per aequora vectus  
advenio has miseras, frater, ad inferias  
Catullus

## PROSPECT

### Publication History:

**FV:** *Four Voices: Poetry from Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1982. 93.

**SA:** *Shades of Adamastor: Africa and the Portuguese connection: An anthology of poetry*. compiled by M. van Wyk Smith. Grahamstown: Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Rhodes University, National English Literary Museum, 1988. 194-195.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 48-49.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 82/22/3; NELM MS 98.4.4 = NELM MS 2004.24.2; NELM MS 98.82.8;  
NELM MS 2002.41.4.1; NELM MS 2002.41.4.2.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.4

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: Point ] Poi[n <i>over</i> m]t	2002.41.4.1
2 Headland ] Headland, ^	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
3 Facing ] Fa cing ^	2002.41.4.1
6 primaeval ] pr[im <i>over</i> as]aeval	2002.41.4.2
urge ] [u <i>over</i> s]rge	98.82.8
7 glance ] [g <i>over</i> f]lance	98.4.4
8 A ... smoke, ] Beyond the humps of thrift and starveling grass,	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
9 Beyond ... grass, ] The hum in pub of chumand butty and bloke, starveling ] star[v <i>over</i> w]eling	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1 98.4.4
10 The ... bloke, ] A glimpse of coppice, steeple, cottage smoke,	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
13 link ] li[n <i>over</i> k]k	82/22/3
15 Stacked ] Stac[k <i>over</i> c]ed	82/22/3
16 lapses ] lap[s <i>over</i> p]es	98.4.4
18 on ] o[n <i>over</i> j]	82/22/3
20 mimicking ] mimi[c <i>over</i> s]king	98.82.8
mimicking ] <del>miki</del> mimicking	2002.41.4.2
soil ] soils	SP
21 gules ] gules, ^	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
22 anemones ] anemonies	98.4.4
anemones ] anemonies	98.82.8, 82/22/3
23 tenancy ] enclave	FV, SA, SP, 98.82.8, 82/22/3
their hungry tenancy ] their enclave	2002.41.4.1
25 collapse ] colla[p <i>over</i> s]se	2002.41.4.1

## PROSPECT

### *Cape Point*

They say: no man's an island—  
Headland perhaps, the last lonely spar  
Facing the slap and slaver of the surge,  
Striving to understand  
Its muttering vernacular; 5  
But he turns back with the primaeval urge  
For comradeship, a touch, a glance, a pass,  
A glimpse of coppice, steeple, cottage smoke,  
Beyond the humps of thrift and starveling grass,  
The hum in pub of chum and butty and bloke, 10  
The muted tongue of snug humanity.

Across the causeway, striding the sullen sea,  
The stones of friendship link us to the land,  
The casual handiwork of chance and time  
Stacked and piled haphazard on the sand, 15  
That slips and lapses with the ooze and slime.

The stones slip one by one. The lifting surge  
Encroaches, coil on reaching coil,  
To wash the standing pools,  
Where, mimicking the flowers of the soil, 20  
Ironic blazonment of argent and gules  
Purple and green, the strange anemones  
Assert their hungry tenancy of the verge.

“They all go into the dark—”  
When the last slab shall collapse into the surf, 25  
I stand alone in face of the red west  
On the last gnarled toenail of the world.  
Indigo in the trough and fire on the crest,  
In lifting menace, lips back-curved  
From the white flash of teeth, 30  
Voracious appetite of shark,  
Mumbling in hunger underneath,  
The breakers gnaw at the tousled turf,  
And, phlegm from an old man's throat,  
The spume spatters the shifting of the beach. 35  
Inscrutable, remote,  
Beyond imagination's utmost reach,  
Nothing between me lies  
Before, oceans beyond, the face of the oblivious ice.



30	of ] [o over i]f	98.82.8
31-32	<i>no line break ] line break</i>	SA
32	underneath, FV, SA, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1, 2002.41.4.2: underneath	98.4.4
33	breakers ] brea kers ^	2002.41.4.1
	turf ] tu[r over e]f	2002.41.4.1
34	man's ] man'd	2002.41.4.2
	throat ] throa[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]t	98.4.4
36	Inscrutable ] Inscr[u over t]table	98.4.4
38	Nothing between ] Nothing beyond	82/22/3





## NATURALIST

### I.

Some say: being only exists in seeing,  
What you don't see is never there at all;  
And, dear vanished friend, though not agreeing,  
I know your eyes gave me, beyond recall,

A second window on the world, through which 5  
Everything came bright as a new-minted coin,  
Bird and bug, feather and carapace, rich  
With a clean beauty time never will purloin.

Your exact pictures I salvaged from the litter,  
Each detail like a facet: a two-inch limit, but 10  
Enlarged and brilliant with a knife-edge glitter—  
These still are with us now your lens is shut.

The miniscule revealed: primp of tiny petal  
Curling in plumes of pompadour, the scale  
Of snake and lizard like damascene on metal, 15  
The chambered labyrinth of the snail.

Here the wild acres that you tamed: but with your grace  
Not too precisely tamed—as one composes  
Lyric and sonnet from the random phrase,  
And lets the bindweed flourish with the roses. 20

### II.

Now, in the dark,  
Curb of regret is loosened, and I see,  
Glad as a rampant colt, hill and ravine,  
The sprawling wilderness, the cloistered park,  
We tramped together 25  
In the high-veld weather,  
Untrodden gorges full with spume and thunder,  
Birdsong pulsed from swelling throats,  
And, in between,  
The insect click and rumour creaking under, 30  
Thin as the top-treble piano notes  
Just timidly tapping on the rim of silence:  
Bivouac under trees where the owlets snored,  
Wind through a knot-hole in the weatherboard,  
Half-drowsy memories of vleis and steep, 35  
Beyond sight and sense  
All streaming past me into sleep.

37	past ] [p <i>over</i> <sup>3/8</sup> ]ast	2002.41.4.1
39	bloated ] [b <i>over</i> v]loated	2002.41.4.1
43	one, ] one ^	FV, 98.82.8, 2002.41.4.2
44	And, deep ] And, <del>edd</del> deep	82/22/3
45	arcane ] ar[c <i>over</i> a]ane	2002.41.4.1
46	phagocytes FV: phagocities	98.4.4
	phagocytes ] phagocities	98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1, 2002.41.4.2
48	Transmutes ] Tra nsmutes ^	98.82.8
	Tra nsmutes ] Transm[u <i>over</i> o]tes	82/22/3
51	heady ] [h <i>over</i> g]eady	2002.41.4.2
	heady ] he[ad <i>over</i> de]y	98.4.4
	nectar ] necta r ^	82/22/3
52	sarcophagus ] [s <i>over</i> c]arcophagus	2002.41.4.1
54	womb ] w[om <i>over</i> mo]b	2002.41.4.2
55	short ] [s <i>over</i> m]hort	2002.41.4.2
57	last, FV, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1: last ^	98.4.4, 2002.41.4.2
	integuments ] inte[g <i>over</i> f]uments	2002.41.4.2

### III.

You told me once the testament of the chrysalid:  
The bloated caterpillar silk-strapped to twig or bark,  
Losing its lurid hues in the grey cuticle, 40  
Wrinkle and flute that hardens to the urn  
Of folded wings and incurled antennae,  
Past and to come ambiguous into one,  
And, deep within, the secret alchemy—  
Not chemistry: too arcane for that 45  
The dissolution of the phagocytes:  
Not confined death, but resurrection,  
Transmutes the crawling grub,  
The blatant guts refined to feed on air,  
On light and wind and springtime's working wine, 50  
The heady nectar of the future flowers  
Sealed in the bud's own close sarcophagus.

Mess of emulsion into lift of wings:  
In the womb of the crawling night that brought  
Your short unnecessary death— 55  
Could it presage that out of dissolution  
Might come at last, through split integuments,  
The pardon, the peace, the last utopia?

## NEIGHBOUR

### Publication History:

**FV:** *Four Voices: Poetry from Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1982. 96-97.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 82/22/3; NELM MS 98.4.4 = NELM MS 2004.24.2 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 4 of NELM MS 98.4.4); NELM MS 98.82.8; NELM MS 2002.41.4.1; NELM MS 2002.41.4.2.

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.4

### Variant Readings:

2	and ] [a over A]nd	82/22/3
4	quietest ] q[u <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ietest	98.4.4
	quietest ] quietest	2004.24.2
5	the ] t[h <i>over illegible character</i> ]e	2002.41.4.2
6	tower ] [t over T]ower	2002.41.4.1
9	me. ] me:	FV, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1, 2002.41.4.2
12	the ] t[h <i>over y</i> ]e	82/22/3
	hedge, ] hedge	2002.41.4.1
	^	
14	rising ] r[is <i>over si</i> ]ing	2002.41.4.2
15	and ] a nd	2002.41.4.1
	^	
18	saw ] sa w	2002.41.4.1
	^	
	year ] yea r	2002.41.4.1
	^	
23	and ] an[d <i>over n</i> ]	2002.41.4.2
24	umber, FV, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1: umber	98.4.4, 2002.41.4.2
	^	
27	year's ] ye[a <i>over r</i> ]r's	98.82.8
28	eclipse ] e[c <i>over l</i> ]lipse	2002.41.4.2
30	deeper ] [d <i>over s</i> ]eeper	82/22/3
32	wold's ] wo[l <i>over ;</i> ]d's	82/22/3
	shadow ] shad[o <i>over d</i> ]w	82/22/3
33	vlei's ] [v <i>over g</i> ]lei's	2002.41.4.2
34	that ] tha t	2002.41.4.1
	^	
35	memory ] mem[o <i>over r</i> ]ry	82/22/3
37	ten ] [t <i>over e</i> ]en	82/22/3

## NEIGHBOUR

They say:

“Clunton and Clunbury,  
Clungerford and Clun,  
Are the quietest places  
Under the sun.”

5

Like sprinkled chimes from tower and spire  
Lost between Clun and Clee,  
Those names to which you were the heir,  
And Merlin’s runes to me.

Son of sequestered parsonage,  
Crony of groom and keeper,  
You knew the stutter of wren in hedge,  
On Teme, the placid deeper

10

Pools the rising grayling traces,  
Oak and beechen drives,  
And seemly folk with quiet faces  
Walking through quiet lives.

15

We saw encroaching year on year  
The century’s overspill,  
The afternoon where the snarling gear  
Sets its teeth on the hill.

20

We saw the strident years outnumber  
Limits of parks and pales,  
The prostrate shires of England umber,  
And evening red on Wales.

25

As through the sullen bars it dips  
To next year’s incubus,  
We saw its gracious sad eclipse—  
And left it, both of us.

And sought this deeper solitude  
Beyond spume and fume,  
The bare wold’s shadow sun and mood,  
The green vlei’s elbow-room.

30

But kept the stance that once we had  
In boyhood’s memory,  
The mooning gloom of Shropshire lad,  
The clock at ten to three.

35

38	Pantaloon FV, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1: pantaloon	98.4.4, 2002.41.4.2
40	September ] Sep[t <i>over</i> p]ember	2002.41.4.1
45	quieter ] qui[e <i>over</i> t]ter	98.82.8

With wry grimace of Pantaloon,  
Sly, askance, aloof,  
Silent, the slow September moon 40  
Climbs red above your roof.

Your orchard boughs across its brow  
Quiver and pause and stir:  
You knew this quiet place, but now  
You've found a quieter. 45



## CLERK IN HOLY ORDERS

### Publication History:

**FV:** *Four Voices: Poetry from Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1982. 98-99.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 82/22/3; NELM MS 98.4.4 = NELM MS 2004.24.2; NELM MS 98.82.8;  
NELM MS 2002.41.4.1; NELM MS 2002.41.4.2.

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.4

### Variant Readings:

4	laughter ] l[a <i>over</i> u]ughter	2002.41.4.1
	laughter ] la[u <i>over</i> i]ghter	2002.41.4.2
5	playing ] playimh	2002.41.4.2
7	I ] [I <i>over illegible character</i> ]	2002.41.4.2
	mode FV, 82/22/3, 98.82.8, 2002.41.4.1, 2002.41.4.2; more	98.4.4
9	To ] [T <i>over</i> t]o	2002.41.4.1
	iamb's ] [i <i>over</i> a]amb's	98.4.4, 82/22/3
	iamb's ] [i <i>over</i> a]ambic's	98.82.8
11	in the ] in nthe	2002.41.4.1
12	Perhaps ] Perha ps	2002.41.4.2
	with ] wi[th <i>over</i> rt]	98.4.4
	Primrose ] [P <i>over</i> p]rimrose	2002.41.4.1
16	disgust, ] digust	2002.41.4.2
17	underneath, ] underneath	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1, 2002.41.4.2
19	Then FV, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1: The	98.4.4, 2002.41.4.2
21	I'll ] I8ll	2002.41.4.2
22	commentaries ] comme[n <i>over</i> m]taries	98.4.4
23	my ] m[y <i>over</i> u]	2002.41.4.2
24	Hamstrung ] Hanstrung	98.82.8
28	calendar ] calandar	98.82.8
	calendar ] calen[d <i>over</i> n]ar	2002.41.4.2
31	there, FV, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1: there	98.4.4, 2002.41.4.2
32	reading ] read[i <i>over</i> d]ng	82/22/3
33	window light ] window-light	2002.41.4.1
34	the ] th	98.82.8
36	sup ] sup,	82/22/3
	sup ] cup	2002.41.4.1
37	hiccup; FV, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1: hiccup:	98.4.4, 2002.41.4.2
38	Gainsborough ] Gai[n <i>over</i> i]sborough	98.4.4

## CLERK IN HOLY ORDERS

They say: dead men tell no tales. For us  
From you no more the askance, the impious,  
That set the lamplight winking on the glass  
And civilised with laughter drab and farce,  
With pun and quibble playing pitch and toss: 5  
And every meal is hungrier for your loss.

I write for you in couplets, mode demure  
As sleeping cat, but catlike lithe and sure  
To strike with iamb's sly arithmetic,  
The pause, the aim, before the deadly kick. 10  
Disciplined in the cloth and mellowed by Cantab,  
Perhaps with more of Primrose, less of Crabbe,  
You strolled in spirit through the elegant age,  
And, through the polished mirror of its page,  
When wit was more than wisecrack, you saw plain 15  
Folly did not disgust, but entertain:  
Amused, urbane, and level underneath,  
The unperplexed acceptance of the faith.

Then let us ponder this as you were wont to do,  
No sentiment to obfuscate the issue: 20  
Facing the fact I'll never hear again  
Your wry dry commentaries on moles and men  
That hitched my headlong fancies by the heel,  
Hamstrung with metre and mis-led by rhyme:  
Classic tradition the years can not repeal 25  
Fix the ripe numbers in the flux of time.

The last I had of you before you died,  
This calendar, usual at Christmastide—  
Twelve glimpses through the year from sable hair  
And the blunt palette knife, flat to declare 30  
The glory and the gaiety; and there,

First a Vermeer interior, woman reading  
In the crisp window light, placid, receding  
Into a clean perspective of the trees.  
Then a Breughel bucolic, elbows, knees, 35  
Posturing, tipsy, platter bowl and sup  
Full with the fare for belch or lively hiccup;  
Lely and Gainsborough, Stubbs and Cox,

43	turn ] tu[r <i>over</i> t]n	98.82.8
47	Begin ] Beg[i <i>over</i> g]n	82/22/3
	meticulous ] met[i <i>over</i> t]culous	98.4.4

Satin of hide, velvet and falling locks,  
Ringlet and thew to point the paradox 40  
That foliage and sunlight are the feature  
To limn the characteristic of the creature.  
I turn the year's bright pages, till there came  
December with a Turner sunset flame,  
Quick with the insolence of that lavish spender: 45

So you would read the world, slippers on fender—  
Begin meticulous, and end in splendour.

## SUICIDE

### Publication History:

FV: *Four Voices: Poetry from Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1982. 100.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 82/22/3; NELM MS 98.4.4 = NELM MS 2004.24.2; NELM MS 98.82.8;  
NELM MS 2002.41.4.1; NELM MS 2002.41.4.2.

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.4

### Variant Readings:

1	say: ] say ^	2002.41.4.1
	sill— ] sill[— <i>inserted by hand over</i> :]	98.4.4
	sill— ] sill:	FV
	sill— ] sill,	2002.41.4.2
3	across, ] across[, <i>over</i> m]	2002.41.4.1
5	bill ] bill, ^	FV, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
6	Who'd ] Who'[d <i>over</i> s]	98.82.8
7	zinnias ] Zinnias	2002.41.4.2
8	Jackson ] Jac[k <i>over</i> j]son	2002.41.4.2
9	eyes, ] eyes ^	2002.41.4.1
10	pillow, ] pillow ^	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
13	Above ] Ab[o <i>over</i> b]ve	82/22/3
	raven's ] raven[' <i>over</i> 8]s	98.82.8
15	step ] ste p ^	2002.41.4.1
20	car ] ca r ^	82/22/3
21	squeak ] squea k ^	82/22/3
	mouse and ] mouse or	FV, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
24	without ] wi[t <i>over</i> r]hout	98.4.4
25	Throw ] Threw	82/22/3
27	of ] [o <i>over</i> p]f	98.82.8
28	climb up ] climbup	2002.41.4.1
	for fingerhold ] for <del>feethold</del> fingerhold	2002.41.4.1
30	scrannel ] scra[n <i>over</i> a]nel	2002.41.4.1
	tufts ] tuf[ts <i>over</i> t]	82/22/3
	sod ] [s <i>over</i> d]od	2002.41.4.2
31	at ] a[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]t	98.4.4
	at ] aat	82/22/3
32	Haul ] Hau[l <i>over</i> u]	2002.41.4.1

## SUICIDE

They say: the high ridge is a basalt sill—  
A homely word for that serrated frown.  
A sill's to lean across, tranquil  
To watch, over the flickering green, the brown  
Thrush with his questing orange bill 5  
Who'd run and listen, listen and run,  
Among the zinnias and chrysanthemum  
Under the pompous gold of Jackson willow:  
A sill—meant for calm eyes,  
Over shaving mirror or from a drowsy pillow, 10  
For contemplation and the mild surprise.

But that ironic window-ledge for you,  
Above the storeys of the raven's perch—  
For you was this:  
Where the last dizzy step, the fatal lurch 15  
Will send you hurtling through  
The flash of sun and shade  
To the jagged fangs of the abyss.  
But you'd look down on the ant-masquerade,  
The crawling car, the matchstick man, 20  
Subsonic squeak of mouse and charlatan;  
You'd had enough:  
Give one last sardonic glance, and so,  
Deliberate, without vertigo,  
Throw yourself off. 25

Or was it, to switch the metaphor, my dour old friend,  
The stiffer prospect of the upward climb,  
The desperate climb up, prizing for fingerhold,  
Kicking behind the clattering stones of time,  
Spurning the scannel tufts of flower and sod, 30  
And at the end,  
Haul your chin up above the iron threshold,  
Confront with a brave stare the calm eyes of God?



## POETESS

No gradual dark for you, the violet hour  
That mutes the voices and draws to the curtain,  
But the violent eclipse, the flutter of luck,  
Dicing with death as you'd so often done,  
Rejoicing in the day. Deliberate and certain,  
Above the fatal ridge, the immediate sun  
Gathered its glory to a fist, and struck.

5

Maybe you'd have chose this way, the same  
That gave your verse the shock of the absurd;  
The sly sly verse associate with your name  
Through long encumbered years will still remain—  
Life, stolen by time but salvaged back in word,  
Life, shrivelled by drought, but given back in rain.

10



## VILLAGE HEADMAN

### Publication History:

**FV:** *Four Voices: Poetry from Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1982. 101.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 82/22/3; NELM MS 98.4.4 = NELM MS 2004.24.2 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 2 and 12 of NELM MS 98.4.4); NELM MS 98.82.8; NELM MS 2002.41.4.1; NELM MS 2002.41.4.2.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.4

### Variant Readings:

1	say ] say: ^	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
	can't ] [c <i>inserted by hand over</i> a]an't	98.82.8
	with ] wi[t <i>over</i> i]h	98.4.4
	with you: ] with you—	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
2	try; ] try:	2002.41.4.1
	sitting ] [s <i>inserted by hand over</i> c]itting	98.4.4
	sitting ] citting	2004.24.2
3	dark ] d[ar <i>over</i> ra]k	82/22/3
7	offered FV: offered	98.4.4, 82/22/3, 98.82.8, 2002.41.4.1, 2004.24.2
8	Your ] Yous	82/22/3
9	dance ] dan[c <i>over illegible character</i> ]e	82/22/3
12	cellophane ] cel[l <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ophane	98.4.4
	cellophane ] celophane	98.82.8, 2004.24.2
	good-fellowship ] goodfellowship	2002.41.4.2
13	aether ] aet[h <i>over</i> t]er	82/22/3
	sloughs ] slo[u <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ghs	98.4.4

## VILLAGE HEADMAN

They say you can't take it with you: but you  
Will try; sitting hands clasping knees  
Will stare unwinking over the dark brink  
On rose of spring and winter's guttering gold,  
The patterned blanket wrap you from the cold, 5  
The little platter of meal suffice, the gourd of drink,  
The simple comforts offered to you there  
Your folk for centuries were wont to do.

Well, bring it back: ghost home with drum and dance—  
Behind each shoulder at the council tree 10  
Cast your grave veto to your sons and wives,  
Against bribes wrapped in cellophane, good-fellowship in cans,  
Insults from the aether, snake-sloughs in Arcady,  
All the debris of our littered lives.



## MAX GATE

*After reading a biography of Hardy*

We once wandered along the Dorset coast,  
And wondered at the enigmas underneath,  
The traitor shale, the foot-sliding pebbles,  
The swan-assembled reaches,  
Coves with the arm-encircled blue, 5  
Bog pools in the haunted heaths,  
Slept under a thatch that could be Talbothayes:  
But not to that grey uncomfortable house.

That was fifty years ago,  
And Hardy in his grave for only six; 10  
Legend still lingered in the Wareham granaries  
Along the verges of the loitering Frome.

But now I shall never go to Max Gate.  
You could go now just a sightseer,  
Ushered into the parlour where Emma fumed and Florence schemed, 15  
Be nudged down passages and up the stairs  
To the chill study, where, one by one,  
Congealing like icicles on eave or nose,  
The cold poems came.  
Here you would need to sit an hour at least, 20  
Alone, to look long through the blind casement  
At the pale Dorset fog.

Not in the parlour, where the white sage would sit,  
Fondling an ordinary sheep-dog's ears,  
Sharing talk and toast with the young Graves or young Sassoon, 25  
An old mild revenant whose secret self  
Had not come down the stairs.



AUBADE FOR ORPHEUS

to my wife

## AUBADE FOR ORPHEUS

### Publication History:

**FV:** *Four Voices: Poetry from Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1982. 104.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 82/22/3; NELM MS 98.4.4 = NELM MS 2004.24.2; NELM MS 98.82.8;  
NELM MS 2002.41.4.1; NELM MS 2002.41.4.2

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.4

### Variant Readings:

1	have ] ha ve ^	82/22/3
2	Stood ] Stoo[d over f]	2002.41.4.1
4	enterprise ] enterprise, ^	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1, 2002.41.4.2
6	shattered ] shattere[d over e]	82/22/3
12	ghost ] [gho over hos]st	2002.41.4.1
	ghost ] [gh over ho]ost	2002.41.4.2
16	And ] An[d over f]	2002.41.4.1
17	acrid ] ac[r over c]id	2002.41.4.1
	seat ] s[e over illegible character]at	2002.41.4.1

## AUBADE FOR ORPHEUS

*To my wife*

We have been in the shadows, but not bereft,  
Stood for an instant, but together, on the edge,  
Aghast glanced into the depths, but with your deft  
And gallant enterprise yourself redeemed the pledge

From Dis on his purple throne, amid the glare 5  
And reek of cordite in the shattered room.  
It was not song that did it, though song was there,  
Song in our hearts against the dust and gloom.

We stumbled out side by side. The happy chance  
Did not put me in front, nor you so lost: 10  
No call for the agonising backward glance,  
The sad white flutter of a vanishing ghost.

Escape from the black antre into the gay  
Familiar light transfigured to a glory,  
Titters and rustles of our common day, 15  
And we, singing, alive to tell the story:

The acrid incense round the seat of death  
That now sanctifies our ordinary breath.





## ENDPIECE

### Incomprehension

## SPASTIC CHILD

### Publication History:

**FV:** *Four Voices: Poetry from Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1982. 106.

**MBZ:** *Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Ed. Colin and O-lan Style. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986. 87.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 82/22/3; NELM MS 98.4.4 = NELM MS 2004.24.2; NELM MS 98.82.8;  
NELM MS 2002.41.4.1; NELM MS 2002.41.4.2.

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.4

### Variant Readings:

Title:	SPASTIC ] SP[A over S]STIC	98.4.4
Subtitle:	Mukuwapasi FV: Mukwapasi	MBZ, 98.4.4, 98.82.8, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1, 2002.41.4.2
1	Half ] Hal[f over l]	2002.41.4.2
3	snail ] [s over n]nail	2002.41.4.1
	trail ] trai[l over i]	82/22/3
	ecstatic ] [e over s]cstatic	2002.41.4.1
4	wordless bird-like ] bird-like wordless	98.82.8
5	of ] o[f over d]	2002.41.4.2
7	Bum-upward ] Bum-upwards	2002.41.4.1, 2002.41.4.2
	back ] back,	2002.41.4.2
	^	
8	Legs ] legs	MBZ
	weakly ] feebly	MBZ, 82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
	weakly ] [w over illegible character]eakly	2002.41.4.2
9	Retrieving ] Retrie[v over b]ing	82/22/3
10	feeble ] crying	82/22/3, 2002.41.4.1
12	us ] u[s over d]	2002.41.4.2
	seems ] see[m over e]s	98.4.4
13	fumbling ] fum[b over v]ling	2002.41.4.2
14	any ] a ny	98.82.8
	^	
15	tears ] [t over f]ears	82/22/3
	tears ] fears	MBZ

I.

**SPASTIC CHILD**

*Mukuwapasi Clinic*

Half-witted, half-limbed, helpless and erratic,  
He rolled his coloured ball along the patio,  
Dragging his snail-like trail, but ecstatic  
With wordless bird-like chirp and crow  
To see the rolling wonder at his stumps of hands. 5

It rolls over the curb; he following, lands  
Bum-upward in the gutter, like a beetle on its back  
Legs waving weakly, and my alien white hands  
Retrieving him, fill his alarm. The lack  
Of words to quiet the feeble fears 10

Is paralysis on compassion: it rears  
A sullen barrier between us, seems  
To freeze my fumbling tongue and interferes  
With any notion of his joy, his gaudy dreams,  
His dumb uncomprehending tears. 15

## DUNG BEETLE

### Publication History:

FV: *Four Voices: Poetry from Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1982. 107.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 82/22/3; NELM MS 98.4.4 = NELM MS 2004.24.2; NELM MS 98.82.8;  
NELM MS 2002.41.4.1; NELM MS 2002.41.4.2.

Text: NELM MS 98.4.4

### Variant Readings:

6	mush ] mus[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]h	98.4.4
9	false ] f[a <i>over</i> l]lse	2002.41.4.1
7	well-chosen ] well-c[hose <i>over</i> oson]n	82/22/3
10	And ] [An <i>over</i> aa]d	98.4.4
	again ] ag[a <i>over</i> g]in	98.4.4
	again ] back	FV, 98.82.8, 2002.41.4.2
	ditch ] di[t <i>over</i> r]ch	82/22/3
11	times ] [t <i>over</i> r]imes	2002.41.4.2
16	way ] wa[y <i>over</i> t]	2002.41.4.1
18	Only ] On[l <i>over</i> k]y	2002.41.4.1

II.

**DUNG BEETLE**

Up the steep camber of the road,  
With dour persistence, six legs striving,  
He shoves his precious load,  
Brown, iridescent, rich  
With teeming food for hungry grub, 5  
The perfect sphere of luscious mush  
Intently meant for some well-chosen hide;  
But, inches from the crown arriving,  
One false lop-sided push,  
And down it rolls again into the ditch. 10  
Blind Sisyphus, three times he tried,  
Bent on some secret lair he must have known.

I could be Gulliver to his Lilliput:  
My self-importance preen,  
God from the machine, 15  
And put him on the way that he alone  
Could know. My ears are shut.  
Only another bug could find that rhyme.

I go my way. He tries another climb.



# COUNTRY INTO TOWN

## Threnody, with some echoes

in memory of Eva  
who loved the wild, but became reconciled  
to the town

*"Qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum  
illuc, unde negant redire quemquam -"*

Now he travels the solitary darkness  
towards that region from which there's no return -

Catullus  
on the death of Lesbia's sparrow



## SPARROW

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

**Text:** RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

1	how do you ] how you	2000.18.8.2
2	slipshod ] s[l <i>over</i> h]ipshod	98.4.3
3	doorstep— ] door[ste <i>over</i> tep]p—	2000.18.8.2
4	How ] Ho[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]w	RH Col 3
5	stowaway ] stowawa[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]y	RB Col 6
6	storms ] st[o <i>over</i> i]rms	NIV
7	sutler ] suttler	97.19, 98.82.9, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, 2000.18.8.2, NIV
8	roof to ] roof [t <i>inserted by hand over</i> r]o	2001.1.3.1.7
	to ] [t <i>over</i> r]o	2000.18.8.2
	from year ] from ye[ar <i>over</i> ra]	RH Col 3
5	casual ] casu[a <i>over</i> q]l	97.19
10	eaves ] ea[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ves	RH Col 3
11	autumn, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8: autumn	RH Col 3, ^ RB Col 6, 2000.18.8.2
12	our afternoon ] my afternoon	97.19
	afternoon ] a[f <i>over</i> g]ternoon	2000.18.8.2
14	table-top ] tab[l <i>over</i> b]e-top	RB Col 6
	for ] [f <i>over</i> g]or	98.4.3
15	muted ] m[u <i>over illegible character</i> ]ted	97.19
	traffic ] traffic,	RH Col 3
	^	
16	Beneath ] Ben[e <i>over</i> a]ath	NIV
18	domesticus ] domes[t <i>over</i> r]icus	2000.18.8.2
	farthing ] fa[rth <i>over</i> thr]ing	RH Col 3
19	snub ] sbug	2000.18.8.2
21	a more tortured ] a sadder	98.4.3
22	bawdy ] bawd[y <i>over</i> t]	NIV
23	saw ] s[a <i>over</i> w]w	97.19
	you, ] you, P	2001.1.3.1.7
24	squirming] sq[ui <i>over</i> yu]rming	NIV
	tormented ] tortured	98.4.3
	tormented ] tormented <del>m</del>	RB Col 6
25	twittering ] t[w <i>over</i> o]ittering	2002.41.2

*Variant information continued over the page*

## SPARROW

Cockney, street urchin, how do you come here?  
With your slipshod nests cluttering my gables,  
Dropping your white splashes on my doorstep—  
How did you come, over Africa's sprawling miles,  
Pet or stowaway, casual immigrant? 5  
Did you cling to the rigging round the cape of storms,  
And, sutler or scavenger, no pioneer,  
Venture from roof to roof, from year to year,

Until you reached my house?  
Flurry of wings in the eaves, 10  
Ragged brown leaves of autumn, pert as spring,  
Impudent on the patio of our afternoon  
Hopping between the chair- and table-legs:  
On table-top too, for I remember,  
Beyond the grumble of the muted traffic 15  
Beneath the lilac and the beeches, you  
Once tried to filch our sandwiches at Kew.

*Passer domesticus*, two for a farthing,  
Dowdy of dress, snub-billed with insolence—  
You brash intruder on my urban ease: 20  
You eased a more tortured heart than mine  
In Rome, the sweaty bawdy city:  
He saw you,  
Poet squirming in the tormented man,  
Hop twittering through eleven snips of words, 25  
Perch on the finger of a courtesan.

But none of your impudence here. No whore,  
But a more gracious ghost looks through my windows,  
Where you chatter, my fellows, lining the bright edge  
To shadows under eaves. 30  
—Hop in her walks and gambol in her eyes—  
She will not flurry you with her noiseless foot,  
And if she comes,  
Will cast no shadow where I toss your crumbs.



26	courtesan ] cou[r <i>over</i> t]tesan	2002.41.2
	courtesan ] courtesa[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]n	2001.1.3.1.7
27	impudence ] imp[u <i>over</i> i]dence	RH Col 3
28	But ] [B <i>over</i> b]ut	NIV
	gracious ] grac[io <i>over</i> ci]us	RH Col 3
	ghost ] ghos[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]t	98.82.9
	looks ] lookes	98.4.3
	windows, ] w[i <i>inserted by hand over</i> o]ndows,	2001.1.3.1.7
	windows, windows	97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8
	^	
30	To ] [T <i>over</i> t]o	2002.41.8
	eaves. ] eaves[. <i>over</i> ;]	2002.41.8
31	eyes	97.19, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3,
	NIV: ways	98.4.3, RB Col 6
32	will not ] will[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]no[t <i>over</i> y]	RH Col 3
	foot, ] step,	2002.41.8
33	if ] [i <i>inserted by hand over</i> o]f	RB Col 6
	comes, ] come[s <i>over illegible character</i> ],	2002.41.2
	comes, ] comes	2000.18.8.2, NIV
	^	
34	cast ] ca[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]st	RB Col 6
	crumbs ] cr[u <i>over illegible character</i> ]mbs	2000.18.8.2

## SUNSET

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

**Text:** RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

1	again ] again <sup>w</sup>	2001.1.3.1.7
2	flat ] fla[t <i>inserted by hand over</i> r] play ] pla y ^	97.19 NIV
3	empty ] em[p <i>over</i> 3/a]ty pitch ] pit[c <i>over</i> v]h	NIV NIV
5	with ] [[wi <i>over</i> bu]th	2000.18.8.2
6	cirrus ] c[i <i>over</i> u]rrus	NIV
8	Above ] Abo[v <i>over</i> b]e lines ] line ridge ] ri[d <i>inserted by hand over illegible character</i> ]ge	RB Col 6 97.19 98.82.9
9	prone: ] prone; ejaculation ] ej[a <i>over</i> j]culation	97.19 RB Col 6
10	or ] and eucalypt ] eu[c <i>over</i> u]alypyt eucalypt ] eucal[y <i>inserted by hand</i> ]pt void ] v[o <i>over</i> p]id	RH Col 3 RB Col 6 2002.41.2 NIV
11	architecture ] ar[ch <i>over</i> rc]itecture serried ] serroed	RH Col 3 98.4.3
12	menace ] manace	2000.18.8.2
13	hilltop ] hiltop	2000.18.8.2
14	boulder ] [b <i>over</i> o]oulder in the ] the the of a ] o f a ^	98.4.3 2000.18.8.2 2002.41.2
15	shape ] [s <i>over</i> d]hape paradox ] par[o <i>over</i> a]dox	2001.1.3.1.7
16	dream: ] dream.	97.19, 98.4.3
17	As ] —As Mozart ] M[o <i>over</i> p]zart	97.19 98.4.3
19	pipe of flute the ] pipe of [flute <i>inserted by hand</i> ] the ^	98.82.9

*Variant information continued over the page*

## SUNSET

We walked again with beauty, muted beauty,  
Round the flat green where schoolboys play.  
They are all gone now; the empty pitch  
Lies pale beneath the spread of rose and grey

Of an unsensational sunset: with no bounty 5  
Of flaring cirrus, but the smouldering edge  
Of one low bar above the amber reaches,  
Above the level lines of roof and ridge.

Level and prone: the sole ejaculation  
Pylon or eucalypt, and then the void— 10  
No architecture of the serried rocks  
To house the ambushed menace that destroyed

Our hilltop lives with its stark interruption,  
A boulder toppled in the flow of a stream,  
In hindering, to shape—the easy paradox 15  
That moulds the contradictions of a dream:

As Mozart breaks a repeated cadence  
To return to it with muted variations,  
The rising pipe of flute the sole intruder  
To satisfy our quiet expectations. 20

I stand now alone—stealing and giving odour—  
Above the mower's swathes of ordered neatness,  
The perfume of your presence in slashed grass  
Dead to release its sweetness,

Rises to meet me. Sullen in indigo 25  
And chrome, the night allows  
Last smoulder of the light to tinge its edge.  
The deepening cloud spreads like the boughs,

Espalier boughs holding the gold fruit.  
Reach me an apple, Eve, ripe with your laughter. 30  
I am ready now for the expected coda,  
For whatever dayfall should come after.



21	alone—stealing ] alone.[— <i>inserted by hand</i> ]Stealing	97.19
	alone—stealing ] alone.—Stealing	97.19
	alone—stealing ] alone.—stealing	2001.1.3.1.7
	odour— ] odour[— <i>over</i> ,]	97.19
	odour— ] odourm—odour	98.82.9
22	swathes ] s[wa <i>over</i> aw]thes	RH Col 3
	of ] o[f <i>over</i> r]	NIV
	neatness, ] s[n <i>over</i> w]eatness,	98.82.9
	neatness, ] neatness	NIV
	^	
23	presence ] [p <i>over</i> o]resence	98.82.9
	grass ] grass,	98.4.3, 2001.1.3.1.7
24	release ] re[l <i>over</i> ;]ease	2002.41.2
27	of the light ] of light	97.19, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8
	edge. ] edge,	2002.41.8
28	boughs ] [b <i>over</i> n]oughs	2001.1.3.1.7
29	Espalier ] Espal[i <i>over</i> l]er	RB Col 6
	gold ] ripe	NIV
30	Eve ] [E <i>over illegible character</i> ]	NIV
31	expected ] e[x <i>over</i> d]pected	2001.1.3.1.7
32	should ] shou[l <i>over</i> k]d	97.19



## SPITTING COBRA

### Publication History:

NCT: *New Contrast* 20 (4), December 1992. 39.

SP: *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 50.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

Text: RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

Title:	SPITTING ] SPITT[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ING	97.19
1	was with ] [w <i>over illegible character</i> ]as [w <i>over q</i> ]ith	98.82.9
2	chair, ] chair;	98.4.3
3	Desperate it was, slithering ] Desperate, slithering	97.19, NIV
	Desperate it was, slithering ] Desperate, and slithering	SP, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8,
	polished ] polishe[d <i>inserted by hand over c</i> ]	97.19
5	colour ] [c <i>inserted by hand over v</i> ]olour	97.19
	of sun-warmed ] of the sunwarmed	NCT
	warmed ] wa[r <i>over m</i> ]med	RH Col 3
6	turquoise ] tu[r <i>over t</i> ]quoise	98.4.3
7	Silver-wrought ] Silversmith-wrought	SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, NIV
	Silver-wrought ] Silvermith-wrought	98.82.9
	chromium-plate ] chromium plate	NCT, 97.19, 98.4.3, 2002.41.8, NIV
8	Its ] [I <i>over O</i> ]ts	98.4.3
	Its ] It[ <sup>^</sup> <i>deleted</i> ]s	RH Col 3
10	mat, ] mat	NIV
	^	
13	coils ] coil[s <i>inserted by hand over d</i> ]	2002.41.8, RB Col 6
	grass ] grass,	2001.1.3.1.7
	^	
15	An ] And	97.19
	hour's ] ho[u <i>over i</i> ]r's	98.4.3
	half-blinded ] half blinded	2001.1.3.1.7, RH Col 3
16	Your ] your	NIV
17	me again ] m[e <i>over illegible character</i> ] again	RH Col 3
	stone-blind ] stone blind	SP, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, NIV
	pause ] [pa <i>over ap</i> ]use	97.19
	pause ] cause	NCT

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## SPITTING COBRA

It was with curiosity, not alarm,  
I saw it squirming past my chair,  
Desperate it was, slithering on the polished floor,  
Lost from familiar sun and air.

Gold-brown, colour of sun-warmed earth,  
Gilt-scaled, banded with turquoise,  
Silver-wrought in age of chromium-plate,  
Its lethal poise.

5

I guided you out with a stick. It was  
A kindness; but across the mat,  
You suddenly turned, flaunted your hood,  
And spat—

10

Straight to the mark. Of amber coils in amber grass  
I only had one startled glance:  
An hour's pain, half-blinded to  
Your deadly elegance.

15

Strike me again stone-blind, Medusa: give me pause  
Only to listen in the first fall of night,  
To listen for her step, her voice, her laugh,  
To see in darkness what is lost in light.

20

18 Only ] Onl[y over t]  
20 darkness ] d[ar over ra]kness  
darkness ] dar[k over r]ness  
lost in ] lost i[n over j]

97.19  
RB Col 6  
2002.41.2  
98.4.3



## THRUSH

Listen, thrush: run and listen,  
For a noiseless step in the grass.  
The dabchick's wake scratches the lake's mirror  
And everything is glass. 5  
With cock of grey head and questing orange bill,  
Attentive to the blind stir of the worm—  
Forget the exclamation mark on your white throat  
Its point your bead of eye.  
Listen, thrush, for the unregarded note: 10  
The squeak and mutter of frogs in autumn  
Not the deafening chorus of downpour,  
Not the roar of spate but the drip of rain from the eaves;  
Not the cataract's boom but the voiceless chute  
Steep slide of silence, 15  
Not vituperations in hustings  
But murmurings in arbours,  
Not brass gongs of sun  
But mist on the water:  
—Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low—  
So listen, thrush, listen for the undertones, 20  
Or for nothing at all.

## WILD ORCHIDS

### Publication History:

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 52.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

### Text: RB Col 6

**Note:** All copies of this poem have 22 lines except NELM MS 97.19 which has 23 lines and NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7 which has 21 lines. Line 6 of RB Col 6 is, in NELM MS 97.19, divided into two lines, the division falling between “sunlight” and “wonder”.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	ORCHIDS ] ORC[H over C]IDS	97.19
1	a cliff ] the cliff	97.19
3	slender ] slnder	98.4.3
	stream ] stream <del>m</del>	97.19
5	Where ] Whe[r over f]e	97.19
6	to ] [t over r]o	RB Col 6
	our ] ou[r over t]	98.82.9
8	daybreak ] day[b over y]reak	RB Col 6
	stirred ] s[t over i]rred	98.82.9
	their tiny ] the tiny	SP, 98.82.9, 98.4.3, 2001.1.3.1.7
9	opening ] openi ng	2000.18.8.2
	^	
10	bonnets ] bo[n over b]nets	98.82.9
	you ] [y over t]ou	RH Col 3
	remembering ] remembering,	98.82.9
	^	
11	What? ] Wha t?	RB Col 6
	^	
	toadflax ] toa[d over f]flax	98.4.3
	toadflax ] toadfla[-inserted by hand]x	97.19
	cowslip ] cow[sl over ls]ips	2001.1.3.1.7
12	Shades ... cups ] omitted	2001.1.3.1.7
	and ] [a over q]nd	97.19
13	spinsters ] sp[i over p]nsters	2001.1.3.1.7
	in the ] in nthe	2002.41.2
14	Mazawattee ] Mazawatt[e over i]e	2000.18.8.2
	Pear's ] [P over p]ear's	98.4.3

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## WILD ORCHIDS

### *At Chirwe Falls*

At the edge of the day, on the edge of a cliff,  
 We stood beside them, small circle of flowers.  
 Below our feet, the slender stream fell headlong  
 Shattered in spume and shreds of lawn,  
 Where birds, eagle or merlin, floated like motes 5  
 From shadow to sunlight,  
 Wonder of wings below our toes.  
 The wind of daybreak stirred their tiny heads,  
 Purple pointed caps and white opening faces.  
 "Ah, granny-bonnets," you said, remembering 10  
 —What? cuckoo-pint, toadflax, cowslip heads?  
 Shades of grey heads and blue-lined cups  
 —The spinsters and the knitters in the sun—  
 Mazawattee and Pear's Soap, Illyria  
 Behind the chintz and china, the fantasy 15  
 You would translate to commonplace  
 To keep my heels to the ground.  
 And now again  
 I stand, alone, on the despairing verge.  
 Speak to me, love: keep my feet to the earth, 20  
 Lest, hung for an instant on the falcon's wing,  
 I drop—to what?

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 15 | Behind ] [B over illegible character]ehind<br>chintz ] chin[t inserted by hand over y]z<br>and ] a[n inserted by hand over b]d<br>china ] chin[a over illegible character]<br>fantasy ] fa[n over illegible character]tasy | 2000.18.8.2<br>2002.41.2<br>RB Col 6<br>NIV<br>2000.18.8.2                                    |
| 16 | commonplace ] commonplace,<br>^  | NIV   |
| 18 | again ] again,<br>^  | SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2,<br>2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, NIV |
| 19 | stand ] s[ta over at]nd<br>alone ] a lone<br>^   | 98.82.9<br>RB Col 6   |
|    | alone ] alo[n over illegible character]e<br>despairing ] despai[r over i]ing   | 2000.18.8.2<br>97.19  |
| 20 | love: ] love;  | 97.19   |
| 21 | falcon's ] f[al over la]con's  | 98.82.9   |
| 22 | what? ] wha[- inserted by hand]t?  | RB Col 6  |

## CLOUD

### Publication History:

SP: *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 53.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

### Text: RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

2	ordinary ] ordin[a over r]ry	97.19
3	Warming ] War[m over illegible character]ing	RB Col 6
	tea-pot ] teapot	2002.41.8, NIV
4	sky: ] sky[: inserted by hand]	97.19
	sky: ] sky.	2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.8
5	saffron ] [s over illegible character]affron	2001.1.3.1.7
8	And now ] From here	97.19, 2002.41.8
	And now ] [F over A]rom here	2002.41.2
9	celestial ] celest[i over a]al	RH Col 3
11	blown ] blow[n over m]	RH Col 3
	violence ] violen[c over f]e	RH Col 3
13	brow serene, ] serene brow,	97.19, 2002.41.8, NIV
14	long ] lon[g over f]	RH Col 3
	streaming ] streamin	2000.18.8.2
15	of ] o[f over d]	98.4.3
16	From here, unwavering, ] But now unwavering,	97.19, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8
	From here, unwavering, ] But from here, unwavering,	SP, 98.82.9
17	beauty ] be[a over u]uty	97.19
	beauty ] be[au over illegible characters]ty	RB Col 6
18	white against ] wh <sup>^</sup> ite agai[n over i]st	RB Col 6
19	outlived ] [o over p]utlived	NIV
	outlived ] outlive[d over e]	98.4.3
20	all ] a[- inserted by hand]ll	98.82.9
	can ] ca[- inserted by hand]n	2002.41.2

## CLOUD

As I stand in the first light at the kitchen door,  
After the first ordinary fumbings of the day,  
Warming the tea-pot, milk from the fridge,  
Squashing a cockroach—I look up at the sky:

Cloud in the high air, alight with the first saffron, 5  
Profile of cumulus clean against the blue,  
Filling the sky from treetops to the zenith,  
And now white-still, fixed in gigantic cameo.

And what celestial Rodin carved the face,  
Up there—imprisoned in the viewless winds 10  
And blown with restless violence about—  
Moulded and cast it in its perfect bounds?

And from its brow serene, wild locks of hair,  
Mile-long tresses streaming to the east,  
Teased-out and shredded by high turbulence of wind, 15  
From here, unwavering, fixed, at rest.

So rest in beauty after the storm and stress:  
In damascene of white against eternal blue.  
You have outlived all this, and I  
Stare into the sky: all I can do. 20



## DUNG

### Publication History:

SP: *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 54.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

### Text: RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

1	wall ] wall, ^	2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.8
2	Suddenly ] Suddenl[y over t] Suddenly ] Sudde[n over b]ly came ] [c over x]ame beneath ] ben[e over a]ath	97.19 NIV 97.19 NIV
3	Thick ] Thi[c over v]k and ] a[- inserted by hand]nd	2002.41.2 2001.1.3.1.7
4	dieseline ] diesilene dieseline ] dieseli[n over illegible character]e dieseline ] die[s over l]ilene	98.82.9 RH Col 3 2000.18.8.2
6	Flags ] Oriflammes on ] o[n over f] muck-heap ] muc[k over j]heap muck-heap ] muck-hill muck-heap ] muckheap	2002.41.8 98.82.9 2001.1.3.1.7 2000.18.8.2 NIV
7	often ] often, ^	NIV
	gaffe ] [gaffe over a word deleted with corection fluid]	NIV
10	lumbering ] lu[m over k]bering tumbrils— ] tumbrilss—	2001.1.3.1.7 97.19
11	Milk-smell ] Milk-sme[- inserted by hand]ll Milk-smell ] Milk[- over O]smell	2001.1.3.1.7 2000.18.8.2
12	smarting ] smart[i over u]ng stalks ] sta[lk over ks]s	2000.18.8.2 98.82.9
13	bumpkin ] bumbkin	2000.18.8.2
15	The ] [T over t]he mangold-tump ] mangold tump hoopoe's ] hoo[p over ʒ]oe's	RH Col 3 2002.41.8 97.19, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.8
16	Low ] Sly to ] [t over r]o ridgeback's ] ridgebacks' ridgeback's ] r[i over o]dgebacks'	97.19 RB Col 6 98.82.9, RH Col 3, NIV 2001.1.3.1.7

*Variant information continued over the page*

## DUNG

Along a blank garden wall  
Suddenly it came, as we strolled beneath the lamplight,  
Thick and heavy, lying abroad  
The fume of dieseline along the road.

Food for somebody's roses, we said: 5  
Flags on a muck-heap, joy from the flowering dirt.  
How often in my arms, with your irreverent gaffe,  
You'd subterfuge the passion with a laugh.

Ah, lovely muck, you said:  
Tossed to the winds behind the lumbering tumbrils— 10  
Milk-smell and dung-smell in remembered byres,  
Eye-smarting fume from cabbage-stalks in fires.

And other bumpkin scents: dung-smear on a floor,  
Horse-sweat and shag tobacco, must and barm,  
The opened mangold-tump, the hoopoe's nest, 15  
Low taint of jackal to our ridgeback's quest.

—Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds—  
His nose fastidious wrinkled in The Globe,  
Did not his many minds see sweetness hidden  
In lilies and weeds together in the midden? 20

Now you have gone, the odours fail and vanish.  
The savour's lost from salt and bread and rose.  
Yet even now,  
Could the smell-dogs of despair shudder and fix,  
And flush up from your ash—the phoenix? 25



18	His ] [H <i>inserted by hand over N</i> ]is	98.4.3
	The Globe, ] The <del>G</del> lobe Globe:	2001.1.3.1.7
	Globe, ] Globe:	SP, 98.82.9, NIV
19	not ] [n <i>over m</i> ]ot	RB Col 6
	his ] hi[s <i>over illegible character</i> ]	2002.41.8
	minds ] mind[s <i>over r</i> ]	2002.41.8
	see ] s[ <i>ee inserted by hand over illegible characters</i> ]	RH Col 3
21	vanish. ] vanish;	RH Col 3
22	salt ] sal[t <i>over y</i> ]	2000.18.8.2
	and rose ] a[n <i>over b</i> ]d rose	NIV
23	even ] e[v <i>over c</i> ]en	2002.41.2
24	of ] o[f <i>over d</i> ]	2001.1.3.1.7
	despair ] des[p <i>over ¾</i> ]air	97.19
	fix, ] fix	SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2,
	^	2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, NIV
25	your ash—the ] the ash—your	97.19
	your ash—the ] yo[u <i>over i</i> ]r ash—the	RB Col 6
	your ash—the ] your [ <i>three illegible characters deleted</i> ] ash—the	RH Col 3

## HENGRAVE HALL

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

**Text:** RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

1	A casual turn ] A <del>Casual</del> casual turn	2002.41.2
	casual ] casua[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]l	97.19
3	among ] am[o <i>over</i> m]ng	RH Col 3
4	Of teaming ] Of[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]teaming	97.19
	teeming ] teemin[g <i>over</i> f]	2000.18.8.2
	fashions. ] fashions;	2002.41.8
	Tudor, ] Tudor	2001.1.3.1.7, RH Col 3
	^	
8	baroque ] b[a <i>over</i> o]roque	2000.18.8.2
9	and ] an[d <i>over</i> f]	97.19
	elegant ] elega[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]nt	RB Col 6
11	Knighthood ] Knightho[o <i>over</i> p]d	97.19
	Sir ] [S <i>over</i> s]ir	2002.41.2
	John, ] John:	
1 3	place ] p[l <i>over</i> p]ace	RB Col 6
	you ] [y <i>over</i> t]ou	RH Col 3
15	cook ] [c <i>over</i> v]ook	RH Col 3
16	later ] la ter	RB Col 6
	^	
17	assertion ] asser[t <i>over</i> y]ion	98.4.3
19	phlox ] p[h <i>over</i> k]lox	2001.1.3.1.7
	phlox ] phlo[x <i>over</i> d]	98.4.3
20	kitchens ] kitchen-gardens	97.19
	kitchens ] kit[c <i>over</i> f]hen-garden	2002.41.8
	kitchens ] kitchen[s <i>over</i> d]	2002.41.2
22	said ] sa[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]id	RB Col 6
24	his bent back ] his back	2000.18.8.2
25	tophat ] top-hat	97.19, RH Col 3
	glance ] gla[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]nce	98.82.9
27	Victoria, ] Victoria—	97.19, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8
28	lost ] p[a <i>inserted by hand</i> ]st	97.19
29	long ] lo[n <i>over</i> g]g	RH Col 3
30	year ] year.	2001.1.3.1.7
	^	

*Variant information continued over the page*

## HENGRAVE HALL

- A casual turn of the page, and there it stood,  
The lordly portico:  
One page among the architectural fantasies  
Of teeming times and fashions. Tudor, these,  
Putti and dragons, plump bottoms, squirming scales, below 5  
A brow of balcony, a multitude
- Of crack-brained crazes, intertwined, entire  
With mock baroque,  
But the whole placid and elegant, contained  
Within the classic lines; for he attained 10  
Knighthood: Kytson, Sir John, bespoke  
Haberdasher of Bow turned country squire.
- But that's the place, you said: I was once there,  
I remember now, the porch, the hall, the stair:
- My brother-in-law head gardener, Phyllis the cook, 15  
In this later time  
Were there amid the assertion of box hedges,  
Opulence of peonies, pansies in wedges,  
Semi-circle of phlox, lavender and thyme.  
It didn't show the kitchens in the book. 20
- George banished the cabbages behind the outhouses.  
They stink, he said.  
His heart was with his flowers and sparrowgrass.  
Behind his bent back, shades of parvenu and grandee,  
In tophat or peruke, they glance and pass, 25  
Ogling and sidling with their tight-laced spouses.
- Elizabeth, Anne, George, Victoria,  
Slily it slides, the lost euphoria.
- For that was long ago, between the wars,  
George dead this many a year 30  
—All honour's mimique all wealth alchemie—  
Lords without accolade, satins and dimity  
Fade to miasma, only a glimpse, a pause:  
You'll not be there again, or anywhere.
- Edward, the Georges, William, Elizabeth, 35  
In faceless anonymity of death.



31	mimique ] mimique, ^	97.19
32	without ] with[o over illegible character]ut dimity ] dimity, ^	97.19 98.82.9
33	only ] onl[y over t]	RB Col 6
34	again, ] again—	97.19, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, NIV
35	Georges ] [G over g]eorges	98.82.9, NIV
	Georges ] [G inserted by hand over g]eorges	2002.41.8, RH Col 3
	William, ] Ann,	2000.18.8.2, NIV
	Elizabeth, ] Elizabeth:	2001.1.3.1.7
36	faceless ] [f over g]aceless	2002.41.8
	faceless ] fa[c over v]eless	97.19
	death ] dea[- inserted by hand]th	2002.41.2



## SHADOW SHOW

### Publication History:

NCT: *New Contrast* 20 (4), December 1992. 39-40.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2000.18.8.2“a”; NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS  
2002.41.8; RB Col 6; RH Col 3; NIV.

### Text: RB Col 6

**Note:** There is no indentation in NELM MS 97.19. I have appointed the accession number NELM MS 2000.18.8.2“a” as there are two variant copies of “Shadow Show” in NELM MS 2000.18.8.2.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	SHADOW SHOW ] SHADOW\$SHOW	2001.1.3.1.7
	SHADOW SHOW ] SHADOWSHOW	2000.18.8.2, 2002.41.8, NIV
1	carpet: ] carpet,	2001.1.3.1.7
	slanting, NCT, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2000.18.8.2“a”, RH Col 3: slanting	2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RB COL 6
	slanting, ] slantin[g over ],	NIV
2	tree ] trees	97.19
3	early ] earl[y over t]	97.19
	early ] [e over a]arly	NIV
4	shadows ] s[h over j]adows	98.82.9
	shadows, slide ] shadows that bslide,	2001.1.3.1.7
5	on ] [o over i]n	98.4.3, 2001.1.3.1.7
6	intercrossing ] intercr[o over p]ssing	97.19
	intercrossing ] inter-crossing	2000.18.8.2“a”
7	Choreograph ] Choreogr[ap over pa]h	2000.18.8.2“a”
8	ballet, ] balle[- inserted by hand]t,	RB COL 6
	ballet, ] ballet	2001.1.3.1.7, RH Col 3
9	skein ] [s over k]kein	2001.1.3.1.7
10	Mendelssohn's ] Mendelssoh[n inserted by hand]'s	98.82.9
	scherzo ] *scherzo	RH Col 3
11	of the spaces ] of spaces	NCT, 97.19, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8
	spaces ] [s over p]paces	NIV
12	sunbird's ] s[u inserted by hand over i]nbird's	97.19
	wings ] [w over q]ings	NIV
13	not go ] no[t inserted by hand] go	2002.41.8, RB COL 6
	go ] go outside	RH Col 3
	go ] go [outside deleted with correction fluid]	NIV

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## SHADOW SHOW

Square of light on a green carpet: slanting,  
Hesitating, through the wind-stirred tree outside,  
Urn of the early sun decanting  
Shower of shadows, slide  
Dark green on lighter green, blurred at the edges, 5  
Scurrying, wavering, intercrossing—  
Choreograph to the word of the wind.  
Do you remember that ballet, in the “Dream”, tossing  
A skein of leaf-russet elves behind  
Mendelssohn’s scherzo? 10  
Now the eyes of the spaces in the sprays  
Blink with the sunbird’s wings.  
I sit and watch: I dare not go  
Outside; scream of cicada cleaves, rives  
Any dream that was. 15  
The leaves have edges like knives.  
I cannot do more for now, because  
My dreams were half of yours: but this  
I must inform with my own artifice.

- 14 Outside; scream ] Outside; . scream 98.4.3  
15 Any ] An[y *inserted by hand over d*] 2002.41.2  
dream ] drea[- *inserted by hand*]m RB COL 6  
17 I cannot do more ] I can do no more NIV

## FRITZ

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

**Text:** RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

2	wagging gesture ] wagging drop	98.82.9
3	like most is ] like is	97.19
	walk ] wal[k <i>over</i> o]	97.19
4	know, ] know—	97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, NIV
	understand, ] understand	97.19, 98.82.9, 2002.41.8, NIV
		^
8	But ] Bu[t <i>over illegible character</i> ]	RH Col 3
9	month ] mo[nth <i>over</i> thh]	RB Col 6
10	him ] hi[m <i>over</i> k]	97.19
	has, ] ha[s <i>over</i> d],	2001.1.3.1.7
	has, ] has[, <i>over</i> m]	2002.41.2
12	orange ] [o <i>over</i> p]range	97.19
	gnarled, ] gnarle[d <i>over</i> e],	97.19
	gnarled, ] gnarled	98.82.9
		^
14	Plunge ] <del>Plu</del> Plunge	2001.1.3.1.7
16	of ] o[f <i>inserted by hand over</i> g]	NIV
18	<i>line indented</i> ] <i>line not indented</i>	RH Col 3
	leaf ] l[e <i>over</i> w]af	97.19
20	see now, in ] see, in	98.82.9
	brooding ] br[o <i>inserted by hand over</i> r]oding	98.4.3
21	blouse ] blo[us <i>over</i> .se]e	2001.1.3.1.7
	blouse ] blo[us <i>over</i> so]e	2000.18.8.2
22	lissom ] [l <i>over</i> k]issom	2000.18.8.2
	gesture ] ges[t <i>over</i> r]ure	2002.41.2
	gesture ] gest[u <i>over</i> t]re	RH Col 3
23	first notes ] first three notes	98.82.9
	wood-dove's first notes ] wood-dove's notes	RH Col 3
	the boughs ] the[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]boughs	97.19
25	<i>line indented</i> 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, NIV: <i>line not indented</i>	RB Col 6

*Variant information continued over the page*

## FRITZ

He said:

With a forward wagging gesture of his long hand—  
What I like most is just to walk through the bush,  
You know, just on and on. You understand,  
I was never looking for anything, never found it. 5

They said:

Oh, poor old Fritz: he's a good carpenter,  
But you could never pay him by the hour,  
Or day, or month, just for the job. It's queer,  
Time means nothing to him, never has, never will. 10

He never carried a gun, only a stick  
Cut from a clapper-orange, knuckled, gnarled,  
Like the fist that held it. The duiker's slick  
Plunge through the shadows had no fear of him.

To myself I said: 15

Why should I think of him now: dead, I think,  
This many a year. Other woodlands were his place,  
Twig and leaf stirring before a scatter of light,  
Intercrossing fingers before a shy bright face.

And do I see now, in my own brooding walk, 20  
Flick of a green skirt, a yellow blouse,  
Sway of a tread lissom as sapling's gesture?  
The wood-dove's first notes drop through the boughs,

Those first three notes, wait, wait, and wait—  
Then the descending tumble of despair 25  
—Houres, dayes, moneths, that are the rags of time—  
Time drops a heartbeat, and I stand and stare.

He has gone on ahead with her. They part, those ghosts,  
At the verge where the grass takes over from the trees—  
He to his gaunt shack, back to his debts, 30  
A scolding wife, supper of sour bread and cheese.

And I saw—

Time close up like the book of a butterfly's wings,  
The day's lesson read; and red the stems.  
The silence stands in columns with the hour; 35  
No wish reproaches me, no regret condemns.



26	<i>line indented</i> ] <i>line not indented</i>	RH Col 3
	dayes ] da[y over t]es	97.19
	dayes ] [d over s]ayes	2000.18.8.2
	that are ] that[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]are	97.19
27	heartbeat ] heart-beat	97.19, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8
	heartbeat ] heart[b over n]eat	RH Col 3
	pause ] pau[s over <i>illegible character</i> ]e	2002.41.2
	stand and stare ] pause and stare	97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3
	stand and stare ] [p over ;]ause and stare	NIV
28	her. ] her[. over ,]	RB Col 6
	part, ] par[t. over <i>characters deleted with correction fluid</i> ]	NIV
	ghosts ] ghos[t over h]s	2001.1.3.1.7
29	<i>line indented</i> ] <i>line not indented</i>	2002.41.2
	verge ] verge, ^	NIV
	over ] o[v over c]er	RH Col 3
	the trees ] th trees	NIV
30	<i>line indented</i> ] <i>line not indented</i>	2001.1.3.1.7
	gaunt ] ga[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]unt	RB Col 6
31	wife ] wif[e over w]	97.19
32	saw— ] nsaw:	97.19
	saw— ] saw ^	2002.41.8
	saw— ] saw:	NIV
34	lesson ] less[o over n]m	97.19
	and ] a[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]nd	2002.41.8
	red ] re[d over e]	97.19
	stems ] s[t over g]ems	NIV
35	silence ] silen[c over f]e	2000.18.8.2
	columns ] column	97.19, 2002.41.8
	with ] wit[h over y]	2001.1.3.1
	with ] witht	97.19
	hour; ] hour.	98.82.9, NIV
36	no regret ] n[o <i>inserted by hand over u</i> ] regret	97.19
	condemns ] conde[m over ,]ns	2002.41.2

## NOCTURNE

### Publication History:

NCT: *New Contrast* 20 (4), December 1992, 40.

SP: *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 55.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

### Text: RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

Title:	Nocturne ] Nocturne I	SP
2	across ] acroas	97.19
5	slant, to ] slant, <del>the</del> to	2002.41.2
	to pause ] t[o <i>over</i> h]e pause	98.4.3
	move ] m[o <i>over</i> i]ve	NIV
7	house, ] house	NCT, 97.19, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8
	^	
12	curtain slit ] window slit	98.4.3
13	Restless ] [R <i>over illegible character</i> ]estless	97.19
14	darkness ] da[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]rkness	2001.1.3.1.7
15	to ] t[o <i>over</i> p]	98.4.3
18	and ] a[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]nd	98.82.9
20	shadowshow ] shad[o <i>over</i> p]wshow	98.82.9
21	ever ] e[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ver	RB Col 6
23	The ] †The	RB Col 6
24	silence ] silen[c <i>over</i> d]e	2001.1.3.1.7

## NOCTURNE

- Sleep quiet, love.  
 Though headlights streak across your dream,  
 Like galleon or quinquireme  
 The undulating fables seem  
To slant, to pause, to move. 5
- Once it was the bright  
 The moonlit wind about our house,  
 That lifted through the waving boughs  
 To top the distant hills, and souse  
The sky with light. 10
- The street-lamp now  
 Filters through the curtain slit:  
 Restless once because of it,  
 Lie now in darkness infinite,  
Never to know. 15
- The voices come and go:  
 The wail and clank of distant train,  
 A car purrs by and fades again,  
 The crickets spin their endless skein  
Of shadowshow. 20
- Sleep ever, as you must,  
 In stillness at the core of noise.  
 Between your unremembered joys  
 The silence sinks in equipoise,  
Like dust. 25



## SONG BY OWL-LIGHT

### Publication History:

SP: *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 56.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

### Text: RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

Title:	SONG ] S[O over P]NG	NIV
2	hedges ] hed[g over h]es	2000.18.8.2
4	comes ] come	2000.18.8.2
3	Along ] A[l over .][o over ʔ]ng	97.19
	secretive— ] secretive,	2001.1.3.1.7
9	interstices ] inter[s inserted by hand]tices	97.19
10	Illumined ] [I over illegible character]llumined	RH Col 3
12	shade, ] [shade, over word deleted with correction fluid]	97.19
14	won, ] w[- inserted by hand]on,	97.19
	won, ] won	97.19, NIV
	^	
	years, ] [y over u]ears,	98.82.9
15	fastidious ] fasti[d over f]ious	98.82.9
	clean, ] clean[, over n]	2001.1.3.1.7
17	Keats, SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, RH Col 3: Keats	^
	2002.41.8, RB Col 6	
19	—The ] [— over \$]The	2000.18.8.2
	owl ] o[w over l]l	98.4.3
	is ] in	2001.1.3.1.7
	is ] was	2000.18.8.2
20	ask ] aske	98.4.3
	me ] [me over illegible characters]	2000.18.8.2

## SONG BY OWL-LIGHT

To-wit, to-woo—

Over the hedges, under the trees,  
Along the lamplit avenue,  
The voice comes, hollow, secretive—  
Who—who—who?

5

To wit—

To wit, a voice without a wing,  
A smile without a face, to flit  
In dark interstices of dream  
Illumined by the thought of it.

10

To woo—

As once I wooed in sun and shade,  
In skies of storm, in skies of blue,  
And won, and kept for fifty years,  
One heart fastidious, clean, and true.

15

To who?

Whose image, like the spear of Keats,  
Transfixed the aching entrails through  
—The owl for all his feathers is a-cold—  
Ah, never ask me who.

20

## AIR LINE

### Publication History:

SP: *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 57-58.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

### Text: RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

Title:	AIR LINE ] AIRLINE	2002.41.8
Subtitle:	Town ] T[ow <i>over illegible character</i> ]n	2000.18.8.2
1	bland ] blan[d <i>over f</i> ]	98.4.3
	announcement ] ann[o <i>over i</i> ]uncement	2002.41.8
	announcement ] announ[c <i>over f</i> ]ement	2002.41.2
2	The ] [T <i>over R</i> ]he	98.82.9
	minus ] minu[s <i>over d</i> ]	2002.41.2
	three— ] [t <i>over y</i> ]hree[— <i>over \$</i> ]	2002.41.2
	three— ] three[— <i>over ;</i> ]	2000.18.8.2
3	alexandrine ] alexa[n <i>inserted by hand</i> ]drine	NIV
5	Alexandrine ] Alexan[d <i>over n</i> ]rine	RH Col 3
6	easy ] eas[y <i>over t</i> ]	98.82.9
7	ease ] ease,	97.19
	^	
8	prone ] pro[n <i>over b</i> ]e	97.19
9	My hand tight; through ] My hand; through tight; ] tight:	NIV 97.19, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8
11	Antarctica ] Antar[c <i>inserted by hand</i> ]tica	2002.41.2
	sun ] su[n <i>over j</i> ]	RH Col 3
12	that ] as	NIV
	“Dr Bill” ] “Dr.Bill”	97.19
13	Observation ] Ob[se <i>over er</i> ]rvation	NIV
	Hill ] H[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ill	RH Col 3
14	contours ] contour[s <i>over w</i> ]	2001.1.3.1.7
16	Contrive ] Constrive	98.82.9
	lines ] line[s <i>over w</i> ]	2001.1.3.1.7
	easy ] eas[y <i>over t</i> ]	98.82.9
19	Scaly ] Scaley	2000.18.8.2
	or ] o[r <i>over e</i> ]	NIV
21	was; ] was.	2001.1.3.1.7
	perhaps you see now, ] perhaps now you see,	SP, 98.82.9
	now, ] now	97.19
	^	

*Variant information continued over the page*

## AIR LINE

*To Cape Town: to London*

Over the speakers comes the bland announcement:  
“The temperature outside is minus forty-three—”  
Good enough alexandrine, I say, sitting  
Bemused in the hour’s unreality.

—Alexandrine, perfect with caesura: 5  
That age of easy verse, cushioned with ease,  
This ease upholstered in the cloud,  
All time spread like a prone map. You squeeze

My hand tight; through the secure circle 10  
Of the porthole, down on the clouds we see  
Antarctica of snow lit with the blaze of sun—  
Such sights that “Dr Bill”,\* in minus 43,

Humming unperturbed on Observation Hill,  
Sketched in those contours etched with ice.  
How could he, with those numbed doomed fingers, 15  
Contrive such lines so easy, so precise?

But you see rifts in the white cloudscape,  
Holes in the ice. What monsters there,  
Scaly, sleek-backed, or spined like dragons,  
Could be, if we dropped plumb through the freezing air? 20

Two years ago, that was; perhaps you see now,  
In what chill shades you wander, all the wonder  
Of night and nightmare, where you lightly step,  
Snow and ice, earth sand and granite under.

. . . . .

Now, on this other flight, I sit alone: 25  
Strangers and victims, all two hundred of us,  
Recusants from Nineveh, half-heads over seat-backs,  
Snug in leviathan’s aesophagus.

Be with me through what’s there, with your wise smile,  
Over the snoring cities we shall not see twice 30  
—For in that sleep of death what dreams may come—  
To freeze my heart into a finger of ice.

\* “Dr Bill” (affectionately so called by his companions) was Dr Wilson of the Scott expedition. His extraordinarily delicate watercolours of Antarctica are one of the most extraordinary things to come out of that tragedy.



24	ice, earth sand ] ice, clay sand earth ] earth, ^	2002.41.8 SP
	sand and ] sand or sand and ] sand a nd ^	97.19 2001.1.3.1.7
	granite ] granit[e over w]	NIV
25	alone ] al[o over l]ne	RH Col 3
26	and victims ] and <del>recusants</del> victims all ] a[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ll	2002.41.2 RB Col 6
	two ] [t over y]wo	2001.1.3.1.7
27	Recusants ] Recusant[s over illegible character] Nineveh ] Nine[v over b]eh Nineveh ] [N over n]ineveh over ] o[v over b]er seat ] se[a over e]t	NIV NIV 2002.41.8 97.19 RH Col 3
28	aesophagus ] oesophagus	SP
29	with me ] wit[h over y] me through ] [th over illegible characters]rough what's ] [w over illegible character]hat's what's ] [w <i>inserted by hand over illegible character</i> ]hat's wise ] wi[s over d]e	2001.1.3.1.7 2002.41.2 2001.1.3.1.7 NIV 98.82.9
30	<i>line not indented</i> ] <i>line indented</i> snoring ] snorin[g over f]	2001.1.3.1.7 2000.18.8.2
31	in that 97.19, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8: in this	SP, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, RH Col 3, RB Col 6, NIV
32	<i>line not indented</i> ] <i>line indented</i>	2001.1.3.1.7
33	To ] [T over t]o	NIV
	footnote: "Dr Bill" ... tragedy. ] [Hugh Finn thinks this needs an annotation—"Dr Bill" ... tragedy. <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	RB Col 6
	"Dr Bill" ... tragedy. ] "Dr Bill"—affectionately so called by his comrades in Scott's expedition—doctor and artist	2002.41.8
	"Dr Bill" ... tragedy. ] ["Dr Bill"—My daughter in law thinks an annotation necessary —he was Dr Wilson (Dr Bill, affectionately[, <i>over</i> ]) to his companions) in Scott's gang. His extraordinarily delicate watercolours of Antartica are one of the most astonishing things about the whole expedition. (Sorry if it's un-called for!) <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	2001.1.3.1.7
	"Dr Bill" ... tragedy. ] <i>omitted</i>	SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2002.41.2, RH Col 3, NIV

## CUCKOO

### Publication History:

SP: *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 59.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

### Text: RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 1  | Eleven] Eleve[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]n   | RH Col 3   |
| 2  | eleven ] el[e over l]ven   | 98.4.3   |
|    | eleven ] ele[ve over ev]n  | 2001.1.3.1.7   |
| 3  | aged ] aged,   | NIV  |
|    | ^  |  |
|    | eleven ] elev[e over v]n   | RB Col 6   |
|    | years ] year[s over r]   | 98.4.3   |
| 7  | stick. ] stick,  | SP   |
| 8  | have ] ha[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ve  | RB Col 6   |
|    | life, ] life   | 97.19, RH Col 3  |
|    | ^  |  |
| 9  | breath ] b[r over e]eath   | 2000.18.8.2  |
|    | all—. ] all—   | SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, NIV |
|    | ^  |  |
|    | The ] Th[e over r]   | 2001.1.3.1.7   |
|    | replies, ] replies   | 97.19, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, NIV                                   |
|    | ^  |  |
| 11 | Across ] Over  | RH Col 3   |
|    | cornfield ] [c over v]ornfield   | RH Col 3   |
|    | cornfield ] [c over f]ornfield   | 2002.41.2  |
|    | crimsoning ] cri[m over n]soning   | 98.4.3   |
| 12 | morning's ] morni[n over m]g's   | 98.4.3   |
|    | morning's ] morning'[s over d]   | 98.82.9  |
|    | throat. SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, |  |
|    | RH Col 3, NIV: throat;   | RB Col 6   |
| 13 | that ] tha[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]t  | 98.82.9  |
|    | No ... Lear; ] No ... Lear:  | SP, 98.82.9  |
|    | No ... Lear; ] No, that way madness lies, cries Lear;                                | 97.19  |
|    | clean ] c[l over ;]ean   | 2000.18.8.2  |

*Variant information continued over the page*

## CUCKOO

Eleven times he shouted, to me and the laggard year—  
To the listening maid eleven years to wedlock,  
To the aged eleven years to the churchyard,

For her, beyond delight, beyond regard,  
Never to lean her ear to that teasing voice, 5  
Never to see the hawthorn's bursting quick.

I slash the young nettles savagely with my stick.  
—Why should a bird, a weed, have life,  
And she no breath at all—. The bird replies,

And calls again, and nonchalantly flies 10  
Across a green cornfield crimsoning with poppies,  
A slash across the morning's lifted throat.

No more of that, cries Lear; clean-etched, remote,  
Turn back to that earlier moment, when  
Agate-edged, lilac and silver after a night's rain 15

Our sunsharp hills subtended to the plain,  
We saw him, perched on the humming wires,  
Respite on his long journey home, and you

Lifted a happy face to call, "cuckoo."  
He is morose in Africa: you got no answer. 20  
The old ribaldries mock and mow beneath

The innocent day. I sniff the bitter breath  
Of earthgall and ramson. And I walk  
Past the grey bird's spinney, cuckolded by death.





14	Turn back to that earlier ] Was that much earlier back ] bac[k over j] earlier moment, ] earlier spring, when ] when, SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, ^ NIV	2002.41.8 NIV 97.19
15	Agate ] [A over S]gate Agate ] A[g over f]ate after ] af[t over f]er rain ] rain, ^	97.19 98.4.3 RB Col 6 2001.1.3.1.7
16	sunsharp ] sunshar[p over r] sunsharp ] sunshar[p over o] plain ] plai[n over j]	98.4.3 NIV 98.82.9, 2001.1.3.1.7
17	perched ] perch[e over illegible character]d	98.4.3
18	long ] lon[g over t] journey home, ] journey[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]home , ^	98.4.3 98.4.3
19	call, ] call ^ "cuckoo." ] cuck[oo over 00]." "cuckoo." ] "cuckoo".	2002.41.8 98.4.3, RB Col 6 SP, 98.82.9, 98.4.3, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.8, NIV
20	Africa: ] Africa;	98.4.3
21	ribaldries ] r[i inserted by hand over e]braldries mow ] [m over k]ow	98.4.3 2002.41.2
23	Of ] of Of ] O[f over F] earthgall ] earthgall[s over ¾] and ] an[d over f] ramson ] <del>ram</del> ramsons ramson SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, NIV: ramsons	98.82.9 98.4.3 98.4.3 98.4.3 98.4.3 2002.41.2, RB Col 6
24	Past ] By SP, 97.19, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8 bird's ] b[i over o]rd's	98.4.3



## ITCHEN ESTUARY: BITTERNE

She never showed me this or told me of it,  
So it is immaculate of sadness,  
Though the scene is sad, and grey the weather.  
Low tide on the estuary: flat flanks of mud  
Sleeked with the gleam, purple and sullen silver; 5  
The yawning warehouses lean forlorn together  
With no store of ore or timber, nor yet  
Of cheap tin trays. The derelict hoists stand stark.  
A rusty hulk sags at its hawser, neither 10  
To feel the tug of the tide, nor heel over  
To the freshening east. And yet, along the hither  
Bank, among the whitening shallows, she  
Must once have wandered eager and alive,  
There, where loosestrife and meadowsweet smoulder  
Away the depth of summer, listening perhaps 15  
To the dim boom of that secret bird who haunts  
In this place, with such a name, as well as other,  
His blade of bill upthrust amid the blades of rushes.

- 16 haunts ] ha[u *over* i]nts 97.19  
17 with ] wit[h *over* y] 2002.41.2  
18 rushes. SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3,  
NIV: rushes . RB Col 6  
^

## SEVERN: ABOVE BEVERE LOCK

### Publication History:

SP: *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 61.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 97.19; NELM MS 98.4.3; NELM MS 98.82.9; NELM MS 2000.18.8.2;  
NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7; NELM MS 2002.41.2; NELM MS 2002.41.8; RB Col 6;  
RH Col 3; NIV.

### Text: RB Col 6

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: —to ] to	NIV
loss, ] loss[, <i>over m</i> ]	RB Col 6
loss, ] loss	97.19, 2001.1.3.1.7
^	
disappointment ] di[s <i>over d</i> ]appointment,	98.4.3
^	
disappointment ] disappointmen t	97.19
^	
disappointment ] disappointment,	SP, 98.82.9, 98.4.3, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, NIV
^	
life—” ] life.”	SP, 98.82.9, 98.4.3, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, NIV
life—” ] life”	97.19
R.L. Stevenson’s prayer ] [R.L. Stevenson’s prayer <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	RB Col 6
1 flood ] flo[o <i>over d</i> ]d	2000.18.8.2
slowly: SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8,	
RH Col 3, NIV: slowly,	RB Col 6
3 to ] [t <i>over illegible character</i> ]o	RH Col 3
caprice ] cap[r <i>over t</i> ]ice	RH Col 3
caprice ] capri[c <i>over f</i> ]e	2002.41.2
4 pass ] apass	RB Col 6
5 Show ] S[ho <i>over oh</i> ]w	98.4.3
7 or rebuff ] ro rebu[f <i>over d</i> ]f	2001.1.3.1.7
9 mayfly ] ma[y <i>over t</i> ]fly	97.19
10 mirror, ] mirror[, <i>over m</i> ]	97.19
12 urgent ] u[r <i>over d</i> ]gent	2002.41.2
13 Fish ] Fis[h <i>over g</i> ]	RH Col 3, NIV
rain ] ra[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]in	NIV
14 back ] bac[k <i>over c</i> ]	RH Col 3
15 stormcock ] stormc[o <i>over l</i> ]ck	98.4.3
throat ] throa[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]t	2001.1.3.1.7

*Variant information continued over the page*

## SEVERN: ABOVE BEVERE LOCK

*“—To accept death, loss, and disappointment  
as it were straws upon the tide of life—”*

*R.L. Stevenson's prayer*

The flood slides slowly: you would hardly notice,  
Still as a steel glass, the steel glass  
They used to say told truth, no flattery, no caprice.  
Only the straws that hesitate and pass

Show that it moves, not sleeps, but still enough 5  
To see your image in the green verge depths, tease,  
Naiad or lorelei, with invitation or rebuff,  
Gone with a shiver of wind, the shiver of trees.

A perch gulps at a mayfly: the sudden rings 10  
Ripple the mirror, fold my illusions up.  
The first scatter of a shower on the surface flings  
Myriads of interruptions with each urgent drop.

Fish-greed or rain-blessing: they change the note  
And head me back to flat reality.  
The wind rises; a stormcock swells his throat 15  
In the tossed whitened aspens. Too easily

I catch at the straws. Through them I can discern.  
They spin and twirl with the hidden eddies, stress  
Beneath the stillness; then, with deliberate turn  
Down with the weir plunge to forgetfulness. 20



16	whitened ] whitening	SP, 98.82.9, RH Col 3
	whitened ] whi[t over i]ened	NIV
	aspens. ] aspens[. over ,]	RB Col 6
	easily ] [e over m]asily	RB Col 6
17	I catch ] I[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]catch	RH Col 3
	can ] ca n	NIV
	^	
	discern. ] discern;	SP, 97.19, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, NIV
18	and ] an[d <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	NIV
	eddies ] e[d over e]dies	2000.18.8.2
19	Beneath ] Ben[e over a]ath	NIV
	stillness; ] stillness:	97.19
	then, ] [t over T]hen,	2002.41.2
	then, ] then	2002.41.8
	^	
	deliberate ] deli[b over v]erate	2001.1.3.1.7
	turn ] turn,	SP, 97.19, 98.4.3, 98.82.9, 2000.18.8.2, 2001.1.3.1.7, 2002.41.2, 2002.41.8, RH Col 3, NIV
	^	
20	forgetfulness ] for[g over f]etfulness	NIV
	forgetfulness ] forgetf[u over i]lness	97.19
	forgetfulness ] gorgetfulness	2000.18.8.2





# UNCOLLECTED POEMS

(In approximate chronological order)



UNDERGRADUATE POEMS

## THE SINGER

### Publication History:

UG: *The University Gazette* 5 (4), 1929. 89.

Manuscript Copies: *none*.

Text: UG

Variant Readings: *none*.

## THE SINGER

I sing the joy of life,  
The bursting of a lark song in the dawning;  
I sing the youth of life,  
Spring waters, and the wild blue air of morning;  
And the songs of the winds and the singing sea 5  
And the harebell's swing and the sun motes' glee  
Have whispered wondrous things to me,  
And the torch is burning.

I sing the life of life,  
The revel of a hot young heartbeat leaping: 10  
I sing the wine of life,  
The madness when the eyes of thought are sleeping;  
And the moon's far smile, and the shy light press  
Of a hand whose touch is loveliness,  
And the rain's kiss and the wind's caress, 15  
And love's heart beating.

SEVERN. MAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Publication History:**

**UG:** *The University Gazette* 6 (1), 1929. 7.

**Manuscript Copies:** *none.*

**Text:** UG

**Variant Readings:** *none.*







## ODYSSEUS

The clouds gather up. The yellow leaves spin round  
In maddened gusts. The sea cloak from my shoulders  
Streams to the storm. Thin snowflakes bite the ground.  
O life! O the old hunger is at my heart.  
The dead ember smoulders.

5

No rest, no rest! Fool, take away that wine!  
The sea's boom and the grey wind pathways call me.  
No peace! I'll never be content. Yes, swine  
May be content, not men. See, under the storm  
Of the hot thoughts that gall me.

10

Galleons of dream beat out over far waters.  
The salt is on my lips. Shout gallant wind! I come.

JUNE 14<sup>th</sup>

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 2002.17.40

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.17.40

**Variant Readings:**

3      sweet ] ~~deep~~ sweet

2002.17.40

**JUNE 14<sup>th</sup>**

Not as in those languid dreams I dreamt, you came,  
Not the strange moonlight nor noon's heavy hush,  
Not twilight's elf time wakened your sweet blush  
When I said love and you whispered my name.

But with the storm you came, as the storm proud, 5  
On hills blinded with hail, clarioned with thunder,  
With passion writ in flame across the cloud,  
And all the trees aslant with a wild wonder.

Strange were your tremulous lips, amid the rain's kiss  
Whispering those words to me; and there did come 10  
Into our heart the wildness of the storm.  
The breath of storm was in our startled kiss,  
And all your passionate loveliness was storm—  
O never in all the world was love as this!

**TRES VIA**

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 2002.17.4

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.17.4

**Variant Readings:** *none.*

## TRES VIA

So here we part, at the bleak crossways of dream,  
You that way, I this. There is a strange land  
Haunted with strange mist, and only the gleam  
Of one star quivers. Come, I will kiss your hand

And I'll forget your beauty's magic ways, 5  
And I'll forget the sunlight in your hair,  
Forget the changing secrets of your gaze  
And never seek to find an answer there.

Come, for the dawn breaks. My spirit leaps  
To reach the dawn in the country of my dream— 10  
And as I go I follow the glorious shapes  
Of what we might have been, walking to my dream,

And though I come not there, one step will do.  
Farewell. I kiss your hands. 'Tis better so.

**STAKENBRIDGE. JULY 13<sup>th</sup>**

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 2002.17.4

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.17.4

**Variant Readings:** *none.*

**STAKENBRIDGE. JULY 13<sup>th</sup>**

Something was there in those still woods. It lay  
Like quivering lashes over deep full eyes—  
But dusk misted the sunset, murmured day  
Asleep. It was the birth of mysteries.

And then a common flower in a mean street  
Came rich with eastern scents. In hushed surprise  
Blind walls were listening. A child I chanced to meet  
Looked on me strangely from blue-water eyes.

5

But all I knew was that cool night would come,  
Weaving the secret into dream—that I  
Should slumber awhile with pale dream on my brow.  
And then the east will wake, and a wild drum  
Beat to hot work beneath a splendid sky—  
So silence. Sleep now. At dawn I shall know.

10



**WHEN I GO DOWN TO STRATFORD ON AVON**

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 2002.17.4

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.17.38

**Variant Readings:** *none.*

## WHEN I GO DOWN TO STRATFORD ON AVON

When I go down to Stratford on Avon,  
I shall but dream as I wander, roam and dream  
Like all the rest of them, dreaming long dreams  
In the noon-hush, by a memory-haunted stream.

But my eyes will not be their eyes. I'll not see 5  
Fresh Rosalind nor love's own Juliet,  
Not Desdemona's eyes dewy and soft  
As warm Spring rain when primroses are wet.

Frolic Maria shall not pour my ale,  
The pride of Cleopatra shall not flaunt 10  
On the toss'd ash trees; and Miranda's gaze  
Shall not peer shy and secret from the haunt

Of big-eyed deer. I shall not see Cordelia,  
That lone pale jewel trembling at edge  
Of Night's black diadem, nor hear her voice 15  
"Gentle and low" down in the whispering sedge.

For me their loveliness is fainter than sleep,  
Their glory lives but dimly in the gleam  
Hovering through your droop'd lashes. For me  
They are but you, and you will be my dream 20

When I go down to Stratford on Avon.

## CHARLEMAGNE

### Publication History:

UG: *The University Gazette* 6 (3), 1930. 70.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 2002.17.39

Text: UG

### Variant Readings:

3	I ... blood ] I flung my laughter at the sky	2002.17.39
5	took ] wrought	2002.17.39
10	sun-mote ] sun mote	2002.17.39
11	fringed ] tinged	2002.17.39
14	silver clean ] silver-clean	2002.17.39
15	my lance, ] a lance	2002.17.39
16	a queen. ] my queen—	2002.17.39
17	sword, ] sword	2002.17.39
	I bowed ] and bowed	2002.17.39
19	forth, ] forth	2002.17.39
21	wind, ] wind	2002.17.39
22	We sealed ] And sealed	2002.17.39
	dew-wine; ] dew wine—	2002.17.39
23	O, ] O	2002.17.39
	eyes, ] eyes	2002.17.39
	lips, ] lips	2002.17.39
24	And the ] And O the	2002.17.39

## CHARLEMAGNE

I stood tiptoe on hills of wind,  
I saw the flags of day unfurled,  
I heard the trumpet in my blood  
I drew my sword to win the world.

I took a bridle from the rain  
And twisted it with starwhite braid,  
I bound the bridle on the clouds  
And rode them for a pageant steed.

I wove for silk the gold of noon,  
The rainbow and the wild sun-mote,  
I fringed it rich with sunset flame  
And wore it for a crested coat.

I took a clarion from the winds  
And startled music silver clean,  
I took the shrill hail for my lance,  
And rode before a queen.

I broke my sword, I bowed my head,  
I whispered love and faltered rhyme,  
I took her hand and led her forth,  
Into the wild love time.

We rode out on the hills of wind,  
We sealed a troth in pure dew-wine;  
And O, I kissed her eyes, her lips,  
And the world is mine.

5

10

15

20

## CATHEDRAL

### **Publication History:**

UG: *The University Gazette* 6 (6), 1930. 179.

**Manuscript Copies:** *none.*

**Text:** UG

**Variant Readings:** *none.*

## CATHEDRAL

It was very silent in the great white church,  
Silent and drowsy as an afternoon;  
And like the listless croon  
Of waterbreaks in autumn under a pale blue sky,  
A tired canticle wandered complaining up to the altar, 5  
Wearily suppliant at the feet of the Most High.  
Outside, past the suffocating curtains of silence,  
A tramcar jangled, a sparrow bickered restlessly:  
It is a dream, I thought, a listless dream—  
I stole away into the shrouded chapel 10  
And knelt and whispered there, and knew not why—  
    O Lord God let me never be blind,  
    O Lord God let me never be lame,  
    O Lord God let me never be sick,  
    Let me be ever strong in body. 15  
    So shall I tear with strong hands this thick silence,  
    And shatter these listless dreams with stormy laughter;  
    And the startled tapers shall gutter and flicker and flare,  
    And the silver morning shall shine through the great walls cleft—  
I almost laughed aloud in the dreamy air, 20  
And strode out, looking not to the right hand nor the left,  
The sparrows were fighting for breadcrumbs on the ground,  
The trams went jangling into the teeming city;  
And boys were shouting and girls laughing and men labouring,  
And behind me the organ sprang into soaring sound. 25

**RELIQUIA**

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 2002.17.41

**Text:** NELM MS 2002.17.41

**Variant Readings:**

4      when I've ] ~~nōw I have~~ when I've

NELM MS 2002.17.41

## RELIQUIA

Now you have gone, my thought shall not be of you,  
Forgot the hand I took when I first met you,  
Unfelt the cheek that burned when I first kissed you.

That will be cold as night when I've forgot you,  
These will be chaste as dawn now I have lost you,  
And tired flesh sleep cool when I have left you.

5

But other things will linger since our parting—  
The pale sky over the roofs at our first trysting,  
Raindrops and bird-whispers round our first embracing.





POEMS WRITTEN  
AFTER ARRIVING IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA

## SONG

### Publication History:

UG: *The University Gazette* 5 (2), 1928. 40 (under title: "Athleta").

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.110 = NELM MS 98.4.110"a" = NELM MS 98.82.26.16 (except for handwritten emendation to line 5 in NELM MS 98.4.110"a" and NELM MS 98.82.26.16).

### Text: NELM MS 98.4.110

**Note:** NELM MS 98.4.110"a" is an unaccessioned carbon copy of NELM MS 98.4.110. I have appointed the accession number to distinguish it from the original.

All copies of this poem have 24 lines except for UG which has 16 lines.

### Variant Readings:

Title: Song ] Athleta	UG
Subtitle: For an athlete ] <i>omitted</i>	UG
1 We're ] O we're	UG
2 And ... shout, ] And we feel the rain's wet kisses on our brows,	UG
3 And ... double ] While the last rose drops its paleness,	UG
4 And ... out; ] And the trees of autumn toss in wild carouse;	UG
5 The ... tumble ] And the wind is full of voices,	UG
haw ks ] hawks	98.4.110
^	
hawks ] haw[- <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ks	98.82.26.16
6 In ... mirth, ] And the brooks are swirling low with secret mirth,	UG
7 running running running ] running, running, running,	UG
^ ^ ^	
8 merriment of ] magic of the	UG
9 The ... us ] <i>omitted</i>	UG
10 To ... steep, ] <i>omitted</i>	UG
11 And nothing at the end of it ] <i>omitted</i>	UG
of it ] of it <del>but</del>	98.4.110
12 But innocence and sleep, ] <i>omitted</i>	UG
13 In a tavern at the world's end ] <i>omitted</i>	UG
14 Where the swinging lamps are lit, ] <i>omitted</i>	UG
15 And we're running to the world's end ] <i>omitted</i>	UG
16 For the very joy of it. ] <i>omitted</i>	UG
17 The ] Sweet	UG
eyelids ] eyelids,	UG
^	
19 sinew ] sinew,	UG
^	
20 laughter in the rhythm ] there's laughter in the glowing	UG
21 revel ] revel,	UG
^	

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## SONG

*For an athlete*

We're running running running  
And the wind goes racing past us with a shout,  
And the trees are all bent double  
And the torn flags of heaven are streaming out;  
The hawks toss up and tumble 5  
In huge cartwheels of acrobatic mirth,  
And we're running running running  
Through the merriment of earth.

The road tilts up before us  
To the wildernesses steep, 10  
And nothing at the end of it  
But innocence and sleep,  
In a tavern at the world's end  
Where the swinging lamps are lit,  
And we're running to the world's end 15  
For the very joy of it.

The mist is on our eyelids  
The air with curl of woodsmoke hovers sweet,  
And there's joy in every sinew  
And laughter in the rhythm of our feet; 20  
And our blood is hot with revel  
And gallop of mad life in every part,  
And we're running running running  
To the beating of our heart.

22 gallop of mad ] there's madness of sweet UG  
23 running running running ] running, running, running, UG  
          ^      ^      ^  
24 beating ] magic UG

## THIEF

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.110 = NELM MS 98.4.110“a” = NELM MS 98.82.26.15.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.110

**Note:** NELM MS 98.4.110“a” is an unaccessioned carbon copy of NELM MS 98.4.110. I have appointed the accession number to distinguish it from the original.

### Variant Readings:

Title: THIEF ] [T <i>over</i> T]h[ie <i>over</i> ei]f	98.4.110
12 tempest ] te[m <i>over</i> n]pest	98.4.110

## THIEF

Escape me if you must, but do it lustily:  
I'll brook no sliding down a furtive drain—  
Throw the windows wide to the slanting rain;  
My wakened curtains flap inward gustily.

Defiant imp, one glance over your shoulder, 5  
Poise your white courage for a certain dive  
Into the dark where the elf-lanterns smoulder  
Beyond the squares of lamplight on the drive.

Adventure, not escape: you know the way, 10  
The way that hand in hand we had begun;  
Run down it, eager heart: more prompt than I  
—Where the spent tempest spreads in level grey  
Espalier boughs across the charmed sky—  
To steal the golden apples of the sun.

## RETREAT FROM RAPTURE

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### **Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.4.110 = NELM MS 98.82.26.12.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.110

### **Variant Readings:**

4	ecstasies <i>ed:</i> ecstacies	98.4.110
9	further down ] further do[w <i>over</i> n]n	98.4.110

## RETREAT FROM RAPTURE

Down from the hilltop, down to the rustling vlei,  
Since we can't be stars, let's flower like daisies,  
Busy our baulked hearts out of their ecstasies,  
Cock ribald fingers at the staring day:

Where you and I digged for contentment, 5  
Let's stroll our round again before we part—  
The hissing brushes, the rich stable scent,  
Satin hindquarters sleek as a swallow's dart.

And further down, swart faery: down to the curious mucks 10  
In the steaming midden and the bumpkin mind—  
Perfumes for pinched noses, discords that hurt,  
Something to busy us we shall surely find:  
Poetry in pigs, music in quacking ducks,  
Flags on a dunghill, joy in the flowering dirt.



**CENTAUR'S SONG, 1942**

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.4.110 = NELM MS 98.4.110“a” = NELM MS 98.82.26.17.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.110

**Note:** NELM MS 98.4.110“a” is an unaccessioned carbon copy of NELM MS 98.4.110. I have appointed the accession number to distinguish it from the original.

**Variant Readings:**

2	Six ] S[i over u]x	98.4.110
3	philosophy <i>ed.</i> : philosphy	98.4.110

## CENTAUR'S SONG, 1942

After the News at eight,  
Six dun horses go galloping off,  
    Lust philosophy hate  
    Panic and plan and pause:  
Some with sly nosing at the latch 5  
Some with splintering stable doors,  
Over the tree-tops, over the roof-tops  
    Round about eight-fifteen.

Eight-fifteen or thereabouts,  
One bell's pause between platter and play: 10  
    Policy fact and doubts  
    Insinuations regrets,  
Subtle fingers on petulant reins,  
Curb of slinking fears and debts,  
Champing of appetites, pawing of passions, 15  
    From eight to a quarter past.

Twenty-four hours grace,  
One more post towards peace or oblivion;  
    Quicken the flagging pace  
    Spur the reluctant flanks; 20  
Drown defeat in a fanfare of saxophones  
Pocket success with a cavalier thanks,  
Ease the snaffle, gallop the merrygoround,  
    Now that we've heard the News.

## TURN OF THE YEAR

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.82.26.13.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.26.13

**Variant Readings:**

3	haysel ed: haysell	98.82.26.13
	cobbing ] cobb[i <i>over</i> o]ng	98.82.26.13
29	August] Aug[u <i>over</i> i]st	98.82.26.13
36	hours ] ho[u <i>over</i> n]rs	98.82.26.13

## TURN OF THE YEAR

We cannot now expect  
Any more rain,  
Haysel and corn-cobbing  
Will not come again,

Not again until 5  
The earth turns over,  
And the northern rim  
With grey clouds cover;

Which now, blinking stars 10  
In wild branches tossed,  
Expects in quiet daybreak  
Footfall of frost.

The leaves drift down  
Dry pods splinter;  
We ask no fruit of autumn, 15  
No boon of winter.

Loins belted up  
Fields stoked and gleaned,  
Cows grazing aftermath  
And the cows weaned. 20

The long lean months  
Sprawl out before us,  
Chill wind, flame wind,  
Dust wind in chorus.

Snell breath of June, 25  
Summer inside-out,  
Pries into pelt and hide  
Turned tail about.

Flamboyant August  
With cruelty bedizen, 30  
Where the jiggling file of fire  
Prinks the black horizon.

Brazen October  
Will shrivel its flowers  
And the incessant grasshoppers 35  
Scissor away the hours.



Be the season meagre  
And the springs fall,  
Well we have garnered,  
Readiness is all.

40

Fodder for the manger  
Straw for the shed,  
Foisson in bin and barn  
Quietly husbanded.

## SAFE INTERIOR

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.4.10

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.10

**Variant Readings:**

8	resentfully ] resent[ <i>fu over ly</i> ]lly	98.4.10
10	the breath ] the <del>cheek</del> -a[ <i>b over s</i> ]reath	98.4.10
	moleskin ] mol[ <i>e over s</i> ]skin	98.4.10
12	may ] ma[ <i>y over t</i> ]	98.4.10
14	white ] whi[ <i>t over r</i> ]e	98.4.10
20	posture ] p[ <i>os over so</i> ]ture	98.4.10
21	satchel ] sat[ <i>c over x</i> ]hel	98.4.10
24	down ] [ <i>d over f</i> ]own	98.4.10
	wait ] w[ <i>ai over it</i> ]t	98.4.10
26	blowing ] bl[ <i>o over w</i> ]wing	98.4.10
31	Roland's ] Roland'[ <i>s over S</i> ]	98.4.10
34	glass ] [ <i>g over illegible character</i> ]	98.4.10

## SAFE INTERIOR

In the meantime, let us regard this room.  
If you speak low, no echo will disturb you  
Within the narrow, softly-furnished walls.  
The windows are shuttered; no sunlight or shadow  
Will interrupt the unambitious patterns 5  
On chair or carpet or your ambling thoughts.  
The pewter that should hold ale holds roses  
And its glum lustre glowers resentfully—  
Roses whorled deep with scent and shadows  
Smooth on the breath as moleskin to the cheek; 10  
Soon they will be discreetly put outside  
That we may sleep.  
Smooth as an acquiescent brow  
The white walls hold the silence  
And hang two pictures only: 15  
Here on the right, the Sunflower vase  
Smoulders upon us from behind the glass: much as the sun  
Would glower at the fish above the crystal ceiling.  
Left is a Breughel winter,  
Mannikins ogle and posture from the frame, 20  
Lean questing whelps and satchel-loaded rogues;  
But their cries are frozen in the iron air  
And will not touch upon our indolence.  
Sit down; count twenty to your breath; and wait.

For a later day will come, some wind-swept holiday— 25  
Spring blowing in, open all the windows—  
The door burst open  
And someone come with rain upon his hair  
With “have you heard?” and “have you heard?”—  
The hunting pack will bay about the world 30  
And a horn will blow down valleys lonelier than Roland’s.

But till then we will contemplate the room,  
And hold the ruby moment in our fingers  
Through the cut prism of a glass.



## NIGHTFALL

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### **Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.4.110 = NELM MS 98.4.110“a” = NELM MS 98.82.26.14.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.110

**Note:** NELM MS 98.4.110“a” is an unaccessioned carbon copy of NELM MS 98.4.110. I have appointed the accession number to distinguish it from the original.

### **Variant Readings:**

15	loveliness ] l[o <i>over</i> i]veliness	98.4.110
22	not ] n[o <i>over</i> i]t	98.4.110

## NIGHTFALL

### *In the hot season*

The western light had died long since  
And all the stars come out,  
We felt the whispering skirts of night  
Wrap us like flame about.

Orion strode the zenith height, 5  
And long we stared at him,  
The laggard moon was hiding yet  
Behind the eastern rim.

The silent flaking of the ash  
The stirring in the embers, 10  
The all-but-voiceless falls of leaves  
In long-forgot Septembers.

Uncertainty and well-nigh doubt  
The just unfinished line,  
Tomorrow's vanished loveliness 15  
Of lips now close on mine.

And in my soul thought chasing thought  
And name halloo-ing name,  
Hunting the zebra shades for words  
And no words came. 20

It might have come I know not how  
And been I know not what;  
Maybe, I said, we'll dream of it,  
And maybe we shall not.

## RHODESIAN SPRING SONG

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.4.110 = NELM MS 98.4.110“a” = NELM MS 98.82.26.19.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.4.110

**Note:** NELM MS 98.4.110“a” is an unaccessioned carbon copy of NELM MS 98.4.110. I have appointed the accession number to distinguish it from the original.

**Variant Readings:**

28 I ] [I over i]

98.4.110

## RHODESIAN SPRING SONG

### *13th Century Echo*

Nou sprinkes the sprai  
In russet woods  
That skirt the amber vlei.

They knew it then—  
We have forgotten— 5  
    The roundel and the rounne,  
The season's name  
When Lenten came  
    With laugh and love to town.

The song of leaves 10  
Under the eaves  
    They carolled lusty and long,  
And stammered a bit  
As thrush and hedge-pipit  
    Break and tumble in song. 15

Nou sprinkes the sprai  
In rose and gold  
About the boulders grey.

To town, to men,  
To life again,  
    The hermit winter after, 20  
From lonely hearth  
To green and garth  
    To green and crowded laughter.

Nou sprinkes the sprai 25  
In flush and flame  
That takes the breath of day.

And I instead  
Turn tail to head,  
    And post from men away; 30  
Nor can I guess  
In loneliness  
    The singing of the spray.



The sales, the news,  
The talk pursues 35  
    From wireless in cars,  
My measures break  
Not with love's ache,  
    But fibs and phobias.

Nou sprinkles the sprai 40  
So fugitive  
Confounds my wit to say.

**DEDICATION TO EVA: FOR “BRONZE FRIEZE”**

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.82.26.2.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.26.2

**Variant Readings:**

5	taking ] t[a over q]k[i over k]ng	98.82.26.2
12	full ] f[u over y]ll	98.82.26.2
13	first ] fi[r over s]st	98.82.26.2

**DEDICATION TO EVA: FOR "BRONZE FRIEZE"**

This is your book:

Though to the making of it

Went the half-glances of forgotten faces,

Like fruit half-ripened,

Shrunk in the taking of it.

5

Look backward, look

At the far-visited places

We two rode out to find:

Some to remember, some past all recall,

Cloud-cuckoo towers, and the blue above—

10

Lad's-love and calf-loves.

For in the last full love

Lurk the first half-loves:

And you are all.



## ZIMBABWE

### Publication History:

STD: *Standpunte* 9 (2), 1954, 19-21.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS PLO56(10) = NELM MS PLO56(10“a”); RB Col.

Text: NELM MS PLO56(10).

NELM MS PLO56(10“a”) is a carbon copy of NELM MS PLO56(10). I have appointed the accession number NELM MS PLO56(10“a”) to distinguish it from the original.

In STD lines 17 & 18 of NELM MS PLO56(10) are combined. STD’s line 25 does not appear in any other copy of this poem.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	Zimbabwe ] Zimbabwe // Conversation on the Acropolis	STD
3	shelves; ] shelves.	STD
5	desolate ] desolated	STD, 98.4.10, RB Col
8	up, ] up ^	98.4.10
9	acolyte ] acolyte, ^	STD
10	his ] h[i over s]s	98.4.10
14	quadrant ] quad[r over t]ant curbstones ] curb-stones	98.4.10 STD
15	between, STD: between ^	PLO56(10), 98.4.10, RB Col
16	enough ] [e over w]nough queen. ] queen—	PLO56(10) STD
17	A ] “A	STD
18	Sheba’s ] Sh[e over a]ba’s Ophir, ] Ophir ^	98.4.10 STD
19	all? ] all?” fairy tale STD: fairytale	STD PLO56(10), 98.4.10, RB Col
20	twister: ] twister;	STD
21	Yet, ] Yet— when ] whrn fêted ] feted fêted ] f[ê accent inserted by hand]ted	STD 98.4.10 PLO56(10) RB Col, 98.4.10
22	mouse ] mouse, ^	STD
24	stair ] stair, ^	STD

## ZIMBABWE

It rained, and we had the ruins to ourselves,  
Only two children's shouts to alarm the ghosts,  
Any ghosts left on these deserted shelves;  
Embrasure, buttress, windy look-out posts,  
The desolate splendour sprawls, 5  
And over turrets, over walls,  
The ghost-grey squirrels frisk at ease.

“Shall we go up, or down?”  
—Was it acolyte or clown  
Carried his burden upward through the trees 10  
And placed it here or there,  
Stone upon stone, year on forgotten year,  
Rampart or reredos: does it matter much?  
The quadrant curbstones of the twisted stair,  
The narrow treads between, 15  
Narrow enough for pigmy, flamen, queen.

A Queen?  
Suppose it were Queen Sheba's Ophir, after all?  
—That is the old impossible fairy tale,  
Just-possible imagination twister: 20  
Yet, when she felt her fêted spirit fail,  
Modest as antelope or mouse  
Remembering her blind and flightless birds,  
She saw the winged lions flank the stair  
With wine-cupped hands holding his vintage words: 25  
She could have said—you should see mine, high mister,  
—Stair above stair ascending  
Bastion and boulder blending  
Grey upon grey and grey with dripping green;  
Up to the high embattled balconies 30  
She comes, the figment of our lazy brain,  
Dark questioner, courtesan, queen,  
Clad in a few words teasing mysteries  
That men through turning centuries have pinned  
Their wanton fancies to: 35  
With ape-skinned retinue  
Up from the once-peopled plain  
Where hearth-smoke lifts and lingers on the wind  
And carries up the hollow coil of drums,  
Up the last stair she comes, 40  
Up with the tide of softly clapping palms  
The mounting climax of their shy salaams,  
Her questions answered and her passions cold  
And wrists and ankles gossiping with gold.

25	words: ] words,	STD
	words: // She ] words, // Watched his ascent into his Lord's high house: // She	STD
	you ] [y <i>over</i> s]ou	98.4.10
	mister, ] mister—	STD
27	—Stair ] Stair	STD
	ascending ] ascending,	STD
	^	
28	boulder ] bo[u <i>over</i> i]lder	98.4.10
	blending ] blending,	STD
	^	
29	Grey ] Gre[y <i>over</i> e]	RB Col
	green; ] green.	STD
30	balconies ] balconies,	STD
	^	
35	to: ] to,	STD, RB Col, 98.4.10
37	peopled ] pe[o <i>over</i> p]pled	RB Col
	peopled ] people[d <i>over</i> s]	98.4.10
38	hearth-smoke ] hearth smoke	STD
	lifts ] [l <i>over</i> r]ifts	RB Col
39	drums, ] drums—	STD
40	Up ] U[p <i>over</i> ¾]	PLO56(10)
42	shy ] say	STD
43	cold ] cold,	STD
	^	
46	O ] —Oh	STD
51	name ] name,	STD
	^	
52	Over ] Ove[r <i>over</i> t]	98.4.10
	Sabi to ] Sabi down to	STD
53	ran ] ran,	STD
	^	
54	heeling ] [h <i>over</i> n]eeling	PLO56(10)
56	The ] [T <i>over</i> t]he	RB Col
57	untroubled ] introubled	STD
62	sand. ] sand:	STD
64	proudly named ] proudly-named	STD
65	crescent ] cres[c <i>over</i> e]ent	PLO56(10)
67	evanescent ] evanscent	PLO56(10)
68	masks ] masks,	STD
	^	
70	conquistadores, ] conq[u <i>over</i> i]istadores,	RB Col
73	posting ] posing	STD
74	Or ] O[r <i>over</i> t]	PLO56(10)
	secret ] gleaming	STD
78	them; ] them,	98.4.10, RB Col
	them; ] them	STD
	^	
79	sought vanished past of them, ] sought the unrecorded past of them	STD
	^	

“Gold?” 45  
 O yes, for gold they came,  
 The dark, thin-visaged traffickers;  
 No loose-spun legend these,  
 Cracking earth’s ribs to find her ambergris,  
 And bore it off in endless caravan 50  
 Down kloof and vlei that never had a name  
 Over the loitering Sabi to the Indian Sea,  
 Where the monsoon wavered and the sharp tides ran  
 The shouting lighters and the heeling dhows—  
 And left their empty shafts for us to see, 55  
 The shady hollows, the old elephant wallows  
 Where the untroubled deer daintily browse;  
 Skeleton scaffolding and the wheel’s broken teeth  
 Continued for a few-score years to lift  
 Their forlorn limbs and fingers underneath 60  
 The ever slow-accumulated drift  
 Of falling leaves and the wind-filtered sand.  
 There have been sojourners in Gazaland,  
 Nameless or proudly named, Semite or Portuguese,  
 Bearing the blazonment of cross or crescent 65  
 Or some old emblem ancienter than these;  
 With sun resplendent or mist evanescent,  
 Behind their taciturn masks  
 Seekers for plunder proselyte or trade,  
 Sheik, hidalgo, conquistadores, 70  
 Apes for playmates, sea-cows for stories,  
 Living ebony or nine-foot tusk:  
 How the sun burnished on their posting casques  
 Or tipped their secret amulets in the dusk,  
 Lengthened the shadow of their cavalcade 75  
 In centipede procession endlessly  
 Down grape-blue valleys deeper than the sea;  
  
 And no more curious questions asked of them;  
 No longer sought vanished past of them,  
 And maybe we shall be the last of them. 80  
  
 “How long ago?”  
 —Oh, ask the ground-toad there,  
 Complacent with his hard unwinking stare  
 As like as us to know,  
 Obese and paramount on the lichened chair 85  
 His stagnant-blooded grandsire used  
 A thousand stony years ago:  
 He sat like us and purposefully mused  
 Waiting the answer to the morning’s meal,  
 Wisdom of sage or simpleton. 90  
 What weapons have we for oblivion?

82	—Oh, ] O, ground-toad ] ground toad	98.4.10 STD
86	stagnant ] stagna[ <i>n inserted by hand</i> ]t	RB Col
87	ago: ] ago;	STD
89	morning's ] m[ <i>or insered by hand over ro</i> ]ning's	RB Col
95	marsh grass ] marsh-grass	98.4.10
98	selfsame ] self-same afternoon ] afternoon, ^	STD STD
99	ringdoves ] ring-doves	STD
100	One two three, One two three, ] One-two-three, One-two-three,	STD
103	ungessed-at, ] un-gessed-at	STD
105	certain ] certian history: ] history—	98.4.10 STD
106	build— ] build,	STD
107	than ] thatn	98.4.10
108	(The ] The phallus and the ] phallus[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ] and the ^	STD RB Col
109	follows priest king ] follows king follows priest king ] follows <del>priest</del> king	98.4.10, STD RB Col
110	priest) ] priest—	STD
112	sun, ] sun ^	98.4.10
114	shoulder: ] shoulder;	STD
116	sky ] sky, ^	STD
117	have ] ha[ <i>v over illegible character</i> ]e least— ] least.	98.4.10 STD
118	monkey-rope; ] monkey rope,	STD
119	grey ] gr[ <i>ye emended by hand to ey</i> ] drizzle." ] drizzle" ^	RB Col STD
121	antelope ] antelope, ^	STD
124	up!" ] up—"	STD
126	beginning, ] beginning ^	STD
	126-127 <i>no line break</i> ] <i>line break</i>	STD
	footnote: (In the Acropolis, 1950) ] <i>omitted</i>	STD

Skeletons of sky-raking steel  
 And neon-scrawls in Salisbury streets  
 And wind-flagged scraps of newsprint sheets,  
 Where yesterday the marsh grass whispered and the dikkop cried 95  
 Lamentably down the desolate waterside.  
 How long ago? There are no clocks in Africa,  
 Where afternoon follows each selfsame afternoon  
 And for slow centuries the ringdoves try their tune,  
 One two three, one two three, over and over, 100  
 And no better one discover.  
 How long ago? We have no debt to Africa,  
 The past unguessed-at, and today is ours,  
 Feet that dry-sandalled run  
 Unclogged by clay of certain history: 105  
 How we could build—  
 With symbols potenter than theirs  
 (The urgent phallus and the quiescent ring,  
 The dreadful slype where helot follows priest king  
 Or victim priest) 110  
 How honestly we could build  
 In Africa, beneath our peasant sun,  
 More generous corridors to walk with comrades  
 Shoulder to shoulder: intimate bowers,  
 Towers like candid fountains, free arcades, 115  
 And friendly courtyards open to the sky  
 When we have known the most and guessed the least—  
  
 “Oh stop: you’re climbing up a monkey-rope;  
 You’ll lose yourself in this grey drifting drizzle.”  
 —Damp fancies spurt and flame and fizzle, 120  
 And do not find, like dassie or antelope  
 Any sure path through crevice or forest maze  
 Where weavers build and springhaas blindly delves—  
  
 “Daddy, come here: here is the easy way up!”  
 Easy way up? or easy way out? 125  
 Brave new beginning, or the end of ways?  
 It rained, and we had the ruins to ourselves.

(in the Acropolis, 1950)

## EXPECTING PEACE

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS 98.82.26.10; NELM MS 98.4.10.

**Text:** RB Col

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: With ... Day ] with my horse, August 13th, 1945	98.82.26.10
3    year, ] year ^	98.82.26.10
6    fringe ] fr[i <i>over</i> o]nge	98.82.26.10
8    laggard ] wanton	98.82.26.10
14   fragment ] tongue-less	98.82.26.10
16   or ] o[r <i>over</i> f]	98.4.10
17   behind, ] behind ^	98.82.26.10
19   fit ] fi[t <i>over</i> i]	98.4.10
21   pause ] preach	98.82.26.10
23   can, ] can ^	98.82.26.10
25   torn, ] torn ^	98.82.26.10

## EXPECTING PEACE

*With my horse, V. J. Day*

Shake your shapely head, my dear,  
Toss the curbing bit;  
Spring will come as soon this year,  
As soon in spite of it. 5  
You and I must bide the rein  
Here on the fringe of things:  
God knows we've waited long enough  
For other laggard Springs.

The last of autumn shakes its flags  
Down avenues forlorn, 10  
The new world stirs beneath the rags  
Of cassia and thorn.  
And rumour rides the aether waves  
With fragment whispering,  
Teasing us with hopeful smells 15  
Of stable or the Spring.

A mile behind, they talked of it,  
Conjecture mounted high  
On peace and plenty that would fit  
Your proud expectancy. 20  
And while they pause and while they plan,  
In solitude we wait,  
And find our comfort as we can,  
Yours the manger, mine the plate:  
Old hopes patched and treaties torn, 25  
And harsher provender than corn.



## AT HOME

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### **Manuscript Copies:**

RB Col; NELM MS PLO56(9); NELM MS 98.4.10.

**Text:** NELM MS PLO56(9)

### **Variant Readings:**

5	Securely ] Se[c <i>over illegible character</i> ]urely	RB Col
9	I ] [I <i>over illegible character</i> ]	98.4.10
10	kept ] kep	98.4.10
13	haunt ] [h <i>over a</i> ]aunt	98.4.10
33	firelight ] fireli[g <i>over h</i> ]ht	RB Col
34	curtain's chink, ] window's chink,	98.4.10
	curtain's chink, ] <del>window</del> curtain's chink,	RB Col

## AT HOME

Latching the paddock gate up tight  
—A job I always give myself—  
I linger on the darkening shelf  
Between my acres and the night.

Securely fenced and hedged about  
My friendly garden settles quiet:  
When from some far and bosky eyot  
I hear a jackal's quavering shout—

A fox's bark: how once I harkened,  
A landless youth who kept the paths  
Among the squired and moated garths,  
And wondered how the fir-copse darkened

About the vixen's guarded haunt  
Where I had never trespassed yet  
With poacher, keeper, leveret:  
And with their enigmatic taunt

Denying all I wished to see,  
Beyond the hedge the lapwings cried  
And beckoned to a mystery  
A few dark yards the other side.

. . . . .

Now, when the night wind veers and cools,  
I peer into the dark surmise,  
Where fierce eyes stare at timid eyes  
Across the silence of the pools.

The dog stands tense and grumbles twice,  
The hackles stir his nape and mine,  
And little ants with feet of ice  
Creep in the hollow of my spine.

Content: no more reluctantly,  
From no-one's emptiness to mine  
Own tenancy, I now resign  
My respite from immensity.

The firelight glows behind my doors  
And brightens at the curtain's chink,  
The houseboy's carried candles wink  
Along the windowed corridors.

38 Chill ... cote ] *omitted - line cut off accidentally in the right-sizing of leaves*  
40 cosy ] [co over illegible characters]sy

RB Col  
98.4.10

One grave owl sits, surveying wide,  
Chill sentry up above the cote  
Of Chanticleer and Pertelote  
In cosy wedlock side by side. 40

I smile to see, unswung by breeze,  
The nameless constellations stuck,  
Netted among the garden trees,  
Silver berries for me to pluck.

Secure from one night's dark alarms, 45  
A hundred easy dreams to house,  
The hooked moon and my orchard boughs  
Sleep still in one another's arms.

## EARLY HOUR

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS: 98.4.10.

**Text:** RB Col

### Variant Readings:

10	we'd ] we'[d <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.4.10
14	caught ] cau[g <i>over</i> r]ht	98.4.10
23	retreating 98.4.10: retraeting	RB Col
27	delighted ] deli[g <i>over</i> h]hted	RB Col
31	in a ] ina	98.4.10
32	and ] an[d <i>over</i> s]	98.4.10

## EARLY HOUR

- How, in those boy and girl holidays, it came to greet us  
—Yesterday drained away in gradual nocturne  
With the viola undertone of adult voices  
Droning over their reminiscence in the parlour—  
Cock-clamour, clink of pail, Captain and Snarler 5  
Yapping the sleepy dray-horses into their traces,  
Chill draught under our nightshirts, dew on hedge and fern,  
—Dawn, galloping through the orchard, like a colt, to meet us.
- How, climbing the ridge of the world, it lay before us,  
How we'd surprise them, windows blinded and shuttered! 10  
How we re-fashioned it, students and journeymen,  
Catching the six-thirty while the suburbs snored!  
White fount of steam under the footbridge soared:  
How our brave bragging never caught it again,  
Something ever evading us, never quite uttered, 15  
—Dawn, stealing over the rooftops, like a cat, to ignore us.
- How, on a hopeless threshold, the shadow annoyed us,  
Shadow before sunrise, before cockcrow, denial:  
A thousand favours asked for and none gained,  
And hat in hand, in shifty shuffling queues 20  
We explored dull cul-de-sacs and avenues,  
With yellow scut of fog dragging down the street-end,  
And, with the postman's retreating tread, mile on grey mile,  
Dawn, slinking down the curb, like a cur, to avoid us.
- And, anchored in Africa, roots reaching deep, 25  
Transplanting flowering stock in innocent sand,  
With petals reversing hue in delighted change  
And vacant sunny faces meeting their heritage;  
Seasons our servants and the sun our page,  
Through uneroded plains our projects range: 30  
New thoughts in a new season, easy to understand—  
O easy to live and love and easy to sleep:  
Sleep in the bush, the campfire's frescoes gone  
—How lightfoot she comes, stirring our one night's shade,  
Dawn, as discreet as any chambermaid, 35  
To put the tired stars out, one by one.

## TRANSIT

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS: 98.4.10.

**Text:** RB Col

### Variant Readings:

4	far ] f[ar <i>over</i> ra]	RB Col
	places ] [p <i>over</i> o]laces	RB Col
11	haysel <i>ed.</i> : haysell	RB Col
	haysel ] haysell	98.4.10
14	forests ] forest	98.4.10
18	share ] s[ha <i>over</i> ah]re	RB Col
24	Zambezi ] [Z <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ambezi	98.4.10

## TRANSIT

They have fled, like the buck from the butcher,  
The old, the fugitive graces,  
They have gone, slipping grey through the shadows,  
To the far, the untrodden places.  
The cruel fingers of the beam 5  
Have probed and gouged the aching night,  
The lyre -, the scimitar-horns have gone,  
And gone with them our peasant delight.

They have passed, the kindly old habits,  
The slow-paced diffident ways, 10  
Unflurried as haysel and harvest,  
The slow procession of days.  
The pylons stride the countryside,  
The headlights bore the forests through,  
The casual two-minute sojourner 15  
Accelerates down the avenue.

They have gone, like the deer, like the forest,  
Laid by the axe, by the share,  
And somebody's hermitage, somebody's vineyard  
Brutally shovelled nowhere. 20  
And must we seek where they surely rest,  
Brown eyes deep with love a-quiver,  
Beyond the desolate outposts of Sabi,  
Beyond Zambezi, the fabulous river.





## HESITATIONS

### I.

The firelight brought madness almost:  
With the huge batwing shadows  
Shaking the walls to toppling laughter;  
Proud mounted wit, a quip with a lift of an eyebrow,  
Hesitant protest stammering like a moth 5  
Against the blind indifference of the window pane:  
You and I and one or two others  
Talking till midnight about the scheme of things.

And then I tiptoed out into the night:  
It was cold with the chastening of frost 10  
And empty with the watchfulness of stars  
And wistful with the farewell of a moon,  
And a musician was playing on a hidden gramophone  
Chopin's nocturnes softly into the silence.

14 nocturnes 98.4.10: nocturne's  
nocturnes ] Nocturne's  
nocturnes ] nocturnes,  
^

RB Col  
98.82.26.11  
UG

## HESITATIONS II

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; NELM MS: 98.4.10; NELM MS 98.4.110 = NELM MS 98.4.110“a” = NELM MS 98.82.26.18.

### Text: RB Col

**Note:** NELM MS 98.4.110“a” is an unaccessioned carbon copy of NELM MS 98.4.110. I have appointed the accession number to distinguish it from the original.

There is no indentation of lines in NELM MS 98.4.10.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	HESITATIONS II ] To [W <i>over illegible character</i> ]elcome, My Horse	98.4.110
Subtitle:	To my horse ] <i>omitted</i>	98.4.110
1	little ] litt[ <i>le over el</i> ]	98.4.110
2	my ] m[ <i>y inserted by hand over u</i> ]	RB Col
3	stretched ] held	98.4.110
4	blind ] blind, ^	98.4.110
5	straight 98.4.10: striaght	RB Col
	thicket plough ] thicket and plough	98.4.110
7	Hindquarters ] Hind[ <i>q emended by hand</i> ]quarters	RB Col
	Hindquarters ] Hindquar[ <i>t over e</i> ]ers	98.4.110
	smooth-sliding ] steel-sliding	98.4.110
	steel ] s[ <i>t over r</i> ]eel	98.4.10
9	devouring— ] devouring.	98.4.110
10	this, ] this:	98.4.110
11	a ] my	98.4.110
	dusty ] du[ <i>s inserted by hand over d</i> ]ty	98.4.110
12	for ever ] forever	98.4.10
	cross-road ] crossroad	98.4.10
	cross-road ] crossroads	98.4.110
	^	
13	—Nose ] Nose	98.4.110
	heed— ] heed,	98.4.110

II.

*To my horse*

My eager little horse,  
If I could only curb my cloven mind  
Like the stretched bowstring of your neck,  
View one idea and follow it till blind  
Hunting it straight through thicket plough and beck, 5  
Nostrils astrain, tail flourished like a pennon,  
Hindquarters smooth-sliding cataracts of steel,  
Crest criniered like the wild-beast fire  
A-gallop through the grass ripe for devouring—  
  
I might say all this, 10  
Winnowing a dusty barn of cobweb fancies—  
A mind for ever halted at cross-road  
—Nose down, one foreleg raised, ears giving heed—  
Still lost your happy singleness of mood  
—Honest companion, nuzzling in your hay 15  
Your unperplexed philosophy of speed.

### HESITATIONS III

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

RB Col; NELM MS: 98.4.10.

**Text:** RB Col

**Variant Readings:**

4 unquestioning ] un[[q *emended by hand*]uestioning

RB Col

III.

I sinned against a man: so little a thing,  
It almost seemed the happy stream could take  
The smutted bowl, and the next waterbreak  
Wash it all clean again unquestioning;  
—So little a thing, unnecessary, mean,  
That left the large clean world so undefiled,  
The friendly folk mid flowerbed and green  
Who drank from simple blue-lined cups and smiled.

5

I heard the plovers crying in the wind  
Beyond the garden's hedges endlessly.  
I could not guess what their wild insults meant;  
I was not of the great who proudly sinned  
—Cain going lonely with his gaunt head high,  
And the wild peewits screaming as he went.

10

## BIRTH IN BETHLEHEM

### Publication History:

*The Link*. January 1946. 261 [See: Pichanick, J, A. J. Chennells, L. B. Rix. *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. 116.] *No copy located*.

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.20 = RH Col = NELM MS 98.82.17 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.4 (except for the absence of a handwritten emendation to line 68 of NELM MS 98.82.17); NELM MS 98.4.110 = NELM MS 98.82.26.8 (except for a handwritten emendation to line 48 of NELM MS 98.4.110).

### Text: NELM MS 98.82.20

### Variant Readings:

Subtitle: Any carpenter speaks ] the Carpenter loquitur	98.4.110
5 dark ] d[ar <i>over</i> ra]k	98.82.20
(Outside ] Outside	98.4.110
light, ] light	98.4.110
^	
7 Wise ] —Wise	98.4.110
mother ] mother,	98.4.110
^	
8 —So ] (So	98.4.110
wise ] w[i <i>over</i> u]se	98.82.20
who ] that	98.4.110
9 virginity— ] virginity)—	98.4.110
12 saw.) ] saw.	98.4.110
13 no token ] nothing	98.4.110
15 Over ] O[v <i>over</i> c]er	98.4.110
20 shallow ] [s <i>over</i> S]hallow	98.4.110
23 Before ] Ere	98.4.110
25 sin ] sin,	98.4.110
^	
30 itch or throe, ] peace or woe,	98.4.110
32 Opens, 98.4.110: Open	98.82.20
^	
33 samples ] fancies	98.4.110
34 Jericho, ] Jericho;	98.4.110
35 In ... fancy ] On the dusty plain of dreams	98.4.110
36 Trade ... so. ] Pace a barren league or so.	98.4.110

## BIRTH IN BETHLEHEM

*Any carpenter speaks*

Perfumes and jewels and a certain star:  
So sure they were of everything, those three,  
Sure of themselves, sure of the desert way,  
Sure of the uninterpretable signs  
In the pierced palimpsest of the dark sky. 5

(Outside the circle of that threefold light,  
Wise Innocent, wise suppliants, wise mother  
—So passing wise, who locked her secrets up  
Within the girdle of virginity—  
He sat with heavy hands spread on his knee, 10  
His heavy hands that curved so cunningly  
About the crooked handle of the saw.)

Is there no token I can give my son?  
No cockleshell or compass for the voyage  
Over the scrolled sea, over the white dunes, 15  
Over the countless chimneys to his ultimate stable?

Cockleshells in plenty, but our compasses are broken  
(Young fingers must mend them, re-set the needle)  
Cockleshells in plenty from the curious beaches  
Where our shallow keel creeps, lifting the lilies. 20

Cockleshells in plenty  
From ten year old to twenty,  
Before the leather palate grows  
And the heart turns flinty.

You may sin the ancient sin 25  
Sell your heart to Mephisto,  
Buy the proudest queen that walked  
Seven thousand years ago.

Cressida or Imogen 30  
Solaces for itch or throe,  
Where the creaking lid of verse  
Opens to your Iachimo.

Or retreat: with bag of samples  
Jump a train to Jericho,  
In the idle shops of fancy 35  
Trade a tawdry bead or so.



38	toe ] toe, ^	98.4.110
41	certain star: 98.4.110 certain.star.	98.82.20
43	façade; ] facade;	98.4.110
44	The ... gape ] The[ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]tenons, dishonestly made, gape	98.4.110
45	through into our ] through our	98.4.110
46	peristyles ] peristyle	98.4.110
47	Playing ] And play seed, ] seeds ^	98.4.110 98.4.110
48	barbed, ] barbed[, <i>inserted by hand</i> ] barbed, ] barbed ^	98.4.110 98.4.110
49	sentries, the nonchalant ] sentries, nonchalant	98.4.110
50	Signifier, centurion, ] Signifier and centurion	98.4.110
51	trampling ] marching	98.4.110
52	Clanking ] Trampling	98.4.110
55	Bird-brain, cat-claw, mastodon, ] Steely-squamous mastodon ^	98.4.110
56	Thermopylae ] Thermopylae, ^	98.4.110
59	schooled <i>ed</i> : school ( <i>Editorial conjecture</i> )	98.82.20, 98.4.110
60	Paradisoes ] Par[a <i>over i</i> ]disos	98.4.110
61	Bobadil <i>ed</i> : Bobadill	98.82.20, 98.4.110
64	sten ] bren	98.4.110
66	faldstools ] tables yokes ] yokes, ^	98.4.110 98.4.110
67	trusses ] ties, ^	98.4.110
	sycamore: ] sycamore;	98.4.110
68	Leisure ] Le[ <i>i inserted by hand over u</i> ]sure Leisure ] Leisure saw ] saw, ^	98.82.20 98.82.17 98.4.110
72	baulk ] baulk, ^	98.4.110
74	pundits ] pundit[ <i>s over d</i> ]	98.82.20
75	Their panaceas ] And their wisdom	98.4.110

Or in the pattern of a dance  
 Shaken from a shapely toe  
 In a blue and marble frieze  
 Seven thousand years ago. 40

Cockleshells and nosegays, but no certain star:  
 The joists of the world are cracked  
 And plaster peels from the high façade;  
 The tenons were dishonestly cut: they gape  
 And knaves peer through into our privacies. 45  
 Our doctors loiter on the peristyles  
 Playing at pitch and toss with cummin seed,  
 And aim their wit, all impotently barbed,  
 At the dark sentries, the nonchalant intruders.

Signifer, centurion, 50  
 Brazen legions trampling on,  
 Clanking through the gates of gold  
 To the seats of Solomon.

Mechanised battalion  
 Bird-brain, cat-claw, mastodon, 55  
 Grinding through Thermopylae  
 Squatting on the Parthenon.

Ruled by amateurs and cads  
 Schooled in dark and dangerous fads,  
 Freud dictates our Paradisoes 60  
 Bobadil our Iliads.

Take the bored loose-ended lads  
 Teach them new Olympiads—  
 You get expert with the sten  
 Easier than with the adze. 65

Orders for faldstools and a set of yokes  
 Cedarwood trusses mazers of sycamore:  
 Leisure enough to linger on the saw  
 And watch the shaft of sunlight through the door  
 Fill with the lifting motes, and take 70  
 For frankincense the shaven smell of wood.

Hew the tree and trim the baulk  
 Smear the interstices with size,  
 Leave the pundits to their talk  
 Their panaceas to the wise. 75

76	lathe ] lathe, ^	98.4.110
77	hone, ] hone:	98.4.110
81	propaganda <i>H. Finn</i> : propoganda	98.82.20, 98.4.110
83	Every ] And the	98.4.110
84	Let them ] They can soul ] soul, ^	98.4.110 98.4.110
85	colt, ] colt;	98.4.110
86	Still ] S[t <i>over</i> y]ill	98.4.110
87	receives ] will fit	98.4.110
90	sawing ] sawing, ^	98.4.110

Douse the forge and stop the lathe  
Burr the sickle on the hone,  
Still the reaper turns his swathe  
And the work of hands goes on.

Leave the casuists their lies 80  
And the fools their propaganda,  
Let the turner have his dies  
Every spinster her Leander.

Let them talk and tire the soul  
Strain the mare and break the colt, 85  
Still the dowel fills its hole  
And the nut receives the bolt.

So we are here, resting in Bethlehem,  
Safe in our straw after the anxious months,  
Hoping for quiet and a son to do the sawing 90  
And an end of these unwonted mysteries.

## GEORGIC

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.82.18 = NELM MS 2002.41.7 = RB Col 5 (except for handwritten emendations to lines 4, 7 and 11 of RB Col 5, and 7 of NELM MS 2002.41.7).

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.18

### Variant Readings:

4	meat <i>ed</i> : meet	98.82.18
	meat ] me[e <i>emended by hand to a</i> ]t	RB Col 5
7	With trepidation ] Wi[th <i>over illegible characters</i> ]trepidation	98.82.18
	With trepidation ] Wi[th <i>over illegible characters</i> ][ <i>virgule inserted by hand</i> ]trepidation	2002.41.7, RB Col 5
11	patient <i>ed</i> : patients	98.82.18
	patient ] patients	RB Col 5
	runners ] runne[r <i>over s</i> ]s	98.82.18
16	Persistent ] [P <i>over p</i> ]ersistent	98.82.18
29	timeless ] tim[e <i>over l</i> ]less	98.82.18

## GEORGIC

This is not yet sheep country:  
The claws of awns and burrs tangle the fleece,  
The spear-grass' vicious helices  
Screw ulcers in the meat,  
The drenching season rots the feet, 5  
The bloated bowels squirm  
With trepidation of the worm,  
And sour grass and brack imply  
The soil's exhausted poverty.

But let the years work on the land, 10  
The patient runners bind the sand,  
The fall of flower leaf and stem  
Work out their silent stratagem.  
The combing winds will sweep the wold  
To tease the tussocks with their cold 15  
Persistent fingers. Hoof and tooth  
Will mat the rankness to a smooth  
Sward to clothe the slopes along  
As sweet and brief as rustic song.  
There the breeds will cull and cross 20  
To sturdy stock through flaw and loss  
With all the virtues that entail  
Persian, merino, corriedale;  
There where the sun with shadow plays  
In moving counterpoint to graze, 25  
And nyenye\* nyenye shout the lambs  
About the ruminating dams.

There in the glad and future morning,  
The timeless myth and song suborning,  
The shepherd and his tyke will climb 30  
Beyond the reach of stress and time,  
Amid wind-walking shadows there  
Scatter to the vibrant air  
On antique pipe of oaten straw  
The vanished pastoral metaphor 35  
Of safety and solitude.  
Or in the holy twilight mood,  
Hunched among the folded flocks  
Will see above the towering rocks  
Arise on waiting Africa 40  
The unimaginable Star.

\*nyenye: Shona for lamb—evidently onomatopoeic.

TO HUGH FINN

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 98.82.26.3; NELM MS 96.19.130“a”.

**Text:** NELM MS 98.82.26.3

**Note:** I have appointed the accession number NELM MS 96.19.130“a” as this version of the poem has no NELM accession number. It is located between letters NELM MS 96.19.130 and NELM MS 96.19.31. It has handwritten emendations by H. Finn and is dated “10/12/72.”

**Variant Readings:**

Title:	Finn ] F[i <i>over illegible character</i> ]nn	98.82.26.3
1	Hugh ] [H <i>over h</i> ]ugh	96.19.130“a”
7	gown ] g own	96.19.130“a”
	^	
19	could ] co[u <i>over y</i> ]ld	98.82.26.3

## TO HUGH FINN

*After reading his elegy on John Cowie*

Dear Hugh, you put my words to shame,  
My words that shy and stumble  
Behind your honest rhymes that came  
Salute to the humble:

Humble and proud, tartan and lion crown, 5  
Chief of the clan who wore  
His office like a dominie's gown,  
Gentle and dour,

His charity a homespun plaid,  
Rough, warm: I wish, dear Hugh, 10  
My laggard doggerel could add  
Another savour to

The sharp elusive essences,  
Thyme, tangle, bergamot:  
Burns' salt and blithe irreverences, 15  
The heather tang of Scott,  
With fragrant heart and reverent head  
Assenting to the words you've said,  
And I could not.



**"POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATION OF A POET BLOWN UP BY A LANDMINE"**

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

**Manuscript Copies:**

NELM MS 96.19.168; NELM MS 98.4.10.

**Text:** NELM MS 96.19.168

**Variant Readings:**

1	blimey ] Blimey	98.4.10
3	up ] u[p over o]	98.4.10
	to ] [to <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.4.10
4	bypass ] [b over i]ypass	98.4.10

**“POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATION OF A POET BLOWN  
UP BY A LANDMINE”**

There was an old poet said: blimey  
To meet with an end hot and slimy:  
    Hoist up to Parnassus  
    He’s gone to bypass us,  
Short cut to Pantheon: and I’m he.

5



**ATTIC SHAPE**

*in memoriam, Eva*

*“For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair —”*

And did they pause, between draught and discreet belch,  
Between the mullet and the salted nuts,  
Pouring the sea-dark wine  
Between the wine-dark sea and the white porch:  
Pause and admire, between the shadow nets, 5  
The pictured platter, glazed black and terra-cotta,  
The convoluted pleat, the thin flat line  
Precise as light through the millennia?

With half-disdainful downward glance, forgetting 10  
The thousand ships, the cold dishonoured bed,  
She pours the wine, the thin black spill  
From flask to cup: the flagon never empty, with  
The goblet never full, slim finger coquetting  
For ever lifts the veil, the draperies frozen still,  
Glacial, unwavering, dead, 15  
For ever in the chrysalis of myth.

But you were not like that: your skirts  
Not frozen lines—a swirl of finches’ flight,  
A skirl of cirrus, and your head  
Turns delightedly, loose locks blowing bright 20  
In the Elysian zephyrs, and your fingers flirt  
With scripted Helen and the ancient dead.

And I—I sit with Priam: no king  
Of myth though lord of memories, call  
No dreamed-up cities to be saved or sacked, 25  
Whatever sword I had hung by the wall.  
I sit, hours long as centuries, malingering  
Between the dim intention and the act.

Pour me the vintage, love: I cup my hand,  
Empty cup embossed with knotted knuckle— 30  
Wine of our lives, if old the better for it.  
Lift, lift me up before my old knees buckle,  
Reach me the old king’s crutch that I can stand,  
That I may walk with you, if not through asphodel,  
Through the flowers of the veld, lads-love and pimperl. 35  
Your lightfoot grace, free of the flesh, can flit  
Over tangle of bramble and the wait-a-bit.

## I, YOU, AND CYMBELINE

### Publication History:

**OPR:** *Occasional Papers & Reviews* 6 (2), December 1991. 12.

**SP:** *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994. 62.

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col 9; NELM MS 98.11.1; NELM MS 96.19.374; NELM MS 98.82.26.20; NELM MS 2000.18.5“a”.

### Text: NELM MS 98.11.1

**Note:** NELM MS 98.11.1 was included in a letter to Guy Butler dated August 1 1991. This is the latest dateable copy of this poem.

I have appointed the accession number NELM MS 2000.18.5“a” as this version of the poem has no NELM accession number. It is located in a folder marked NELM 2000.18.5.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	YOU ] Y[O <i>over illegible character</i> ]U	98.82.26.20
	YOU ] Y[OU <i>over ou</i> ]	2000.18.5“a”
2	Pantaloon ] Pantaloom	2000.18.5“a”
	lean, ] lean—	SP, 98.82.26.20, 96.19.374, 2000.18.5“a”
4	Cymberline ] Cymberli[n <i>over k</i> ]e	98.82.26.20
5	quartered ] quart[e <i>over illegible character</i> ]red	98.82.26.20
7	gladness ] gladness,	SP, RB Col 9, 98.82.26.20, 96.19.374, 2000.18.5“a”
	^	
10	his ] [h <i>inserted by hand</i> ]is	RB Col 9
12	Posthumus ] Posth[u <i>over y</i> ]mus	RB Col 9
13	distant ] dista[n <i>over b</i> ]t	96.19.374
	far ] fa[r <i>over t</i> ]	98.82.26.20
	country, ] country	RB Col 9
	^	
14	Beyond ] [B <i>over illegible character</i> ]eyond	2000.18.5“a”
	touch ] reach	RB Col 9
18	perfumes ] perfu[m <i>over illegible character</i> ]mes	98.11.1
	flow: ] flow,	RB Col 9
19	creaking ] creakin[g <i>over h</i> ]	2000.18.5“a”
20	my ] m[y <i>inserted by hand over t</i> ]	2000.18.5“a”
	Iachimo ] Iac[h <i>over c</i> ]imo	96.19.374

## I, YOU, AND CYMBELINE

I, with that faltering hand of glory,  
Pantaloon almost, slippered, lean,  
Knave of later broken summers,  
Sit with Cymbeline.

You, on hills we never quartered  
Where curlews quaver, the lark sings,  
With Fidele's earthsome gladness  
Run with the wild princelings.

I, with that last betrayer, death,  
With his thin blade to sever us,  
In sour suspicion of the cuckoldry,  
Glower with Posthumus.

You, in as distant far a country,  
Beyond the touch of brush or pen,  
Secure behind the painted curtains,  
Are all of Imogen.

With book and taper you will sleep,  
Where the chambered perfumes flow:  
At last the creaking lid of verse  
Opens to my Iachimo.

5

10

15

20

## BALLAD: MADONNA AND BAOBAB

**Publication History:** *unpublished.*

### Manuscript Copies:

NELM MS 98.4.99; NELM MS 98.4.99“a” = NELM MS 98.82.25.5; NELM MS 2000.18.4.

### Text: NELM MS 98.82.25.5

**Note:** NELM MS 98.4.99“a” is an unaccessioned photostatic copy of NELM MS 98.82.25.5. I have appointed the accession number to distinguish it from the original. It is paperclipped to NELM MS 98.4.99, hence the accession number.

### Variant Readings:

1	Coasting ] C[o <i>over</i> p]asting	2000.18.4
4	old. ] old:	98.4.99, 2000.18.4
5	bloat monstrosity ] bloated parody	2000.18.4
7	secure ] demure	98.4.99, 2000.18.4
8	Holds the ] Hol[d <i>over</i> s]sthe	2000.18.4
9	the shy and honest ] that modest honest	2000.18.4
	the shy and honest ] that shy and modest	98.4.99
10	since: ] since,	98.4.99, 2000.18.4
11	Gone to seek asses ] Seeking stray asses	2000.18.4
	asses ] assess	98.4.99
	shantytowns ] shantyto[wn <i>over</i> nw]s	98.4.99
	shantytowns ] shantytow[n <i>over</i> b]s	2000.18.4
13	They ] We	2000.18.4
14	beckons ] becko[n <i>over</i> m]s	2000.18.4
	stark ] st[ar <i>over</i> ra]k	2000.18.4
15	towers ] towersw	98.4.99
	stare ] glare [stare <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	98.4.99
	stare ] glare	2000.18.4
17	avenues ] avenues, ^	2000.18.4
18	trickster, ] trickster[, <i>over</i> m]	98.4.99
	trickster, ] strickster <del>m</del> [, <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	2000.18.4
	lips ] eyes [lips <i>inserted by hand</i> ]	2000.18.4
	aslant ] a-slant	2000.18.4
21	elephant ] elephan[t <i>over</i> y]	2000.18.4
22	millennium: <i>ed</i> : millenium:	98.82.25.5
	millenium: ] millenium;	98.4.99
	millennium: ] millenium.	2000.18.4
23	façades <i>ed</i> : facades	98.4.99, 2000.18.4
	splinter ] s[p <i>over</i> ¾]linter	2000.18.4
25	Epiphany ] Ephi[pan <i>over</i> nhy]y	98.4.99
	Epiphany ] Ehip[h <i>over</i> j]any	2000.18.4
	they may ] we shall	2000.18.4

*Variant information continued over the page*

## BALLAD: MADONNA AND BAOBAB

Coasting down to Christmastime, Down to the streets of gold, They saw her at the roadside verge, Young, and forever old.	
Old as the tree, the bloat monstrosity, Adipose, varicose, She, small, secure in innocence, Holds the world close.	5
Alone: her man, the shy and honest chap, Has left her in the waste long since: Gone to seek asses in the shantytowns, Hopes to come back a prince.	10
They pass, unknowing of the miracle; No star beckons, only the stark Glass-eyed towers with their neon stare Betray to grey the crimson dark.	15
Below the thundering avenues Tycoon and trickster, lips aslant, With all the greed of baobab Suck at the springs of the rand.	20
The tree falls: no timber, elephant dung, Prone in millennium: The towers crack, glass façades splinter, Jackal and ratel come home.	
Epiphany they may come back, Where vistas waver, fable shifts, With kings' escutcheons on their bonnet, Bringing their scant sardonic gifts.	25
Along the unreeling spool of road, Elate on amp and ohm and erg, The tribute pot and patchouli Pennyweights from Johannesburg.	30
. . . . .	
They pass. The dust blows off. They miss the stable And go back to Herod. She sits and understands, Dumb and demure, unseeing in the veld, And holds their fortunes in her slender hands.	35





26	fable ] fables	98.4.99
	shifts, ] <del>shrink</del> [shifts inserted by hand],	98.4.99
	shifts, ] shifts;	2000.18.4
27	With ... bonnet, ] At [e over E]pha[ <i>illegible character inserted by hand</i> ]nphy[ <i>illegible characters inserted by hand</i> ] we shall come back,	2000.18.4
	kings' ] king's	98.4.99
	escutcheons ] escutcheon	98.4.99
	their ] thei	98.4.99
28	their ] thei[r inserted by hand over t]	98.82.25.5
	gifts. ] gifts—	2000.18.4
29	unreeling ] unreeli[n over <i>illegible character</i> ]g	98.4.99
30	amp ] <del>ohm</del> [amp inserted by hand]	2000.18.4
	ohm ] amp [ohm inserted by hand above amp]	2000.18.4
31	patchouli ] [p over :]atchouli, ^	98.4.99
	patchouli ] patchouli, ^	2000.18.4
32	Pennyweights ] Penney-weights	2000.18.4
33-36	They ... hands] <i>omitted</i>	98.4.99, 2000.18.4
36	slender ] slen[der inserted by hand over <i>illegible character</i> ]	98.82.25.5

## RAIN FOR ZIMBABWE CHRISTMAS

**Publication History:** *unpublished*.

**RP:** *Rhodesian Poetry* 4, 1957. 1 (under title: "After Early Rain").

### Manuscript Copies:

RB Col; Letter to George Niven from John Brettell dated 22 December 1991.

### Text: Niven Letter.

**Note:** In the "Niven letter" there are 16 lines, RP and RB Col have 24 lines.

In RP every second line is double indented.

### Variant Readings:

Title:	Rain for Zimbabwe Christmas ] After Early Rain	RP
	Rain for Zimbabwe Christmas ] After First Rain	RB Col
1	bateleur RP: bataleur	RB Col, Niven letter,
	sky ] sky,	RP, RB Col
	^	
2	And ] The	RP, RB Col
	burst ] spurt	RP, RB Col
	upwards ] upward	RP, RB Col
3	chrysalid ] chrysalis	RP, RB Col
4	transmuted ] t[r <i>inserted by hand</i> ]ansmuted	Niven Letter
	sequin ] jewel	RP, RB Col
5	ochre and the grey ] savanna grey	RP, RB Col
6	rain's bequest, ] spring's request,	RP, RB Col
7	Kalahari way ] Bechuana-way	RP, RB Col
8	claws ] claws,	RP, RB Col
	^	
9	No ... day: ] Eyes open everywhere: puddle and rivulet	RP, RB Col
10	His ... story; ] Fragments of fallen sky among the grass;	RP, RB Col
11	The ... spray, ] Open, bright pimpernel, open mock violet:	RP, RB Col
12	The ... glory. ] With stubble-scything flight the swallows pass.	RP
	The ... glory. ] With stubble-scything flight the swallows pass,	RB Col
	] Pass and re-pass, and their wings are tipped	RP, RB Col
	] With amethyst of light snatched from the sky;	RP, RB Col
	] With wink of leaf, the solemn eucalypt	RP, RB Col
	] Flirts with the shouting breezes endlessly.	RP, RB Col
	] On naked sense the roustering odours slap,	RP, RB Col
	] The steaming yeast of winter-pented dust;	RP, RB Col
	] In surge and splurge of urgent mounting sap	RP, RB Col
	] The seedling splutters with the sprouting lust.	RP, RB Col
13	Our ... The kaffirboom with incandescent bough	RP, RB Col
14	With ... lit: ] In taper-tips of leaping fire is lit:	RP, RB Col

*Variant information continued on facing page*

## RAIN FOR ZIMBABWE CHRISTMAS

The bateleur drops from the loosened sky  
And crazy buds burst upwards into light,  
Now every chrysalid a butterfly  
Transmuted to a sequin overnight.

The green sheen sweeps the ochre and the grey 5  
Shouting its answer to the rain's bequest,  
And the old desert, Kalahari way,  
Sheathing its claws slinks backward one step west.

No stable holds our Child on such a day: 10  
His cot the tree-top in the nursery story;  
The swelling fruit bows heavy on the spray,  
The cud-full oxen kneel before the glory.

Our kaffirboom with fissured ancient bough  
With tapertips of scarlet flame is lit:  
If ever men were lucky, we are now: 15  
If ever land was blessèd, this is it.

15 now ] know  
now: ] now;

16 blessèd ] bless[è *accent inserted by hand*]d  
blessèd ] blessed

Niven Letter  
RP, RB Col  
Niven Letter  
RP, RB Col



## INDEX OF TITLES

[A dark and midnight shape]	361
African Afternoon	181
African Student	163
After Published Verse	269
Agrippa	401
Air Line	499
Air Mail	145
Antbear	305
Antelope and Mad Baboon	15
April	289
Arson	387
At Home	569
Attic Shape	595
Aubade for Orpheus	455
August	309
Ausonius	393
Autumn Song	39
Ballad: Madonna and Baobab	599
Birds, The	405
Birth in Bethlehem	583
Birthday of a Sloth	83
Books and Toys	47
Bougainvillea	55
Boy is Born, A	243
Cabbage Seller, The	167
“Car”	377
Cataclysm	123
Cathedral	533
Centaur’s Song 1942	545
Chalton Mill	135
Charlemagne	531
Children, The	257
Chinese Screen, A	143
Christmas Carol	41
Christmas Tree	51
Claudian	395
Clerk in Holy Orders	441
Cloud	479
Columbus	119
Cophetua	69
Cosmos	281
Crowned Cranes	213
Cuckoo	285
Cuckoo	503

December	327
Dedication to Eva: For "Bronze Frieze"	559
Departure Platform	65
Deri-Deri	319
Dick	369
Dikkop	211
Donkey Cart	21
Duiker Doe	203
Dung Beetle	461
Dung	481
Dwarfs' Chorus	97
Early Hour	573
Ease	85
Eavesdropper, The	157
Elephant	197
End of Year Returns	263
Envoi	351
Epilogue: No Road	103
Epiphany 1965	241
Escape by Water	101
Expecting Peace	567
Fancy's Knell	77
Fantasia in Pseudo-Tudor	183
February	279
Felled Wattle	301
Flower of the Clove	63
Fritz	491
From a Hotel Window	173
From Africa: 1941	31
Frost	75
[Froth of a young man's dream]	371
Genius Loci	359
Georgic	589
Giraffes	201
Gorse	411
Harry	375
Harvest at Horsebridge	129
Heard at Inyanga	27
Hengrave Hall	485
Hesitations: I.	577
II.	579
III.	581
Hill, The	79
Hoopoe	207
Hunchback	409

I, You and Cymbeline	597
In the Train	67
In the Wattle	311
Ironworkers	295
Itchen Estuary: Bitterne	507
January	273
July	303
June 14th	523
June	299
Kwashiorkor	323
“L’Après-midi d’un Faune”	35
Lakeside I.	335
II.	339
III.	343
IV.	347
Leaving in September	137
Locus	357
Locust Birds	25
Mantis and Moth	275
March	283
Maronda Mashanu	5
Maronda Mashanu Revisited in time of Crisis	191
Max Gate	451
May	293
Moon	385
Mother and Child	329
[Muffle of hoof-beats]	367
Nameless Bird, The	217
Naturalist	433
Neighbour	437
New Year	223
Nightfall	553
No Prayer for Rain	37
No Road to Xanadu	153
Nocturne	495
Nocturne	425
November	321
October	317
Odysseus	521
On an Inyanga Road	151
On Clent Hill	121
Outside Kimberley	171
Owl and the Ivy, The	195



Personae	355
Petty Thief	403
Poetess	447
“Posthumous Publication of a Poet Blown up by a Landmine”	593
Prospect	429
Prudentius	397
Quartet: Ex Libris:	
Summer	229
Autumn, after drought	231
Winter	233
Spring	237
Rain for Zimbabwe Christmas	603
Reliquia	535
Retreat from Rapture	543
Rhodesian Spring Song	555
Safe Interior	551
Sanctuary in Africa	91
Schoolgirls	407
Schoolmaster	259
September	313
Severn, May 22	519
Severn: Above Bevere Lock	509
Shadow Show	489
Singer, The	517
Skid	255
Song by Owl-Light	497
Song	89
Song	539
Song for Apples	249
Song for Severn	247
Song for Silver	251
[Southern Cross and Charles’ Wain]	117
Sparrow	465
Spastic Child	459
[Spear in an Old Man’s Hand]	365
Spiderwebs	413
Spitting Cobra	473
Spring in the air	383
Spring Song	87
Spring Song	225
Stakenbridge. July 13 <sup>th</sup>	527
Suicide	445
Summit, The	315
Sunset	469
Thief	541
Threnody in Spring	109
Thrush	475

To an Old Man, Dying	71
To Eva	141
To Hugh Finn	591
To Rosemary	93
To Walter de la Mare	139
Tom	363
Transit	575
Traveller's Joy	291
Tres Via	525
Triumvirate of Silver	391
Turn of the Year	547
[Two gleaming wheels come westward]	373
Umsasa	33
Village Headman	449
Vox Populi	19
Wagtail	209
Walking in Woods	177
Wall, The	417
War and Peace	11
Weathercock	187
When I go down to Stratford on Avon	529
White Harrier, The	219
Wild Orchids	477
Wind and an Eagle Owl	265
Wind at the Funeral	73
Window in Between	253
Winter's Tale, A	125
Wood-smoke	95
Zimbabwe	561



## INDEX OF FIRST LINES

A casual turn of the page, and there it stood	485
A dark and midnight shape comes shambling to the crossway	361
A mile away, the wood's on fire	87
After a night's rain, the wind had killed all distances	285
After the easy unencumbered motion	293
After the News at eight	545
Against the noise of men gone mad	91
Against the pallid front of dawn	347
All day the wind had jostled with the sky	233
Along a blank garden wall	481
Along the silence of the river	247
An old half-pay sea captain, shaving one May morning	203
And can it be that this is what it comes to	407
And did they pause, between draught and discreet belch	595
As I stand in the first light at the kitchen door	479
At dawn, I saw the old moon in the east	385
At the edge of the day, on the edge of a cliff	477
At the end is the centre. Here our ways all	327
At times, with a bewildered child	259
Ausonius, bland poetaster, sergeant of affairs	393
Before the black still fuming ruin	387
Beneath the fourteen pointed arches	123
Bird, wild bird, draining your lamentable cry	211
Blackberries not quite ripe	137
Clamped to the aerial wire, there	275
Claudian, with slim Egyptian grace	395
Coasting down to Christmastime	599
Cockney, street urchin, how do you come here	465
Dapper little dilettante	209
Darling, take my hand and lead	93
Dear Hugh, you put my words to shame	591
Do not come with me over the sea	101
Do these things to please me, love, she said	75
Don't even turn your head	253
Down from the hilltop, down to the rustling vlei	543
Easily, easily, turn your head: there is no need	273
Eleven times he shouted, to me and the laggard year	503
Enough to drink, sighs the sodden earth	291
Escape me if you must, but do it lustily	541
Every sultry afternoon	15
Filching an odd halfhour of winter light	305
Framed in the sedan windows, the tall triangular faces	201
Froth of a young man's dream	365

Gently, so gently, lift the lolling head	323
Half-witted, half-limbed, helpless and erratic	459
He came, I think, from Porlock	153
He knew that haloes never grow from mukwa	329
He said: With a forward wagging gesture of his long hand	491
Heavy with rumour, slack with doubt, we bridge	191
Here, in the falling season	295
Hoop, hoop	207
How, in those boy and girl holidays, it came to greet us	573
How shall I find the twelve times fourteen rhymes	279
How to make a song of these	263
I am the sojourner, the conqueror	369
I build: under plumb, mattock, mallet	183
I could not think of death	73
I lie and search the wind	335
I lived alone for fourteen days	141
I thought I knew the birds that haunt the hills	217
I see from the register his name is Gumbo	409
I shall always burn wood on my fires	95
I sing the joy of life	517
I sinned against a man: so little a thing	581
I stood tiptoe on hills of wind	531
I was aware of wings: and then	25
I was bred from this earth	363
I wish the train would start	65
I, with that faltering hand of glory	597
In link-light and lamp-light on the dark verandah	403
In the meantime, let us regard this room	551
In white and crimson the trim steamer goes	119
Inkoos, someone is dead	157
It rained, and we had the ruins to ourselves	561
It stood alone, that grim euphorbia	5
It was an old track forgotten	103
It was like this you came	63
It was very silent in the great white church	533
It was with curiosity, not alarm	473
Latching the paddock gate up tight	569
Lest it should be when we have gone away	35
Let us grope out into the winter frost	303
Listen, thrush: run and listen	475
Long silence of deep waters, you would tell	519
Moonlight filtering in like loneliness of snow	359
Morose and out of breath and out of sorts	319
Muffle of hoof-beats comes to the dark crossing	367
My eager little horse	579

Never come in the spring	89
Never remember me: oh do not say	69
No gradual dark for you, the violet hour	447
Not as in those languid dreams I dreamt, you came	523
Not even a shadow was given me that morning	413
Not for the rain I pray	37
Nothing to do that need be done	85
Nou sprinkles the sprai	555
Now the coat is inside-out	269
Now you have gone, my thought shall not be of you	535
O, the kind air slipped round us like a glove	121
On the raw edge of a ravine	301
One apple on a sapling tree	249
One foot in Eden, one in the Sabine farm	397
One who in Indian Summer told of winter	125
Our sun-dial plays with time—and keeps the rules	317
Our windows answer to the west	425
Over the rooftops, many a coign and angle	173
Over the speakers comes the bland announcement	499
Perfumes and jewels and a certain star	583
Pine needles drop in April, secretive	289
Planned, preordained, and with no fuss completed	229
Reading a young man's difficult poetry	241
Rosemary's for remembrance, the fresh	321
Ruvavi, chameleon, one eye swivelled forward and one back	375
Scratch up everything that's worth	97
See their bright eyes, like darting gillimienkies	257
Sensing the scents of spring, seated to read	237
Shadow across my shoulder	225
Shake your shapely head, my dear	567
She never showed me this or told me of it	507
Silver I bring you	251
Sir, I'm selling cabbages; will you buy some, please	167
Sleep quiet, love	495
Slippers on the feet and my pipe drawing easy	83
Slowly the great head turned	197
So here we part, at the bleak crossways of dream	525
So, sick at heart, we watched the piccanins	171
So we come at last to what seemed	315
Some say: being only exists in seeing	433
Something was there in those still woods. It lay	527
Southern Cross and Charles' Wain	117
Spear in an old man's hand	365
Spin your mechanical toys	47
Spring in the air, and underfoot September	383
Springtime in Capricorn: what can you resurrect	33

Square of light on a green carpet: slanting	489
That boy the waters of Winander knew	339
The back wheels spun and the tall bank	255
The bateleur drops from the loosened sky	603
The clouds gather up. The yellow leaves spin round	521
The concrete stands across the gorge	343
The firelight brought madness almost	577
The flood slides slowly: you would hardly notice	509
The hair-suspended blade flames in the sun	181
The night is full of voices: shrill	19
The night they told me, the wind came at my window	71
The pinch of seed brought by a stranger	411
The pressure lamp hisses into the silence	163
The rain in the dark has two voices: our two voices	283
The restless combines fret and clack	129
The seed is split, the boy is born	243
The stillness drowsed beneath the boughs	311
The western light had died long since	553
The wings slant over the earth's subtended curve	145
The year they finished the wall and shut the gates	417
There was an old poet said: blimey	593
These trees, with their twin intertwisting growth	313
They came a gliding frieze against the hills	27
They have fled, like the buck from the butcher	575
They say: "Clunton and Clunbury	437
They say: dead men tell no tales. For us	441
They say: no man's an island	429
They say: the high ridge is a basalt sill	445
They say you can't take it with you: but you	449
This is not yet sheep country	589
This is your book	559
Three poplars on the road to Rome	391
Thwarted and craven, the lost winds jostle in the alleys	187
To gauge the flow, they threw a weir across	223
Together at the silent point	351
Tom, Dick, Harry, John	355
Too late the colours of autumn come	231
Toss for a totem	195
To-wit, to-woo	497
Two gleaming wheels come westward to the crossroad	373
Two o'clock, and time for the afternoon News	11
Up the dark avenue, leading to no end	151
Up the steep camber of the road	461
Waist deep in foam along the verge	281
Walking in woods, the spring above	177
Was not the empty morning big enough	213
We cannot now expect	547

We could have gone on and on	67
We have been in the shadows, but not bereft	455
We have come, but no others	135
We once wandered along the Dorset coast	451
We quarrelled overnight, about	265
We shall not listen here for any bells	41
We walked again with beauty, muted beauty	469
We're running running running	539
What curious fancy gave your name	401
What song did we expect	139
When I first saw it, fifteen years ago	55
When I go down to Stratford on Avon	529
Whiter than squall on a white sky of storm	219
Why stand so suddenly still	31
Will it be easier, I asked, when heart is older	299
Will someone, black or white, stand here	51
With a half-fascinated faint abhorrence	21
With a shy tentative grace, you lift the lid	405
With sly susurrus on the smothered tracks	377
Yes, stand a little way off, listless and still	77
You chose the time well to die	109
You could not tell if four ways met or two ways crossed	357
You in the snow, under the boulevard trees	143
You say the best is behind us; in the long climb	79
You simple-minded African bird	39
You turn and murmur in your lonely sleep	309



Pencil, ink marks and  
highlighting ruin books  
for other readers.

## Volume II

## CHRONOLOGY: N.H. BRETTELL

- 1908 July 3: Noel Harry Brettell is born in Lye, Worcestershire, the third of four children (Stanley, Lilian, Noel, Madge) of Harry and Lucy Brettell.
- 1913 September: Enrols as a pupil at Orchard Lane Elementary School, Lye.
- 1920 September: Enrols as a pupil at King Edward VI Grammar School, Stourbridge, after winning a county scholarship.
- 1925 Starts to show prowess as a long-distance athlete.
- 1926 Plays rugby for the school first team. Wins school steeplechase.
- 1927 Plays rugby for the school first team. Wins school steeplechase, as well as the quarter, half and mile events at the school sports day.
- 1928 Enrols as a BA student at Birmingham University after winning a Worcestershire major scholarship (£50 p.a.).  
Poem: "Athleta" published in *The University Gazette* 5 (2).
- 1929 Poem "The Singer" published in *The University Gazette* 5 (4).  
Poems "Odysseus" and "Severn. May 22<sup>nd</sup>" published in *The University Gazette* 6 (1).  
Poem "Release" published in *The University Gazette* 6 (2).  
Courts "Cynthia" (Dorothy Baker).
- June: Writes poem "June 14".
- July: Writes poems: "Tres Via" and "Stakenbridge. July 13<sup>th</sup>".  
Probably at this time writes poem "When I go down to Stratford on Avon".  
Goes on a walking tour into Wales with Bill Berry.

- 1930 Poem "Charlemagne" published in *The University Gazette* 6 (3).  
 Poem "Cathedral" published in *The University Gazette* 6 (6).  
 Relationship with "Cynthia" ends.  
 Probably about this time writes poem "Reliquia".
- June 30: Graduates with a first-class honours Degree in English, the Tibbatts Prize for top scholar in his year. Gains a Blue for cross-country running.
- September: Arrives as a teacher at Ruzawi School, Marandellas (now Marondera), in Southern Rhodesia.
- 1931 Meets and falls in love with Eva Scovell, a teacher at Ruzawi who had been on leave in England, nursing her mother, when Brettell first arrived at Ruzawi.
- 1932 Resigns from Ruzawi.
- April: Returns to the United Kingdom by boat via Suez Canal. En route writes poem "Flowers of the Clove".
- 1933 May: Spends one term teaching at Bishop Auckland Grammar School in England.  
 Spends a week with Eva in London followed by a two-week walking tour together through the Isle of Wight and along the Dorset Coast into Devon.
- October: Enrols at Birmingham University for a Teaching Diploma.
- 1934 June 15: Marries Eva Gertrude Scovell in Eva's home parish church in Sholing, Southampton, directly after his final Teaching Diploma paper.
- June 30: Obtains post-graduate Birmingham University Teaching Diploma and the Dame Elizabeth Cadbury Prize for the best result of his year.
- September: Teaches at a primary school in South Harting, Sussex.
- December: Sails for Africa on board the "Winchester Castle".

- 1935 January: Assumes duty as headmaster of Enslinsdeel Primary School.  
 August 23: John Brettell born.
- 1938 September 20: Rosemary Brettell born.
- 1940 July: Leaves Enslinsdeel Primary School to become headmaster of Enkeldoorn Primary School in Enkeldoorn (Chivhu). -
- 1941 Befriends the Rev. Arthur Shearly Cripps and begins writing poetry again.  
 Writes poems: "Sanctuary in Africa" and "From Africa 1941".
- 1942 July: Leaves Enkeldoorn Primary School to become headmaster of Riversdale Primary School.  
 Writes poems: "War and Peace", "Christmas Carol", "Centaur's Song".  
 Family holiday in Beira, Mozambique.
- 1943 July: Writes poem "Birthday of a Sloth".
- 1944 December: Writes poem "Books and Toys".
- 1945 June: Poem "Books and Toys" published in *The Link*  
 Poem "Maronda Mashanu" published in educational journal *School*.<sup>1</sup>
- August 13: Writes poem "Expecting Peace".  
 September: Poem "War and Peace" published in *The Link*  
 October: Poem "Autumn Song" published in *The Link*  
 Probably about this time writes poem "Bougainvilia".  
 December: "Christmas Carol" published in *The Link*

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<sup>1</sup>Information drawn from *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Conjecture: *School* was a journal for school teachers.

- 1946 January: "Birth is [sic] Bethlehem 1944" published in *The Link: Magazine of the Anglican Church in Southern Rhodesia*.  
 December: Writes poem: "Heard at Inyanga".
- 1947  
 Corresponds with Francis Carey Slater. This leads to the publication of *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* in 1950.  
 Takes overseas leave with his wife and children.
- 1950  
 Poems: "Cophetua", "Departure Platform", "Donkey Cart", "In the Train", "L'Après-midi d'un Faune", "War and Peace", "Wind at the Funeral" published in *A New Anthology of Rhodesian Verse*. Chosen by John Snelling. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell Limited, 1950.  
*Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* published by Oxford University Press.  
 September: Poems "Leaving in September" and "Winter's Tale" published in *The Link*.  
 December: Poem "Columbus" published in *The Link*.
- 1951 February: Poems "Chalton Mill" and "Clent Hill" published in *The Link*.  
 March: Poem "On Clent Hill" published in *The Link*.
- 1952 January: Poem "Wind and an Eagle Owl" and "To Eva" published in *Poetry Review Salisbury* (1).  
 August: A.S. Cripps dies. Brettell is a pall-bearer at the funeral.  
 October: Poem "Threnody in Spring" published in *The Link*.  
 December: Poem "Window in Between" published in *Poetry Review Salisbury* (2).
- 1953  
 Harry Brettell (Noel's father) dies.
- 1954  
 Takes overseas leave  
 Poem "Zimbabwe" published in *Standpunte* 9 (2).

- December: Poems: "Leaving England in September", "Air Mail" and "Elephant" published in *Poetry Review Salisbury* (3).
- 1956 Produces poetry collection: "A Rhodesian Leave", his first handmade volume for private distribution among friends and family.
- 1957 Appointed as Superintendent of an African school run by a village council: 1957-1958.  
Poems "After Early Rain", "To Walter de la Mare" and "Envoi (After Published Verse)" published in *Rhodesian Poetry* 4.
- November: Poem "The Children" published in *RTA Journal*.<sup>2</sup>
- 1958 Riversdale Primary School closes. Brettell accepts "Abolition of Office" pension and retires to a house built by himself at Britannia Halt, near Bonda Mission in the Juliesdale area, Inyanga.
- August: Poem "The Schoolmaster" published in *RNTA Journal*.<sup>3</sup>
- 1959 Poems "Outside Kimberley" and "End of Year Returns" published in *Rhodesian Poetry* 5.  
Poem "Giraffes" published in *A Book of South African Verse*; selected by Guy Butler. London: Oxford University Press, 1959: p.87-88.
- 1960 Poems: "Harvest at Horsebridge" and "African Afternoon" published in *P.E.N 1960: New South African Writing and a Survey of Fifty Years of Creative Achievement*.

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<sup>2</sup>Information drawn from *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Conjecture: RTA stands for *Rhodesian Teachers' Association Journal*.

<sup>3</sup>Information drawn from *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*. Conjecture: RNTA stands for *Rhodesian National Teachers' Association Journal*.

- 1963 Produces second handmade illustrated poetry collection “Some Poems 1963 / The Owl and the Ivy”.
- 1964 July: “Epiphany 1964 (for Douglas Livingstone)” published in *New Coin* 2 (2).  
Poems “Duiker Doe”, “Skid”, “The Nameless Bird”, “Weathercock” and “The Cabbage Seller” published in *Rhodesian Poetry* 7.
- December: Produces handmade illustrated volume “Prose Year / Stumbling on Melons”.
- 1965 Produces third handmade illustrated poetry collection: “Season and Festival”.
- March: Poem “African Student: Shakespeare for “A” Level” published in *Two Tone* 3.
- 1966 Poems “Dikkop”, “Winter”, “The White Harrier” and “New Year” published in *Rhodesian Poetry* 8.
- December: Poem “Spring Song: for a hypertensive” published in *Two Tone* 3 (1).
- 1967 March: Poem “Summer” published in *Two Tone* 3 (2).  
September: Poem “Schoolmaster” published in *Two Tone* 3 (4).  
December: Poem “Crowned Cranes” published in *New Coin* 3 (4).
- 1968 Poem “Spring” published in *Rhodesian Poetry* 9, 1968/1969.  
December: Poem “Wagtail: at Pungwe Falls” published in *Two Tone* 4 (4).
- 1969 Produces fourth handmade illustrated poetry collection “One Year”.
- 1970 Poems “Mantis and Moth” and “The Summit” published in *Rhodesian Poetry* 10, 1970/1971.

- Produces "Postscript 1" of an autobiography later published as *Side-Gate and Stile*.
- 1972 June: Poems "Traveller's Joy", "Antbear" and "Mother and Child" published in *Two Tone* 8 (2).
- July 28: Awarded Book Centre / P.E.N. Centre of Rhodesia Annual Literary Prize.  
Poems "Deri-Deri", "Felled Wattle" published in *Rhodesian Poetry* 11, 1972/1973.
- September: Poem "September" published in *Two Tone* 8 (3).
- December: Writes Poem "To Hugh Finn".
- 1973 June: Poems "July" and "August" published in *Two Tone* 9.
- 1974 Poems "June", "December" and "In the Wattle" published in *Rhodesian Poetry* 12, 1974/75.
- 1976 January: Produces fifth handmade illustrated poetry collection "Lakeside: Sebakwe and Ngesi".
- April: Produces sixth handmade poetry collection "Eclogue in the Hills" (unfinished).  
Poem "Genius Loci" published in *Rhodesian Poetry* 13, 1976-1977.
- 1977 January 18: Writes limerick "Posthumous Publication of a Poet Blown up by a Landmine"
- June: Poem "Envoi: for my wife" published in *Two Tone* 13 (2).  
The Poetry Society of Rhodesia publishes *Season and Pretext*.
- October: Produces seventh handmade illustrated poetry collection "And Underfoot September".  
Elected president of P.E.N. Centre of Rhodesia, after the death of Sir Robert Tredgold.



- 1978 May: Spends a month on holiday near Durban with the family. Meets Douglas Livingstone.
- August: Awarded Book Centre / P.E.N. Centre of Rhodesia Annual Literary Prize
- December: Produces handmade manuscript of later published illustrated autobiography *Side-Gate and Stile*.
- 1979 February 12: The Brettells's house is attacked and destroyed by insurgents. Noel and Eva move to Gatooma (Kadoma) where their son John is an entomologist in the cotton industry. Brettell produces "Postscript Two" to later published *Side-Gate and Stile*.
- 1980 Poem "Spring in the air" published in *The Zimbabwe Poetry Review* (15).
- December: Spends a month on holiday in Cape Town with his daughter Rosemary.
- 1981 May: Produces a typescript for a novel, "Ver Genoeg / Far Enough". Produces eighth handmade illustrated collection of poetry "Recessional". Books of Rhodesia publishes *Side-Gate and Stile* which includes Postscripts 1 & 2, twenty-four selected poems, and the complete poetry collection "And Underfoot September".
- September: Poem "Cosmos" published in *Two Tone* 17 (3).
- 1982 Books of Rhodesia publishes *Four Voices* a volume of selected poems by Rowland Molony, David Wright, John Eppel, and Brettell's complete collection "Recessional".
- 1983 May: Produces a typescript for a novel "The Farthest Way" / "Parallel of Time".
- June: Eva is admitted to hospital after a fall.

- December: Produces handmade illustrated prose volume "A Few Sidelights on Side-Gate".  
 Produces a typescript for a novel: "Through a Glass Darkly" / "Through a Sheet of Glass" / "Far Forest"
- 1984 September: The Brettells's car is rammed by a bus in Kadoma. Eva is fatally injured and dies a few days later.  
 Produces typescript for novella "Covenant with Silence".  
 Produces handmade illustrated prose volume *Eva: 1984*.
- 1985 May: Flies with his daughter Rosemary to the UK for a three-month holiday.  
 Produces handmade illustrated prose volume "Letters from England".
- August: Produces handmade ninth illustrated poetry collection "Country into Town".
- 1986 Produces handmade illustrated prose volume "Eva: 1986".
- 1987 October: Spends a month in South Africa with his daughter Rosemary.
- 1989 December: Sends handmade Christmas card containing the poem: "Attic Shape" to the Finns.
- 1990 Spring: Poem "Attic Shape" published in *New Contrast* 71 18 (3).  
 October: Holidays with his daughter Rosemary in the UK.  
 Produces handmade illustrated prose volume: "England Revisited".
- 1991 Starts negotiating the publication of "Not Time's Fool" (a selection of love poems) with South African publishers.

November 29: Noel Brettell dies.

December 6: Funeral service in the Anglican cathedral in Harare.  
December: Handmade Christmas Card containing poem "Ballad: Madonna and Baobab" received by Guy Butler.  
December: Christmas letter containing poem "Rain for Zimbabwe Christmas" found.  
December: Poem "I, You and Cymbeline" published in: *Occasional Papers & Reviews* 6 (2).

1992 December: Poems "October", "Spitting Cobra", "Shadow Show" and "Nocturne (Sleep quiet, love)" published in *New Contrast* 80 20 (4).

1994 Snailpress, Cape Town, publishes *Selected Poems*.



*Noel and Eva Brettell at Pungwe Falls in Nyanga (date unknown).  
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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

N.H. BRETTELL  
1908-1991

To date, the poetry of N.H. Brettell has gone largely unnoticed by literary scholars, even those specialising in southern African writing. This is perhaps not surprising, given that Brettell chose to live most of his life in rural areas of what was then Southern Rhodesia and made little effort to bring his work to the attention of publishers or the literary establishment of the time. While Brettell was reluctant to publish his poetry, preferring instead to circulate it amongst close friends and fellow poets in the form of typescript volumes, illustrated either with his own watercolour paintings or his daughter Rosemary's linocuts, over half his (known) poems were published in anthologies, journals and two solo volumes. His retiring nature and preference for a modern form of scribal publication,<sup>4</sup> however, meant that only a select few were able to appreciate fully his true worth as a poet and his position in southern African letters. These readers, many of them well established poets themselves, recognised the distinct voice and careful craftsmanship evident in Brettell's poetry. Douglas Livingstone,<sup>5</sup> for instance, a pre-eminent South African poet, acknowledged Brettell as "the greatest poet writing in Southern Africa"<sup>6</sup> and Guy Butler,<sup>7</sup> long a commanding figure in South African letters, described him as "possibly the finest poet Southern Africa ... ever produced."<sup>8</sup>

Brettell used his distinctive poetic voice, a compound of intelligence, breadth of vision, erudition, depth of feeling, aesthetic sensibility, striking imagery, discipline and skill in versification, to give expression to a set of highly particular insights and perceptions derived from living in two disparate countries with contrasting countryside, traditions and societies. In his poetry Brettell's experiences of Africa and

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<sup>4</sup>See Textual Introduction.

<sup>5</sup>Douglas Livingstone (1932-1996). See *Companion to South African English Literature*. (Chapman, M, et al. comp. Johannesburg: Ad Donker. 1986) for biographical details.

<sup>6</sup>See letter from David Philip to Brettell dated 14 June 1991 (NELM MS 98.4.39).

<sup>7</sup>Guy Butler (1918-2001). See *Companion to South African English Literature*. (Chapman, M, et al. comp. Johannesburg: Ad Donker. 1986) for biographical details.

<sup>8</sup>Conversation between Professor Paul Walters and Guy Butler, 1999.

England, both imagined and actual, fuse into a layered whole, which lends to his images an interesting poetic duality. His poems reflect the sustained attempt of an *Englishman* to comprehend the “otherness” of his *African* experience. Throughout his oeuvre there is a sense of Brettell as speaker reaching out towards the “otherness” of a land which, though he calls it home, is not quite his own.

\* \* \*

Noel Harry Brettell was born in Lye, Worcestershire on 3 July 1908, the third of four children. His father was a self-made man who had begun life as a worker in a bucket-making factory, but through teaching himself to read and write had risen out of the family nail-making and metal-working trade to become a draper. In the course of his self-education, Brettell’s father had developed a love of literature, especially the work of Dickens, whose novels he used to read aloud every Sunday to an attentive family. According to Brettell’s autobiography *Side-Gate and Stile*<sup>9</sup> (*SGS*) his father was also a “determined odd man out” and a “stout liberal” who had been “unpopularly pro-Boer” in the Anglo-Boer War and very nearly “unpopularly pro-German” (*SGS* 18) in World War I. As later life was to prove, the young Brettell inherited both his father’s love of literature and his liberal political convictions.

Brettell’s childhood, while humble, was a happy one. Lye in 1908 was little more than a village surrounded by countryside and farmland, and while this in turn was bordered by the factories and heavy industry of Birmingham, the relative ease and safety in which a young boy could explore the natural world immediately around him made Lye an idyllic place for Brettell to grow up.<sup>10</sup> From an early age Brettell developed a love of nature and the outdoors and his exploration of the countryside around his home fostered a sensitivity to his natural surroundings which was later greatly to inform his poetry.

Brettell’s formal education began at Orchard Lane School in Lye, from where he won a County Scholarship tenable at King Edward VI Grammar School in the neighbouring town of Stourbridge. It was while a pupil at King Edward’s (1920-1927) that Brettell discovered his athletic ability and also his love of poetry, though at

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<sup>9</sup> Brettell N.H. *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe Publishing Co., 1981.

<sup>10</sup> See pages 1-23 of Brettell’s autobiography *Side-Gate and Stile*, for Brettell’s description of the Lye of his boyhood.

school his knowledge of the latter did not extend beyond the poetry of the eighteenth century. "Grammar School learning", as Brettell noted in *Side-Gate and Stile*:

was solid, integral and unadventurous. Grammar, in fact, was its honest foundation, grammar in the wider sense, not only as the sinews of language, but as the hard structure of all scholarship. ... I find it curious—and rather appalling—to think how few feathers I had on the pinions that took me, a spare, square youth of nineteen, to the university. It was due to my teaching that the poetry that meant most to me was that of Virgil, Horace, Catullus, Lucretius. Shakespeare I hardly realised as a poet. I knew nothing of English poetry later than Pope. I had no idea that men might be writing it still. I had no idea that I might write it myself. ... I had no Greek and little French. I knew nothing at all of science, economics, art, or music. The school gave us honestly what it had to give. What it did not give, we had no means of finding.  
(SGS 45-6)

Despite these drawbacks Brettell, at the age of sixteen, sat the Cambridge Entrance Examination, an examination open to all students in England and Wales. He achieved the distinction of being placed second out of four hundred students. Two years later he proceeded to gain a three-year scholarship at Birmingham University in an age when education for most ended with the three "Rs".

On the sports field Brettell was a natural athlete. He won the school steeplechase in 1926 and 1927 as well as the quarter-mile, half-mile and mile races at the 1927 school sports day. He also set up a record time for the cross country 5-mile run, received his rugby first XV colours and was the school light-weight boxing champion. While a student at Birmingham Brettell continued to show prowess as an athlete and in the first sports meeting between Oxford University and Birmingham University he was narrowly beaten in the half-mile by an Olympic runner. Brettell's time was 2 seconds slower.<sup>11</sup> Throughout his University career Brettell ran for a "celebrated"<sup>12</sup> university team known as the "Birchfield Harriers" and gained his full colours for athletics. Being awarded his Blue for athletics was the one achievement in his life that Brettell was truly proud of.

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<sup>11</sup>"Brilliant Career of Mr H.N. [sic.] Brettell, of Lye."

<sup>12</sup>"Brilliant Career of Mr H.N. [sic.] Brettell, of Lye."



Although he was primarily a long distance runner Noel Brettell competed at other distances in the School Sports and is seen coming in second to G. W. Easom in the 220 yards open in the Summer of 1926.

Brettell coming in second in the 220 yards school open in the Summer of 1926.  
 Photo appears in *The Blackcountryman* 23 (4), Autumn 1990. 15.



The Harriers running team 1927-28. Brettell is standing second from the right.  
 Reproduced with permission of Rosemary Brettell.

While a student at Birmingham University, Brettell also involved himself fully in student life. Although his financial situation dictated that he live at home and commute daily from Lye to Birmingham by train, he represented the university at several debates, was the editor of the *University Gazette*,<sup>13</sup> in which several of his poems<sup>14</sup> (see “Uncollected Poems”) and short stories were published, and was the president of the Literary Debating society. He also acted in amateur dramatic productions,<sup>15</sup> apparently including one in which he played alongside (the later famous film actress) Madeleine Carroll.<sup>16</sup> It was also while at university, in his final year, that Brettell fell in love for the first time. As he noted in *Side-Gate and Stile*:

Successful, popular, arrogant, insolent, first scholar of my year, a cross-country Blue, secretary of this society, chairman of that—from such an altitude I fell in love, and from such an altitude I fell heavily. ... It was the inevitable and necessary end of this stretching of the cuticle of my ignorance, absurd, but as crude and cruel as the bursting of a chrysalis. Cynthia (not her name, but it will do for a boy’s first love)<sup>17</sup> was no walker, but masterfully I insisted on showing her my hills. The bus took us to the foot and we climbed up slowly through the woods. A summer storm was gathering as we walked out on to the downs. The first spatters drove us under the shelter of a great oak. The first tremendous crash and the flash riving the purple of the sky drove her into my arms, and we kissed long and frantically while the storm smashed the afternoon to splinters.

It started in storm, and it was a stormy idyll that did not last long. ... Slowly she, not so slowly as I, we came to see that we had very little in common except our desperate embraces. ‘Honestly,’ she said, ‘can you really see me as the wife of a farmer?’—A farmer: that is what, before the looming

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<sup>13</sup> A testimonial written by one of Brettell’s lecturers Mr Waterhouse noted that “during [Brettell’s] year as editor the standard of the university magazine displayed a very notable improvement” (see letter dated 18 June 1933, NELM MS 98.4.29).

<sup>14</sup> Waterhouse commenting on Brettell’s poetry noted: “if he fulfils the promise of some early attempts, which I saw, he may well make his name known” (see letter dated 18 June 1933, NELM MS 98.4.29).

<sup>15</sup> According to Waterhouse Brettell “showed marked power as an actor” (see letter dated 18 June 1933, NELM MS 98.4.29).

<sup>16</sup> Finn, Betty. Personal interview, December 2001. Madeleine Bernadette O’Carroll (1906-1987) was one of the most celebrated female stars of British film during the 1930s. She is now perhaps best remembered for her roles in Alfred Hitchcock’s *The 39 Steps* (1935) and *Secret Agent* (1935/6). For biographical details see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>17</sup> A note at the top of a draft letter from Brettell to a Dorothy Baker, (NELM MS 94.4.74) identifies Dorothy Baker as the “Cynthia” of *Side-Gate and Stile*. Baker, however, was Dorothy’s married name. From a letter to another university friend, Myfanwy Bridges, née Davies, dated 11 January 1982 (NELM MS 98.4.98), it seems likely that Dorothy Baker’s maiden name was Hych. A drawing by H Rowley (one of Brettell’s university friends) in Brettell’s university copy of *The Works of Chaucer* depicting a man and a woman (identified by means of initials underneath each figure) as “NB” and “DH”, walking hand in hand into the morning sunlight above the inscription: “Against the morning beam // I strode beside my team” appears to add further support to this conjecture.



pressure of Finals, I was thinking the job best worth doing in a tumbling world.

(SGS 57-58)

It was Brettell's brief relationship with "Cynthia", however, that inspired his earliest known love poems (see "Uncollected Poems").

When Brettell graduated from Birmingham University, it was with a first-class honours degree in English, the Tibbatts Prize for the top scholar in his year and the award of a year's free research work, which he declined.<sup>18</sup> According to a newspaper article published in December 1934 titled "Brilliant Career of Mr H.N. [sic] Brettell, of Lye"

Mr Waterhouse, M.A., a lecturer in English at the Birmingham University bore the following testimony: Mr Brettell was considered one of the most able and influential men of recent times, and Mr E. De Selincourt,<sup>19</sup> D.Lt., F.N.A., added similar praise stating how popular he was with all with whom he came into contact, and was a man to be depended upon.

Brettell, however, had no desire to be an academic. Unable to find work in England after graduating and unable to become a farmer as he had hoped because of the onset of the Great Depression of the 1930s, Brettell answered an advertisement for a teaching post at Ruzawi Diocesan School for Boys, a private junior school in rural Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and arrived in that country in September 1930.

Ruzawi School had been founded in 1928 by Robert Grinham and Maurice Carver "with the simple but tremendous conviction that the teaching of young boys is a work of God" (SGS 69). The estate that Grinham and Carver had bought for the school had originally been the site of an inn and as Brettell noted "the founders had deliberately kept the place as simple as possible" (SGS 69).

From the first, I loved the adaptation of the old inn buildings, unpretentious and indeed more than half-shabby and absurd, cheerfully rambling and ramshackle and amateur. It was partly comic, partly touching, that the library should have been the bar, that the class-rooms, hot in summer and chilling in winter, should have been knocked out of the old bedrooms ... that the chapel should have been a stable. The place was shaded by trees well-nigh as old as the colony itself .... The playing field, on a slope that did random things to the bounce of a ball, was carved out of the orchard, where I first found, a bit dubiously, the taste of guavas. The ancient swarms of wild bees were a

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<sup>18</sup>See letter to Betty Finn, 17 March 1976. NELM MS 96.19.159.

<sup>19</sup>Ernest De Selincourt (1870-1943): an influential literary scholar and progressive university teacher, remembered especially for his scholarly work on William Wordsworth. He was Oxford professor of poetry from 1928 to 1933. For biographical details see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

constant plague. Where I had been dreading the thought of a stiff-collared job, I was delighted to be able to teach in shirt and shorts, and to find, in this land of making-do, a counterpoise to teaching in a bit of bricklaying or carpentry, or helping the estate manager to fight a veld fire or dose the flock of sheep that mowed the cricket field.

(SGS 69)

Brettell, while delighted with his surroundings, was not altogether comfortable with teaching at a private boys-only preparatory school, favouring instead a co-educational non-private approach to education. As he noted in his autobiography:

I confess that one of my reactions on first reaching Ruzawi was a feeling that I had come seven thousand miles to find a school that could just as easily have been in Kent or Hampshire. The differences, though subtle, were all superficial.

...Carver said, 'Of course, the Jerusalem of our vision was the Jerusalem of England's green and pleasant land. We were bringing England into Africa, and I'm sure we were right.' But several questions arise. What England was it that we were transplanting into Africa? The answer, again, given the personnel, the clientele, and the uncertain unguessed-at future, was inevitable; it was the English junior school preparatory to the English public school, possibly, though not now inevitably, to Oxford and Cambridge. It was, of its nature, exclusive; at its worst, it could be a parody of *Punch* and the *Tatler*, at its best the training-ground of a coterie of administrators, professional men, large landowners. It ignored, and could hardly be blamed for ignoring, the other England of my own, of the industrial worker, the artisan and the craftsman, the yeoman and the peasant, the private soldier. Were we transplanting and trying to keep alive in Africa as an exotic, a mode of life that was no longer viable in England itself? It was a national question: not necessarily shall we put the clock back, but, coming to a country where the clock was already slow, should we be content to keep it fixed at 'ten to three'?

...

I had to leave Ruzawi, reluctantly, but with an accumulating awareness that it was another of my blind alleys. Though I came to understand and respect Grinham's contention that the poor little rich boys were as much in need of help as the poor little poor boys, I could not see the teaching of them as my vocation.

(SGS 74-6)

It was while teaching at Ruzawi School that Brettell met and fell in love with another young teacher, Eva Scovell, who was later to become his wife.

Eva was not at Ruzawi when Brettell arrived in September 1930 as she had taken leave to return to England to visit her mother, whom, when it was discovered that she was dying of cancer, she stayed to nurse for most of the following term. The seventh of nine children, and five years older than Brettell, she had been one of the first teachers at Ruzawi Diocesan School for Boys, accepting the post "on the frank understanding that she would get a salary if there was money enough to pay one"

(Brettell, "Eva 1984" 9). A pragmatic and highly practical woman with a pioneering spirit, a firm, unquestioning Christian faith and a no-nonsense air about her, she and Brettell initially had little in common and their limited interaction while civil was indifferent. As Brettell noted in "Eva 1984"<sup>20</sup>

We did not meet very often, except at the Staff dinner. Her work was with the smallest boys, mine with the seniors, and in the afternoons I was on the cricket fields, she at the swimming pool or with the minor games of the nippers. ... I didn't play bridge, and she did. She was fond of what social frolics Marandellas<sup>21</sup> could put on; my only contact with the village was with the rugby club. I became vaguely aware of her presence in the Chapel, and once watched with amusement her antics as 'Akela' with the Cub pack, but scouting was a thing outside my province. She told me later she thought I was stand-offish and dull. I suppose I was. There was no aversion, but there was indifference.

(Brettell, "Eva 1984" 3)

Brettell and Eva found that they shared a love of walking and at the suggestion of another teacher at the school, Elizabeth MacFie,<sup>22</sup> Brettell invited Eva, or Miss Scovell as he knew her then, to join him on one of his rambling trips into the surrounding countryside.

I don't think we said much on those first of the many hundreds of miles we have walked together since then. She was too intent, in her khaki skirt, her blunt-nose shoes, and her ash-plant, on the pure joy of the exercise, her face alight with pleasure. ... Her lovely eyes—I saw then that they were lovely—were bright when, at the end, she thanked me. "We must do this often," she said. ...

So, slowly, we began to talk—mostly about each other ... mostly in the shade or on the tops of kopjes [and] our companionship deepened and ripened. We could talk together easily now, and—what is more difficult—stay without talking, and without constraint. ...

And for me the other thing stirred and took fire, as it was sure to do. Taking her hand over a tilted boulder or the stones of a stream, seeing in front of me her slender sunburnt legs on a heavy climb, her upright figure and the swell of her breasts as she stood against the sky, I knew I was in love.

(Brettell, "Eva 1984" 3-4, 5, 6)

In 1932 Brettell resigned from Ruzawi School and returned to England to try to find work that would allow him and Eva (who returned to England a few months later) to marry. It was during Brettell's journey back to England via the Suez Canal

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<sup>20</sup> "Eva 1984" is an unpublished autobiographical prose memoir which Brettell wrote after Eva died as a result of injuries sustained in a car accident in 1984.

<sup>21</sup> Marandellas (now Marondera) was the village closest to Ruzawi School.

<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth MacFie was later to become John Brettell's godmother.

that he wrote the love poem “Flower of the Clove”, the last poem he was to write for ten years.

Once back in England, however, Brettell struggled to find work. Eventually in May 1933 he managed to procure a temporary job teaching for a term at Bishop Auckland Grammar School in County Durham. When Brettell finished teaching at Bishop Auckland, Eva had arrived in England and the two of them enjoyed a three-week walking holiday, circling the Isle of Wight and walking along the Dorset Coast into Devon before separating again. Eva returned to her native Hampshire to teach while Brettell enrolled again at Birmingham University, this time to obtain his Teaching Diploma. They were married in Eva’s home parish church in Sholing, Southampton, on 15 June 1934, immediately after Brettell’s final examination for his Teaching Diploma.

With our joint horror of any public display of our love, it was quiet, intimate and moving. ‘This is not going to be a dressy affair,’ she said; but when I took that too literally and turned up in old flannels and a sports jacket, I was sent off to the Fifty-Shilling Tailors to buy a suit. ... Eva took a Friday off from her work ‘for urgent private affairs’. The only people in the church were her father, a brother and a sister. We hired a taxi to take them, and ourselves defied the conventions by walking there together. We felt we were stealing a space of quietude in a strident world.

(SGS 7)

Brettell had by now decided that he wanted to become a primary school teacher for, as he noted in *Side-Gate and Stile*

I thought there was a more uncomplicated joy in dealing with young children, partly because I solemnly thought it would leave the inner depth untouched, chiefly because it gave us more choice in where we were going to live.

(SGS 79)

After graduating as a qualified teacher from Birmingham University, having won the Dame Elizabeth Cadbury Prize for the best result of his year, Brettell and Eva moved to South Harting in Sussex where Brettell taught at a primary school run by the local church. While the rural setting was idyllic, the teaching conditions were not and Brettell soon found himself:

oppressed with the sense of my own inadequacies, mental and temperamental, as a teacher, and more than oppressed by the school itself, which had seemed so alluring in its rural setting.

(SGS 81)

It was while teaching in South Harting that Brettell was offered another position teaching in Southern Rhodesia at a rural primary school. The salary was double what

he was earning in Sussex and this, and a desire to return to Africa, resulted in the Brettells setting sail for Africa in late December 1934.



*Brettell in January 1934*



*Eva as a young woman (photo undated)*

*Reproduced with permission of Rosemary Brettell*

On arriving back in Southern Rhodesia Brettell took up the first of what was to be a succession of headmasterships of rural government primary schools in the outlying Charter district in central Southern Rhodesia. It is worth noting that after teaching at the private Ruzawi Diocesan School for Boys, Brettell chose to teach for the next twenty-five years at government-run backveld schools where he could use his talents and intellect in the upliftment of poorer and more needy pupils. He believed firmly that through education people could be raised above their situation. He tried hard to give his pupils, the majority of whom were the children of poor Afrikaners, a good foundation on which to build the rest of their lives. Apart from the occasional holiday in South Africa and England, the Brettells spent the rest of their lives in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe.

Brettell's first appointment was as headmaster of Enslinsdeel Primary School, twelve miles from the town of Beatrice, where he taught from 1935 to 1940. It was during this period that the Brettells' son John (1935) and daughter Rosemary (1938) were born.

Living and teaching conditions were hardly ideal at Enslinsdeel, but the Brettell family "accepted it all with the gay abandon of youth" (SGS 88).

Our quarters were a dilapidated two-roomed shack to which had been added a lean-to bedroom, kitchen and bathroom. Either the span was too long or the pitch too shallow, for the heavy rains ... found their way in; after a night's downpour we would often step out of bed into an inch of water. Out of the damp walls, stimulated no doubt by the lime wash on the antheap dagha

plaster, the weed seeds sprouted like cress on wet flannel. We soon became aware of the silent menace of termites. Every night, behind one of the doorposts, they would build up their pillars; every day we removed a bucketful of earth until the cement floor rang cavernous and hollow beneath our feet. In the bedroom I fitted a particleboard ceiling between the low, creosoted rafters.... One morning I noticed an odd wrinkled look in one corner of the ceiling, and touching it, found that the termites had devoured everything except the whitewash. In the livingroom, a bolt of calico had been tacked up to make a ceiling, and the rats scampered over it making a four-point pattern of dimples with their feet. I later replaced it with matchboarding. That withstood the termites for a year or two, though in the end I had to support it from underneath by erecting a sort of soccer goal across the room.

...Discomforts that no one would tolerate now, were part of a large and sweet content, part of a pattern our lives began to fit into, which we were continually exploring and which never failed. The Charter district, we were told, was one of the most featureless tracts of the country. It certainly had none of the crazy theatre of the granite krans [*sic*], only the low blue line of the Manesi hills brooding across the west; but the marches of the grassland, shelving gently down to watercourses, or unrolling mile beyond mile into nothing but themselves, gave one, with the wind streaming past the ears in the exhilaration of a canter, that sense of infinitude and sunlit space that has become a commonplace of the novelists.

(SGS 88-89)

The forty children at the school were drawn from a population within a fifteen mile (twenty-four kilometre) radius and ranged in age from seven to fifteen. As Brettell noted in *Side-Gate and Stile* they were “delightful ... but their innocence was formidable. Some of them had never been to a town, few had seen a train, an aeroplane, or a cinema. None had seen the sea” (SGS 96). Most came from desperately poor Afrikaans families, “the last outriders of the trek-Boers”<sup>23</sup> (SGS 90) who subsisted from month to month on what they could glean from the overworked land on which they lived. Although upon arriving the Brettells expected a degree of antagonism and prejudice on account of their Englishness, they found only warm hospitality in this impoverished Afrikaans community. Brettell was an innovative and imaginative teacher and the pupils at the school flourished under his guidance, with a number winning “the coveted Beit scholarships to secondary schools” (SGS 100).

When World War II broke out in Europe Brettell was among the many South African and Rhodesian men who volunteered to fight against the Axis powers.<sup>24</sup> He failed, however, to pass the medical examination on account of being deaf in one ear,

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<sup>23</sup>Impoverished Afrikaans-speaking stock farmers continually on the move with their herds of cattle and their oxwagons in search of more and better grazing for their stock.

<sup>24</sup>Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Empire of Japan

the result of bursting an eardrum diving off a high diving board, and his application for active service was refused.

In July 1940 the Brettells left Enslinsdeed Primary School and Brettell took up the headmastership of the primary school in Enkeldoorn.<sup>25</sup> Although he was only at Enkeldoorn for two years, those years were to be amongst the most significant in his life. For, as Brettell noted in *Side-Gate and Stile*:

What made those two years memorable was that I got to know the most remarkable man ever to cross my path. That was Arthur Shearly Cripps.  
(SGS 114)

The eccentric, mystic poet-priest Arthur Shearly Cripps<sup>26</sup> was to have an important and lasting influence on Brettell.

When Brettell met Cripps, the older poet was completely blind and Brettell, at Eva's suggestion, offered to visit him in order to read him poetry. The first visit was a success and for the best part of the next two years Brettell rode out on horseback to read to Cripps every Thursday afternoon. This interaction led to a stirring of "my own reluctant imagination" (SGS 129) and resulted in Brettell starting to write poetry again. When he hesitatingly read some of it to Cripps, the older poet encouraged him to send it to Cripps's friend, the influential South African poet Francis Carey Slater.<sup>27</sup> At Slater's urging, Brettell compiled a collection of his poems which Slater, aided by Edmund Blunden<sup>28</sup> and Francis Brett Young,<sup>29</sup> persuaded Oxford University Press to publish in 1950 under the title *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*.<sup>30</sup>

With the exception of his interaction with Cripps, Brettell was unhappy teaching at Enkeldoorn, "a large school with a large staff, and for the management of both I was unhappily ill-equipped" (SGS 114). The unsettling intrusiveness of the Second World War did not help either. As he noted in "Eva 1984":

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<sup>25</sup>Enkeldoorn was renamed Chivhu after Zimbabwe's independence.

<sup>26</sup>Arthur Shearly Cripps: (1869-1952). See notes to "Maronda Mashanu." For biographical details see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>27</sup>Francis Carey Slater (1876-1958). See *Companion to South African English Literature*. (Chapman, M, et al. comp. Johannesburg: Ad Donker. 1986) for biographical details.

<sup>28</sup>Edmund Charles Blunden (1896-1974). For biographical details see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>29</sup>Francis Brett Young (1884-1954). For biographical details see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>30</sup> See notes to *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1950.

It was an anxious time for anyone like us who had families in the threatened spots of England, in London, near Southampton, near Birmingham; and with the bastions crumbling in the distance, in Europe, in Africa, in the not-so-Far East, everybody's nerves were on edge, the atmosphere charged with a vague unease. I was disgruntled too because I was being denied the chance to fight.  
(Brettell, "Eva 1984" 31)

In July 1942 Brettell left Enkeldoorn to take up the position of headmaster of Riversdale Primary School. Brettell's happiest teaching memories were associated with Riversdale and he was to remain there for the next eighteen years until, with the closing of the school and the dissolution of the Central African Federation in 1958, he opted for early retirement and moved to a small-holding purchased earlier in Nyanga, the scenic Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

The Brettells were to live happily in Inyanga,<sup>31</sup> near the Bonda mission station, until 1979 when, in the closing stages of the 'bush war', the house which Brettell had built himself out of Nyanga stone and timber was attacked and destroyed by insurgents<sup>32</sup> and the elderly couple were forced to abandon it. It was while he was living in Nyanga that Brettell wrote a large proportion of his poetry and won the Book Centre / P.E.N. Centre of Rhodesia Annual Literary Prize in 1972 and 1978. He also published his second volume of poetry, *Season and Pretext*, in 1977. While in Nyanga he and his wife were also both active members of the liberal 'Centre Group' (later the Centre Party) in opposition to the white supremacist rule of Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front Party. Brettell eventually became chairman of the Inyanga Branch of the Centre Party.

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<sup>31</sup>Inyanga was renamed Nyanga after Zimbabwe's independence.

<sup>32</sup> See notes to "Aubade for Orpheus."





*The stone and timber house Brettell built in Nyanga  
Reproduced with permission of Rosemary Brettell.*



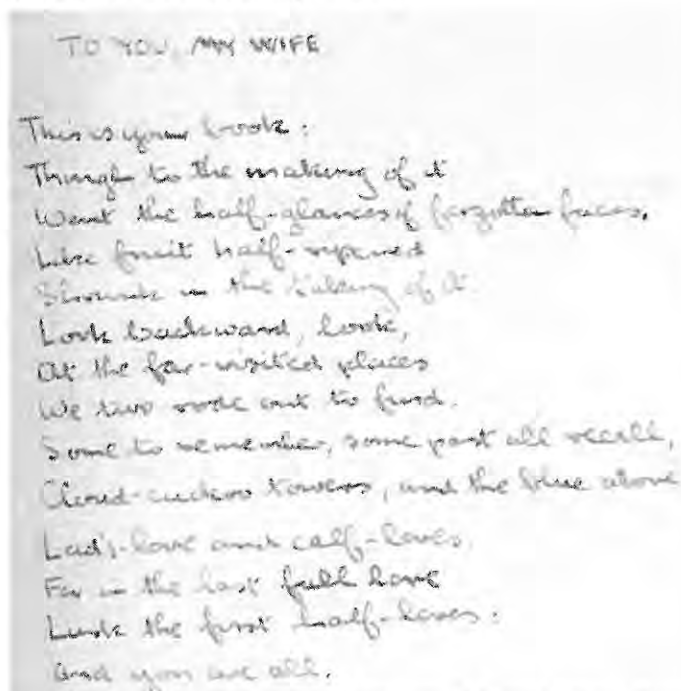
*The shell of Brettell's house in 2000.  
Reproduced with permission of the National English Literary Museum.*

Brettell, while a politically aware and to some extent politically involved poet, could not be described as a political activist, at least not in the common sense of the word. His interest lay in people, not political power. Throughout his life, Brettell sought to make a practical difference in the lives of those around him. While living in Nyanga Brettell, instead of writing protest poetry or leading political demonstrations, actively befriended black Rhodesians, something many white Rhodesians were afraid of, or opposed to, doing. He invited black Africans as guests to his home. He taught, unpaid, at the Bonda mission's St David's Girls High School and invited the school's black pupils to his small-holding for picnics. Without remuneration, he gave private coaching to black trainee teachers while also writing lectures for the Central African Correspondence College. He helped out at the local mission hospital, initially as a

handyman and later as superintendent when, during the height of the 'bush war', no one else would take the job. He was actively involved in the life of the Anglican Church, often acting as a lay preacher.

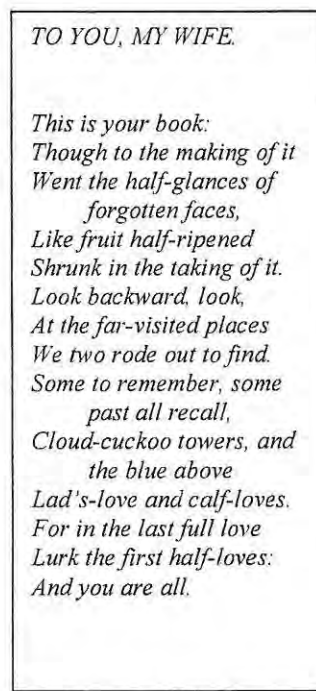
After the attack on their home the Brettells moved to the town of Gatooma (now Kadoma) where their son John worked as an entomologist in the cotton industry. The couple lived happily in a house on the outskirts of the town till, in September 1984, Eva died from injuries caused in a car accident when a bus, ignoring a traffic light, collided with the car in which the Brettells were travelling.

Eva was arguably the most important influence on Brettell's poetry and a presence that is "there in every other one of [his] poems" (Brettell, "Eva 1984" 48). As Brettell was to write in the unpublished: "Dedication to Eva: for 'Bronze Frieze'" (here titled "To You, My Wife"):



TO YOU, MY WIFE

This is your book:  
Though to the making of it  
Went the half-glances of forgotten faces,  
Like fruit half-ripened  
Shrunk in the taking of it.  
Look backward, look,  
At the far-visited places  
We two rode out to find.  
Some to remember, some past all recall,  
Cloud-cuckoo towers, and the blue above  
Lad's-love and calf-loves,  
For in the last full love  
Lurk the first half-loves:  
And you are all.



TO YOU, MY WIFE.

*This is your book:  
Though to the making of it  
Went the half-glances of  
forgotten faces,  
Like fruit half-ripened  
Shrunk in the taking of it.  
Look backward, look,  
At the far-visited places  
We two rode out to find.  
Some to remember, some  
past all recall,  
Cloud-cuckoo towers, and  
the blue above  
Lad's-love and calf-loves.  
For in the last full love  
Lurk the first half-loves:  
And you are all.*

(Brettell's dedication to Eva in her copy of *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. Book in the possession of G. Hacksley)

Eva was the love of Brettell's life, his muse, critic, rudder and sheet anchor for the fifty years they were married. The relative isolation in which they lived in the rural areas of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe meant that their dependence on each other was greater than that of most married couples and all Brettell's love poems, except for the very earliest, have her as their subject.

It is impossible to underestimate the influence that this strong, pragmatic, honest Christian woman had on Brettell's poetry. As Brettell was to note after her death in "Eva 1984":

My own doubts, perplexities and depressions that I know must have oppressed you, yielded always to your clear cool sanity. With what gentle and laughing insouciance you could prick a bubble. With you there was never any need to pretend. You had no pretensions about art and letters, but when they came and I read my poems to you, how often you would say—no, I don't like that: it doesn't sound true. I remember you saying when, in my elation, I shouted that O.U.P was going to publish 'Bronze Frieze—'All right, my dear: but is there enough of it that is really good?' And I can hear you say now, my love, about what I am writing here: if you're going to tell it at all, man, tell it straight—don't embroider it.

(Brettell, "Eva 1984" 5)

Eva's insistence on honesty in all things is probably the most significant influence she had on Brettell's poetry. With her as the first critic to read his poems, Brettell was forced to try to capture the true essence of his subject matter, to "tell it straight". The result was poetry that attempted accurately to reflect the detail of what was being described.

Eva was more than just his wife, she was his closest friend, his staunchest supporter, his hardest critic. Shortly before her death she told Brettell that she felt that the two of them had become one and that she could not imagine them being two separate people anymore;<sup>33</sup> Brettell almost certainly felt the same way. This made her sudden death all the harder for him to bear.

While throughout their marriage Brettell had written love poems for Eva,<sup>34</sup> after their intensely intimate bond was broken by her death, the love poems collected in "Country into Town" literally poured from his anguished pen. In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn dated 22 August 1985, which accompanied the finished collection, Brettell noted:

Not very good, perhaps: you'll judge that better than I can—but it's been good for me. I don't think I've ever written 15 poems in a month before, and am quite exhausted—in the literal sense, drained out. I can understand now what Housman<sup>35</sup> said about the ferment of writing *The Shropshire Lad*—'I can no longer expect to be re-visited by the continuous excitements - - - nor could I well sustain it if it came.'

(NELM MS 96.19.323)

<sup>33</sup> Brettell, Rosemary. Personal interview. 2 August 2004.

<sup>34</sup> See "To Eva" and the 12 sonnets in *One Year*.

<sup>35</sup> Alfred Edward Housman (1895-1936). For a detailed biography see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

The poems are amongst Brettell's finest and most poignant and bear testimony to his love for and dependence on Eva. For instance in "Wild Orchids" Brettell, recalling a visit he and Eva paid to Chirwe waterfall, ends the poem with the following summation of their relationship:

Behind the chintz and china, the fantasy  
You would translate to commonplace

To keep my heels to the ground.  
And now again  
I stand, alone, on the despairing verge.  
Speak to me, love: keep my feet to the earth,  
Lest, hung for an instant on the falcon's wing,  
I drop—to what?

(ll. 15-22)

While in his poem "Dung" Brettell wrote:

Now you have gone, the odours fail and vanish.  
The savour's lost from salt and bread and rose.

(ll. 21-22)

It is poignant that some of Brettell's finest and most honest poetry should result from the pain of bereavement for the woman who, more than anybody else, helped to shape his verse. The following letter from Brettell to his daughter Rosemary, which accompanied his collection "Country into Town", bears witness to this.

Sept. 5TH / 85

...I have at last managed to get it down in verse, or at least some of it, and I think it's done me good. Whether it is any good, I don't know—nothing could be good enough. I feel desolate that I can't show it to her—as I always did all my poetry: but I bring myself up with the ironic reflection that if she hadn't died, it couldn't have been written.

(Letter in possession of Rosemary Brettell)

Soon after his wife's death, Brettell revisited England for the first time in more than thirty years, but the experience was not a consoling one. Shortly before his return to Zimbabwe, he confided to Colin Style, a fellow Zimbabwean poet, that he "had felt a desolate stranger in the country of his birth and upbringing" (Style, "Noel Brettell"

44). While similar feelings of alienation have been felt by many ex-patriates returning to native countries which they may have idealised as “home” while living “abroad”, it is ironic that a poet who believed that “homesickness for England sharpened his awareness of Africa” (Style, “Noel Brettell” 44) should have felt such alienation in England.

Brettell continued to live in Kadoma, writing poetry and acting as a lay preacher in the local Anglican Church until his death on the 29 November 1991 at the age of 83. At the time of his death he was investigating the possibilities of publishing a third volume of verse titled “Not Time’s Fool” made up of poems written for his wife Eva.

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An examination of the poetical fusion of the landscapes of England and Africa—physical, historical and cultural—provides an entry into Brettell’s work. His poetry reflects his outsider position as a self-consciously aware Englishman in Africa trying to make sense of the new, exciting yet alien world around him. As the ideas and ideals of two starkly different worlds meet, the resulting tension manifests itself in poetry which is not merely a vehicle for his ideas and perceptions, but also the crucible in which these ideas merge, melt and fuse. In merging old and new, alien and familiar, Western and African, Brettell attempts to bridge the gap between himself and the other—the unknown, or only partly known, that surrounds him.<sup>36</sup>

Brettell did not start writing poetry seriously until he was in his thirties and had been in Rhodesia a number of years. “There were” he once admitted, “a few, a very few and nebulous undergraduate experiments” (see: “Uncollected Poems”), but in an article in *Illustrated Life Rhodesia* he dismissed these “efforts” as having “no kinship with my subsequent writing” (“Literary Oscar ’72” 3). This is not uncommon. Other modern poets like Wallace Stevens<sup>37</sup> have also disavowed their early work.

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<sup>36</sup>For more on “landscape” in South African poetry see Sydney Clouts: “The Violent Arcadia: An Examination of the Response to Nature in the Poetry of Thomas Pringle, Francis Carey Slater and Roy Campbell.” (Diss. Rhodes University, 1971); also Malvern Van Wyk Smith: *Grounds of Contest: A Survey of South African English Literature* (Kenwyn: Juta, 1990).

<sup>37</sup>Stevens deliberately omitted his early poetry from his editions. When confronted with poetry he’d written while at university and asked to comment upon it, he is said to have replied “some of one’s early stuff gives one the creeps” [Stevens: posted by Baslow @ 2/21/2001 07:50:34AM]

Brettell's early poetry, written while he was a student at Birmingham University, demonstrates a sympathy with Romanticism, perhaps in anticipation of the neo-romanticism<sup>38</sup> of the 1930s, as a poem like "Tres Via" demonstrates:

So here we part, at the bleak crossways of dream,  
You that way, I this. There is a strange land  
Haunted with strange mist, and only the gleam  
Of one star quivers. Come, I will kiss your hand

And I'll forget your beauty's magic ways,  
And I'll forget the sunlight in your hair,  
Forget the changing secrets of your gaze  
And never seek to find an answer there.  
Come, for the dawn breaks. My spirit leaps  
To reach the dawn in the country of my dream—  
And as I go I follow the glorious shapes  
Of what we might have been, walking to my dream,

And though I come not there, one step will do.  
Farewell. I kiss your hands. 'Tis better so.

(ll. 1-14)

While this is an accomplished poem, it exhibits an indulgence in language for language's sake and a romantic sensibility which Brettell shunned in his later poetry. It is therefore not surprising that he disowned his early work which had very little in common with the starker, uncompromisingly exact verse he gravitated towards when he resumed writing poetry in the 1940s.

Years later, as an established poet, Brettell found it difficult to explain why he had waited so long before starting to write poetry again. Among the causes of this poetic silence was the fact that he had not felt the need to write. "Perhaps" he mused in *Illustrated Life Rhodesia*, "this was because I was content to let Shakespeare, Keats, Housman, Hardy,<sup>39</sup> say it all for me" (*ILR* 3). Had he remained in England without the spur of the manifold contrasts of his experience and perceptions of Africa, he might well have been content to allow these poets to give expression to feelings and perceptions he shared with them. However, while teaching in Southern Rhodesia his thoughts changed. He noted in *Illustrated Life Rhodesia*:

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<sup>38</sup>See David Perkins's *A History of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After* for more on this.

<sup>39</sup>Thomas Hardy (1840-1928). For a detailed biography see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

I had been a dozen years in Rhodesia, and was beginning to realise that here was a young world with its own dilemmas and excitements beyond the recognition of the older and wearier cultures.

(ILR 3)

Brettell's first collection, *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*, appeared in 1950, but despite the prestige and marketing muscle of Oxford University Press, Brettell's reputation grew slowly, mainly, according to the poet D.E. Borrell,<sup>40</sup> because of his "casual attitude to his own work". In the Foreword to Brettell's *Side-Gate and Stile* Borrell comments that

the same abstraction which made him leave shirts on the veld after he had stripped to cut a fire-break made Noel lose letters and cheques, mislay contracts and refuse to select poems for publication.

(SGS xx)

Other factors which contributed to the slow growth of his reputation were his solitary lifestyle in rural Rhodesia, the international sanctions imposed on Rhodesia after UDI<sup>41</sup> in 1965 and Brettell's own reserved and unpretentious nature. He noted in a letter to his poet friends Hugh and Betty Finn:

I've been thinking about my curious indifference to publication. ... I think it is because I shrink from the vanity of it. Vanity must be the main motive, though, I've no doubt with many others there are other motives—need to throw out a burning message for instance, or the wish to share a perfect bit of art with somebody else: but neither of those applies to me—most of it seems very indifferent art and I've certainly no message—nothing left but vanity: and I'm sure that self-conceit is one of the vilest as well as the most comic sins.

(1 December 1966. NELM MS:96.19.66)

Always conscious of his English origins and the Western cultural matrix from which he had sprung yet at the same time in love with his African surroundings, Brettell was driven, according to the poet Colin Style, by a sense of being "crucified between two countries" (Style, "Noel Brettell" 45). He felt simultaneously alienated and at home in a land very different from the one which he had previously called home. This is strongly evident in his poetry, but was also something to which he freely admitted. He once noted:

I have chiefly attempted to resolve in my verse the contradictions and dilemmas of a man born and bred in England, but whose life has been spent in

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<sup>40</sup> Borrell was Betty Finn's (1928- ) maiden name and the name under which she wrote.

<sup>41</sup> Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain was an attempt by Ian Smith's regime to prevent the possibility of Rhodesia being ruled by a black African majority. For more information see *Rhodesians Never Die: The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c.1970-1980* by Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock. (Oxford: Oxford University Press; Harare: Baobab Books, 1995).

Africa, and to whom nostalgia for one country has sharpened awareness of the significance of another.

(Style, "Noel Brettell" 43)

This assertion, however, as Style points out, is both a "complete and completely inadequate statement of his poetry", for while it "defines the mainspring of [his] poetic impulse" it "omits even sketching what the sharpened awareness achieves" (Style, "Noel Brettell" 43). In his poetry Brettell fuses his contradictory feelings of alienation and belonging, through the merging of English and African experiences. English imagery, literary allusions and other references to Western culture are integrated with their African counterparts to yield English poetry with a foreign flavour, containing densely interwoven layers of meaning and filled with "vivid power, grave reflection and tortured stress" (Tully 17). For instance in "Spitting Cobra", Brettell suddenly becomes aware of a venomous snake "squirming past" (l. 2) the chair he is sitting in. The poet is not alarmed, merely curious and picks up a stick to help guide the creature outside, however,

...across the mat,  
You suddenly turned, flaunted your hood,  
And spat—

Straight to the mark. Of amber coils in amber grass  
I only had one startled glance:  
An hour's pain, half-blinded to  
Your deadly elegance.

(ll. 10-16)

Brettell's mind turns to Greek mythology as he personifies the cobra as Medusa, imploring it to strike him again so that he might feel closer to his dead wife.

Strike me again stone-blind, Medusa: give me pause  
Only to listen in the first fall of night,  
To listen for her step, her voice, her laugh,  
To see in darkness what is lost in light.

(ll. 17-20)

The poem fuses African experience with Western culture and as Brettell interweaves classical myth and his encounter with the snake he vividly highlights the pain he feels as a result of his bereavement. The snake's venom is nothing in comparison to the poison of loss.

Brettell described himself wryly as "one who has become a poet, albeit an unimportant one, a tardy, reluctant indolent one" (SGS 10), and noted that the growth of this second self was curiously "diffident and retarded" (SGS 10). He noted in his



autobiography that he had been “too young for one war, too old for the other” and had had “no such dreadful spur that made a poet out of Owen” (SGS 129). “Happy marriage,” too, he observed mischievously, “is supposed to kill the virus” that motivates one to write poetry, while of course isolation from the rest of the world also “lent its hand” in keeping him silent (SGS 129).

Brettell may have regarded himself as an “indolent poet”, but the tally of his completed extant poems in the archives of the National English Literary Museum runs to 206, with only one *jeu d’esprit*<sup>42</sup> among them. In addition to writing poetry Brettell also published an autobiography in 1981, wrote several unpublished novels and painted numerous water-colour paintings to accompany his poems as illustrations. Indolence was not something he suffered from.

There were, however, other problems of a more specifically literary nature that kept Brettell from writing poetry. Like the South African poets Thomas Pringle,<sup>43</sup> Francis Carey Slater and Roy Campbell<sup>44</sup> before him, and his contemporary Guy Butler, Brettell was aware of the difficulty of finding new words, modes of expression and forms for new times, places and experiences.<sup>45</sup> He noted:

Form, and hesitation about form, was one of the obstacles. New times, new land, new language: I balked before the obstacle like a reluctant horse before a fence. My acquaintance with the past was too ingrained to abandon. Much of what I then read seemed to have abandoned its mode and put nothing in its place.... So I kept demurely to the tradition, and have always suspected that I burked the issue when I did not. I have welcomed the use of assonance and half-rhyme, but have always felt, and felt rather than thought, that English lyrical poetry at any rate should have rhyme.

(SGS 130)

Also, assimilation in his adopted country was a process that took time.

The high veld of Mashonaland was a kind enough soil to foster an English transplant; but exotic birds and beasts, nameless flowers and trees with an alien name, a people aloof and inscrutable, a climate bland but fickle and sometimes cruel—all this needed the years of waiting and expectancy.

(SGS 130)

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<sup>42</sup> “Posthumous Publication of a Poet Blown Up by a Landmine”.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Pringle (1789-1834). See *Companion to South African English Literature*. (Chapman, M, et al. comp. Johannesburg: Ad Donker. 1986) for biographical details.

<sup>44</sup> Roy Campbell (1901-1957). See *Companion to South African English Literature*. (Chapman, M, et al. comp. Johannesburg: Ad Donker. 1986) for biographical details.

<sup>45</sup> For more on the poetry of Pringle, Slater, Campbell and Butler see Malvern Van Wyk Smith’s *Grounds of Contest: A Survey of South African English Literature*. (Kenwyn: Jutalit, 1990).

In “Three Rhodesian Poets” in *Rhodesiana*<sup>46</sup> published in 1958, Brettell, while discussing the poetry of A. S. Cripps, Kingsley Fairbridge and Lewis Hastings, reflected on the problems of writing poetry in Rhodesia. He noted:

The intellectual and social weather of the first half-century of our articulate life has not been favourable to the making of poetry. ...

Poetry—at least written and contemplative poetry rather than oral and popular ballad-making—does seem to require a more ancient and stable soil than that provided by a society of pioneers. ... To organize and arrange his experience is much more difficult for a poet to do in a society that has to be hacked, ploughed and built out of a wilderness than in a society settled and ordained by the centuries of tradition. There has been so much more for a poet to do than to invent a landscape. This most finished and sophisticated of all the arts does demand the contemplation of an ancient and cultivated scene even when its terms might be revolutionary and disruptive.

(Brettell, “Three Rhodesian Poets” 64)

Later in the same article Brettell writes:

... from their accumulated tradition, words like oak and olive and myrtle carry with them an aura and a savour that kaffirboom and isipingo have not yet got.

...

The genuine poet must be an original. Without being necessarily a prophet or a freak, he must have something to say that has not been said before: and the new experiences of a new country do not in themselves mean that. The idiosyncrasy, the eccentricity even, of the man himself, must take the facts, even the crude exciting facts of a new land and translate them with his own peculiar imagination.

(Brettell, “Three Rhodesian Poets” 64-5)

However, by the time of his retirement at the age of fifty, Brettell, in his own mind, had found his way to a poetic form and diction that satisfied him, and one that was “founded on the past and enlivened by the random reading of isolation” (*SGS* 112). Brettell’s continual reading of English poetry, including the work of modern poets,<sup>47</sup> did not, however, lead him to identify himself with any particular school of poetry. “I have kept myself on the edge of things” (Murphy 132), he noted, while teaching in “as remote a part as I can find” (Butler, *A Book of South African Verse* 212).

While seldom simple or uncomplicated, Brettell’s poetry is characterised by lucidity of intent and expression. For instance, in “Attic Shape”, one of the last poems

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<sup>46</sup>The journal of the Rhodesiana Society, later the History Society of Zimbabwe.

<sup>47</sup>Brettell subscribed to both *The London Magazine* and *The Listener* as well as various South African and Rhodesian poetry journals.

he wrote, Brettell looks at a picture of the interior of a red-figured cup<sup>48</sup> and like Keats in “Ode on a Grecian Urn” speculates about the two painted figures.

And did they pause, between draught and discreet belch,  
Between the mullet and the salted nuts,  
Pouring the sea-dark wine  
Between the wine-dark sea and the white porch:  
Pause and admire, between the shadow nets,  
The pictured platter, glazed black and terra-cotta,  
The convoluted pleat, the thin flat line  
Precise as light through the millennia?

With half-disdainful downward glance, forgetting  
The thousand ships, the cold dishonoured bed,  
She pours the wine, the thin black spill  
From flask to cup: the flagon never empty, with  
The goblet never full, slim finger coquetting  
For ever lifts the veil, the draperies frozen still,  
Glacial, unwavering, dead,  
For ever in the chrysalis of myth.

(ll. 1-16)

Brettell’s imagery is exact and his language lucid as he turns from pondering the figures on the cup to reflect upon his own life, and particularly on Eva for whom the poem is written *in memoriam*. Brettell contrasts Eva with Helen, comparing himself to the old king of Troy:

And I—I sit with Priam: no king  
Of myth though lord of memories, call  
No dreamed-up cities to be saved or sacked,  
Whatever sword I had hung by the wall.

I sit, hours long as centuries, malingering  
Between the dim intention and the act.

(ll. 23-28)

The poem ends with Brettell positioning himself and Eva in the illustration in place of Priam and Helen and is filled with grief as the old poet addresses his deceased wife

Pour me the vintage, love: I cup my hand,  
Empty cup embossed with knotted knuckle—  
Wine of our lives, if old the better for it.  
Lift, lift me up before my old knees buckle,  
Reach me the old king’s crutch that I can stand,  
That I may walk with you, if not through asphodel,  
Through the flowers of the veld, lads-love and pimpernel.

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<sup>48</sup>Brettell misinterprets the figures on the cup (which he takes to be a plate) as those of “Helen” and “Priam” (see notes to “Attic Shape”).

Your lightfoot grace, free of the flesh, can flit  
Over tangle of bramble and the wait-a-bit.  
(ll. 29-37)

The poem is elegiac in its expression of love for the deceased but Brettell's self-control gives the poem a quiet dignity which is all the more moving in its classical depiction of bereavement.

The emotional discipline that is present in nearly all of Brettell's poems owes at least some of its origin and effect to the fact that Brettell's verse is poetry of reflection. Brettell's poems seldom came to the page fully formed. Brettell found writing poetry a painful and difficult process.<sup>49</sup> He worked hard to portray honestly his subject matter and his reaction to it, but in the process of working and reworking his poems the spontaneity of the inspiration is often replaced with measured words of reflection in which Brettell evaluates his thoughts and feelings. Consequently, the tone of his poems is mostly sober, contemplative and at times elegiac, as in "Attic Shape". This generally uniform tonal range does, however, mean that his poetry evinces neither the soaring lyricism nor the biting satire of other southern African poets like Roy Campbell, Sydney Clouts<sup>50</sup> or Douglas Livingstone.

Brettell, however, did write accomplished lyrical poetry. A good example is his "Song for Severn" which begins with a scene of early courtship besides the banks of the Severn and ends with him and Eva standing beside the bank of the river as a married couple.

Along the languour of the river  
Glutted with the scents of June,  
Man and wife we come together  
Old enough and hearts in tune:  
Hearts in tune, and thoughts come easy  
Witless as the voice of birds,  
And with quiet borrowed phrases,  
Blessedly, no need for words.  
(ll. 17-24)

The easy, unhurried rhythm of the verse echoes the "languour of the river", as perhaps does the interweaving of full and half rhyme. The movement of the poem complements the love of old age.

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<sup>49</sup>Brettell, Rosemary. Personal interview. 1 August 2004.

<sup>50</sup>Sydney Clouts (1926-1982). See *Companion to South African English Literature*. (Chapman, M, et al. comp. Johannesburg: Ad Donker. 1986) for biographical details.

Brettell's use of words, even in his lyric poetry, is almost always economical. While very early poems like "June 14<sup>th</sup>" and "When I go down to Stratford on Avon", display a romantic, youthful indulgence in language for its own sake, Brettell's later poetry is direct and uncompromising in its choice of words, sometimes almost to the point of terseness. For instance in "Skid", where Brettell describes a near car accident, his language and use of free verse reflect the intensity of the moment:

The back wheels spun and the tall bank  
came suddenly to life and leapt upon us  
spouted above us like a mounting wave  
hung menacing for one congealed second  
horribly etched and bright  
ragged heraldic clawed and dragon-angry  
old Hokusai in a second across league and century ranging  
all its eyes stared  
the startled martin hung there snared in flight  
we saw his bead of eye his sliver of beak  
the strata line of pebbles bared its teeth  
the harebell's nod clove frozen to its stem.

Such brightness only lives in ecstasy:  
the wheel responds  
and hearts slipped back again and grip went slack  
and the old ruts stretched out again before us.

(ll. 1-16)

Brettell's careful craftsmanship with words is also apparent in his use of metaphor and allusion, as can be seen in the above example where the embankment is compared to the Japanese artist Hokusai's famous painting of a breaking wave. As the poet Olive Robertson once stated, "clarity" in his poetry serves to enhance "depth upon depth of allusion and inference" but also at times it has the ability to "startle one by the brilliance of the illumination" (Robertson 23).

While Brettell's poetry often reveals his fondness for little-used archaic, regional or dialectal expressions and a literary, even recondite, diction, his choices are deliberate and the nuances the words carry are those which the poet intends. For instance in his poem "Ironworkers", Brettell shows his familiarity with a blacksmith's smithy through his use of words like "tuyere" (a furnace nozzle), "martingale and blinkers" (parts of horse harness), "clinkers" (globules of black iron oxide produced when red-hot iron is hammered) and "slag" (refuse from the forge); with Greek mythology through his reference to Hephaestus (the blacksmith of the gods); and with African musical instruments in his comparison between the ring of the blacksmith's

hammer and the sound of the *mbira* (an African musical instrument whose metal keys are plucked). The result of this craftsmanship in language is a poem whose nuanced diction is in tune with its subject matter.

Throughout his oeuvre, Brettell's poetic vision is supported by a solid technical mastery, something clearly demonstrated in a poem like "Duiker Doe". Here Brettell uses an original strict and complex stanza form. Every line in the three nine-line stanzas has a regular number of stressed syllables revealing a pattern of 6-5-5-6-5-5-5-6-5 stresses in their nine lines. These are not mechanically regular: some lines contain caesuras, not all are end-stopped, and there is considerable variation in the basic iambic rhythm, particularly with the many feminine endings. All this creates and maintains an impression of natural speech rhythm, despite the tight metrical control. This is heightened by Brettell's use of rhyme: the pattern here is strictly: a-b-c-b-c-b-d-d-a. Brettell's use of this pattern is extremely subtle, for in each stanza—most notably in the second—rhyme is used to enhance the meaning: the first and last lines (the only two which share the initial rhyme) refer to the speaker, while lines 2-8 (with their three different rhymes) all refer to the duiker. Continuing the analysis of Brettell's word-music one observes his deliberate use of alliteration and assonance. In stanza two, the duiker "primly prunes" the roses with "sly prehensile lip" where the repeated use of the "pr-" sound-pair serves unobtrusively to bind the verse more tightly. The ten-fold repetition in the first stanza of the stressed diphthong first encountered in "pay" and repeated in "shaving", "mermaid", "esplanade", "frames" etc. has a similar binding effect.

Brettell's control over his medium is further illustrated in his word choice and his use of neologisms. In the second stanza, for instance, the expressions "ear-flick", "nostril-twitch", "tight-strung" reflect in their brevity and tautness the nervousness of the animal, her fear of man. By contrast, the man's relaxed attitude is revealed in the stanza's unhurried first and last lines.

The ironic tone further reveals the poet's attitude. Instead of angrily driving the animal out of his garden, the speaker refers to the duiker as "her" (not "it"), thus personalising the creature which he has also teasingly called a "mild sybarite" on account of its dainty preference for honeysuckle and rosebuds. The animal is not treated sentimentally, though. The poet's depiction of the duiker's watchfulness and fear of man forms the substance of the stanza, and the description of the antelope's "sly prehensile lip fumbling the shoot and thorn" is evidence of acute observation.

The poem contains layers of allusion: the sea-captain is shaving, so is the poet. The first sees a mermaid riding a unicorn across the bay, the second sees a duiker doe in his mirror, “pruning” his roses: the suggestion is that both experiences are somehow mythical, or at least imbued with more than ordinary significance.

While Brettell did write accomplished poetry in unrhymed free verse (cf. “Skid” or “Spiderwebs”), his preference was always for defined stanzas and patterns of rhyme. These, however, are not always conventional or regular. Traditional prosody came naturally to him and derived from personal taste as much as from his classical training and wide reading. The dense texture of allusions in his poetry likewise derives from this training and reading: his poetry displays identifiable traces of the influences of Latin,<sup>51</sup> Elizabethan,<sup>52</sup> Romantic<sup>53</sup> and Georgian<sup>54</sup> poets.

Brettell’s allusions to mythology, the Bible and English literature are selected and positioned so that they enrich but do not jar with the (often African, and therefore in some sense alien) themes of particular poems. The unexpected juxtaposition and interweaving of European allusions and African subject matter is surprising and thought-provoking, as the following instance shows. The two concluding lines of Brettell’s poem “Antbear” are an adaptation of a couplet penned first by the Elizabethan playwright John Webster in “The White Devil”. Webster wrote:

But keep the wolf far hence that’s foe to men,  
For with his nails he’ll dig them up again.  
(V.iv.103-4)

Three centuries later, in “The Waste Land”, T.S. Eliot recast these lines as:

O keep the dog far hence, that’s friend to men,  
Or with his nails he’ll dig it up again!  
(ll. 74-5)

In addressing an antbear, Brettell adapts the couplet to read:

But keep the man far hence that’s kin to fox  
For with his lust, he’ll dig you up again  
(ll. 28-29)

thus making the lines his own while exploiting the range of ominous experiences implicit in both previous contexts and linking the threats expressed in them to that

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<sup>51</sup> see “Triumvirate of Silver”, “Georgic”, “Sparrow”.

<sup>52</sup> see “Cataclysm”, “Winter’s Tale”, “African Student”.

<sup>53</sup> see Brettell’s collection “Lakeside”.

<sup>54</sup> see “On An Inyanga Road”.

facing the African animal. Brettell's ironic inversion of the threat highlights the danger to the natural environment posed by rapacious human activity.

The transposition of Western images and mythology upon the African scene lends the poet a sense of his bearings. As noted earlier, Brettell's "nostalgia for one country" sharpened his "awareness of the significance of another" (Style, "Noel Brettell" 43). This is apparent in his poem "The Eavesdropper".

"The Eavesdropper" reflects Brettell's position as the "Inkoos"<sup>55</sup> within the matrix of colonial Southern Rhodesia. However, while Brettell's position as a white man and an employer is reflected in the poem, the main focus is not on race, class or economic divides, but on death and what it means to be alive. The poem opens with the statement:

Inkoos, someone is dead,  
Someone is dead, and my son must go home.  
*(ll. 1-2)*

This dramatic statement leads Brettell to try to comprehend what death means and what it entails. As a result, three of the four stanzas open with the African employee's statement to his European employer "Someone is dead", and in each the poet's imagination describes the rural African sights and sounds which the person who is dead will never again experience. The poem also combines African mythology with Western perceptions and culture, for the apparent omen that leads to the conviction that someone has died is a dead swallow that has fallen out of the nest. Brettell holds the small corpse in his hand and tries to understand the significance of death and where this inevitability places him, but after 75 lines of listing what death entails for the tribal African person presumed dead, Brettell, perhaps in some desperation, ends the third stanza by inserting Hilaire Belloc's line from "Tarantella": "—Do you remember an Inn Miranda—"which", he says, "I can comprehend" (*ll.* 76-77). Death, while real, is unfathomable to the poet. What the dead person will no longer be able to experience may be imagined and described, but the speaker needs allusions from poetry to help him realise the full import of the event. One remembers Belloc's conclusion: "Never more; // Miranda, // Never more.... // No sound // In the walls of the halls where falls // The tread // Of the feet of the dead to the ground, // No sound:

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<sup>55</sup>A polite form of address to a senior man in Nguni languages; "sir".



// But the boom // Of the far waterfall like doom” (ll. 29-31, 34-40). Poetry, for Brettell, is more accessible and easy to comprehend than death.

Unlike the first three stanzas, the fourth and final stanza begins “My son must go home” (l. 78) almost as if Brettell, in speculating about the nature of death, has forgotten the father and his request, thus forcing the waiting father to remind him of the fact. Brettell now contemplates the son, Musemwa, and wonders

Can he close up death’s eyes  
With the slick expertise  
That buffs an alien burnish?

(ll. 80-82)

before contemplating the father and wondering which of the two “...will lead // On your uncharted unreluctant journey?” (ll. 89-90). Brettell watches the two men set off

The impatient and the slow,  
The gleaming wheeling bicycle, the grave  
Deliberate shamble of the sandalled feet,

(ll. 92-94)

as

Into the dust of sunset, saffron pale—

(l. 95)

they leave him

...pausing uncertainly  
Halfway between the swallow and the snail.

(ll. 96-97)

In this poem Western and African cultures exist side by side in a state of creative tension and Brettell is left musing uncertainly somewhere between death, denoted by the swallow, and life, represented by the snail which, paradoxically, is prey to birds.

Brettell’s poetry is strongly influenced by the writings of others and his poems contain many allusions to or even quotations from other literary works. Commenting on this in a letter to the Finns dated 6 October 1986 Brettell noted:

... as a point of interest, the ‘quotations’ do just come, sometimes, perhaps, a bit verbally distorted. I was myself surprised, when struggling with ‘Country into Town’, how they just slipped and clicked into the patterns. I hope it doesn’t seem too much like plagiarism. Somebody—can’t think who—said the measure of the importance to oneself of any poet is how easily and how frequently his words slip into one’s mind. Well, for me—Shakespeare (but of course he’s made of quotations), Wordsworth, Housman, Edward Thomas,<sup>56</sup> Donne, and of the Romans Catullus and Horace.

(NELM MS: 96.19.335)

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<sup>56</sup>Edward Thomas (1878-1917). For biographical detail see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Brettell then, while a modern poet, is one whose poetry is greatly informed by the past. He regarded poetry as

an artefact, a collage of words that capture, often imperfectly, sometimes miraculously, always desperately, memories glimpsed or heard reverberating down [the] endless perspectives of the mind

(SGS 10)

and felt that

a poem of any value... must have at the heart of it a hard core of thought that determines its shape and direction

(SGS 181)

Throughout his poetry Brettell strives to see the concreteness of physical phenomena squarely in their materiality as things and to write about them as such. For Brettell a poet was just that: a poet, a maker, a craftsman—not a politician or a psychiatrist. A craft, though, has to be learnt and Brettell was unflinching in his belief in the need for discipline in writing poetry. He remarked, in a draft letter addressed to Len Rix: “I think a respectable sonnet should be one of the things a young poet ought to submit before he gets his licence” (NELM MS: 98.4.75).

This insistence on the importance of discipline in order to attain craftsmanship was at least part of the reason for his aversion to free verse and one-word lines. For Brettell a poem’s form and structure was of critical importance. He noted in a draft letter to another Zimbabwean poet, E.M. Chimsoro: “Imagery is, of course, the source of all poetry, but it must be controlled and constrained into a pattern” (NELM MS: 98.4.65). In another letter to Betty Finn, dated 20 July 1966, he expanded on this theme:

The versifier must learn the discipline of his craft. ... I suppose the real trouble is that we deal in a medium that’s everybody’s tool. Nobody with any sense would think of playing the fool with sculpture or painting as they do with words. ... Though nobody has—so far as I know—yet pretended that you get music if you let a lud<sup>57</sup> loose on the keyboard, no doubt in painting and sculpture we do get the same sort of nonsense as in poetry—these people who weld bits of old bikes together and call it ‘Woman with her throat cut’ ... or those who spill pigments on the floor and call it a painting when they’ve ridden a bike over it. Still, even there, no doubt you have first to be a passable welder, or at any rate have had to learn to ride a bike. Which is more than you can say for your young men who just waggle their larynx. Yes, I suppose

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<sup>57</sup> Luddite, destroyer

catharsis is the appropriate word—but why call the result poetry—unless you call the result of a literal catharsis<sup>58</sup> ‘sweet violets’.<sup>59</sup>

(NELM MS: 96.19.62)

Commenting on “free verse” to a teacher friend, he noted:

‘Free verse’? I suppose one can’t avoid it these days—though I think all young versifiers should be continually reminded that if verse is free it can’t be verse, and if it’s verse it can’t be free. If they abandon the traditions, it is necessary to produce some other pattern which is as powerful as the old ones. The two chief dangers are lapsing into lines that are too long and lose all sense of rhythm ... or single word lines ... which is much too facile an emphasis. I’m sure it’s a healthy exercise, now and then, to get them to write a sonnet or a piece in ballad measure. I don’t know how your ‘Fine Arts Society’ operates, but some time spent on the ‘old masters’ of form—Shakespeare, Keats, Tennyson, Housman—Roy Campbell, to come nearer home—and seeing how they get effects within the variation of the discipline is a very rewarding and stimulating exercise. Shakespeare’s later verse is the finest ‘free verse’ we have, while still acknowledging the frame of the pentameter. I think too it is necessary to point out that the two most powerful avatars of our century, Eliot ... and Dylan Thomas ... did not write free verse. A glance, too at Edward Thomas and his taut stark stanzas, and Wilfred Owen with his effective—and disturbing—half rhymes, would be most useful. ... Somehow with a young poet you have to combine the freedom of a snaffle and the restraint of a curb.

(Draft letter to John Hodgson. NELM MS: 98. 4. 75)

In giving advice to an (unidentified) African poet, he wrote in a draft letter:

I am always asked to assess the verse entries in the B[ulawa]yo Eisteddfod, much of it evidently the work of black students; and most of it is still just disjointed prose. I know only too well that this is true of many of the English-speaking would-be versifiers: Just open your mouth & a stream of gold will come out. That may be useful as an emotional outlet—and can be fun—but it doesn’t make a poem. All artificers, from a bricklayer to a van Gogh have to accept the plumbline & the spirit level.

(NELM MS: 98.4.72)

Brettell worked hard at crafting his own poetry which, for the most part, took him a long time to write. As he noted in a letter to Hugh Finn dated 13 April 1961:

... I like to keep all my stuff in the cellar for at least a year—sometimes forever. It is, when all is said, not in the bureau drawer but in the basement of your mind that the stuff matures—or ferments. If you prefer the metaphor, I’m the sort of dog who likes to bury his bones. I’m sure this is the only way to sweat out the gaucherie and affectations that spoil all my poetry. It is a bit like my unambitious essays in water-colour. I like to keep a sketch on the board so that I can drop in now and then to add a dash or alter a contour—almost

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<sup>58</sup> emptying of the bowels.

<sup>59</sup> Euphemism for “shit”, from a (soldiers / pub) song “Sweet Violets”.

indefinitely. From the same analogy I perceive the salutary irony that so many effects both in poetry and painting are purely adventitious, hanging on an accidental wash or word. I suppose it's the index of ones [*sic*] skill in either art as to how successfully you can follow these fortuitous smudges and make something out of them.

(NELM MS: 96.19.16)

According to his daughter Rosemary, Brettell would retire every afternoon after lunch to his studio where he was not to be disturbed until tea time. It was during this time that he wrote poetry.<sup>60</sup> Brettell found writing poetry both a very personal and a painful experience, as the following two extracts from letters written more than ten years apart show:

I get a morose sort of satisfaction out of composing the stuff, but it's enough recompense to be able to get it out of my glands, to let a few friends see it now and then and to go on living the life that leads to it.

(Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn. 1 May 1962. NELM MS: 96.19.23)

... I suppose a deeper reason for my mistrust [of teaching creative writing] is my personal dislike of writing. I can't say I've ever got much pleasure out of it since I gave up in disgust and ennui when I was 22. The misery and frustration is too much to bear. I've never had anything like the fun out of it that I get from painting. I hate the pretentious way people say 'I want to write', whether they've got anything to write about or not.

(Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn. 13 July 1973. NELM MS: 96.19.135)

For Brettell, then, a poem was "a deliberate artifact, not a bit of sociology" (Letter to Colin & O-lan Style. 25 September 1986. NELM MS: 96.19.333). While his poetry may appear "old fashioned", occasionally even mannered, Brettell was highly conscious of the difference between mannered verse and poetic mannerisms. He noted in a draft letter to an unidentified black poet: "A manner in verse is good; a mannerism is not" (NELM MS: 98.4.73).

Brettell's beliefs about what was and was not good poetry, however, left him feeling bewildered and alienated when confronted with the poetry written by younger poets in the 1970s and 1980s. The following two extracts are revealing:

I think I shall have to give up: I've just read in *The Listener*, two new poems by Ted Hughes. Although all the words are English, we don't seem to speak the same language. I can see neither sense nor shape in any of it. Nor, incomprehensible though it may be, can I feel behind it any fire that could make its pretext inevitable—like Donne or Hopkins, say. I'd better scratch: competing (though I've no wish to compete) in such a field is rather like

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<sup>60</sup>Brettell, Rosemary. Personal interview. 2 August 2004.

running in a steeplechase in the knee-length shorts of 1908.

(Letter to Betty Finn. 17 March 1976  
NELM MS: 96.19.159)

In fact, I'm beginning to wonder whether I really am, and always have been, lacking in literary intelligence. Just about the only contemporary verse I see these days are the poems printed in *The Listener*, and most of them I can make nothing of—nor do they seem to have the sonority of verse written in a foreign language. And yet they are applauded. It must be a lack in me—surely all the critics and pundits can't be wrong.

(Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn 22  
February 1984. NELM MS: 96.19.299)

These feelings of alienation and isolation were not completely unanticipated. Brettell had noted twenty years earlier:

Anybody writing in the words of one decade runs the great risk of finding himself at a loose end in the next. You can see this clearly enough in the poets of the Thirties who have done nothing really remarkable since then. A middle aged poet can't go on writing in the dead idiom of his youth and certainly can't adopt the slang of his young contemporaries without looking slightly ridiculous.

(Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 23  
November 1965: NELM MS: 96.19.54)

Brettell's poetry is that of a self-conscious outsider struggling to make sense of the world, both physical and literary, in which he finds himself. Although he found the demands of the discipline of his craft difficult, even painful at times, and while he was sometimes close to despair, Brettell felt driven to give honest expression to the words and images that filled his brain. The fact that so much of his poetry is lucid is the result of his uncompromising dedication to his craft.

Probably the most obvious theme running through Brettell's poetry is his treatment of nature and the natural environment. Both the English and the African landscapes feature prominently in his poems, as do the animals and birds of these two different worlds. In commenting on nature and the poet's response to it, Brettell noted in *Side-Gate and Stile*:

It has been said that Nature in Africa to the white poet is inimical, that her symbol here is not the flower in a crannied wall, but, in William Plomer's startling image, 'heraldic in the heat, a scorpion on a stone.' It is a matter of attitude. ... Whether Nature, Housman's 'heartless witless Nature', is benign or malignant, it is our thinking makes it so. The springs of 'nature poetry', and its distillation into mysticism and pantheism, may well be a delusion, but the emotions it disturbs are authentic enough.

(SGS 131)

Brettell believed that while a poet might be able to write a limited number of good poems about the shock of encountering a strange and hostile environment, in order to continue to write poetry he had to become reconciled to that environment. For Brettell this was what Guy Butler meant when he said that nature for a poet has to be “tamed—not cultivated, but understood” (*SGS* 131). Brettell makes no attempt to tame the African environment in his poetry with neat English borders, but neither does he try to cultivate a completely new environment. What he does attempt is to understand his environment in its actuality, and his own position within that environment. He comes to Africa fully fledged, as it were, bringing with him a depth of cultural experience and conditioning. Once in Rhodesia / Zimbabwe, he—unusually—approaches the unfamiliar on its own terms and, in his best poems, achieves so thorough a reconciliation of European and African elements that something altogether new results from the fusion. In addition to the description of the subject matter there is also in Brettell’s poetry a sense of the speaker trying to bridge the gap between himself and the unknown. For instance in the last stanza of “Autumn Song”, Brettell says:

Africa—timidly loved, half understood,  
 Take my shy northern heart and teach it;  
 Ease its drought and drain its flood  
 And in your simple sunlight bleach it;  
 Smooth my involuted sense  
 With your two notes of innocence

(ll. 19-24)

and despite the startling simplification of Africa in this early poem, Brettell’s desire to understand his new surroundings and to become acclimatised to them is clearly evident.

In reflecting on African poetry in English Brettell comments that critics have often demanded that such poetry should have an African context, decrying poetry that does not fulfil this demand. Brettell, however, viewed this as “solecism”. He noted:

A poem is simply the thing a poet writes, and he need not be a revolutionary or a sociologist or a negrophile, though he is quite likely to be all of these. If he feels himself to be an exile, his poetry will be poetry of exile, like Browning in Italy or Flecker in the Levant, or, like Dom Moraes, an Indian in England. His Muse’s advice to Sir Philip Sidney is always the last word. A man might argue himself into being a Christian, a socialist or even a vegetarian or a white African: he has never argued himself into being a poet.

(*SGS* 130-131)

The English landscape described in Brettell's poetry has, as Butler points out, a "mud on the boots, hand on a stile, smell of the hawthorn... feeling about it."<sup>61</sup> So, in a similar way, one can taste the dust and feel the heat of the sun when the African scene is evoked, but Brettell does not deliberately accentuate these differences in environment. Nor does he set out to try to define the differences between an African and a European landscape. He makes no attempt to abstract these reference points or define these sensibilities, for while the natural environments of England and Africa are clearly different, they also have for him a sense of sameness. He noted in a taped interview with Guy Butler in 1987:

It seems to me that when you come down to the real heart of it ... in spite of a sort of rawness and wildness of this country it's much the same... I can transfer Wordsworth quite easily to Inyanga.

(NELM MS: 98.33.14)

In Brettell's poetry the rugged imagery of Africa is starkly present, but alongside it the gentler, richer English countryside quietly pervades his consciousness; and while one is aware of the poet's isolation in Africa one is always conscious of Brettell's literary affinities with poets like Thomas Hardy, Walter de la Mare,<sup>62</sup> Edward Thomas, R. S. Thomas<sup>63</sup> and A. E. Housman. He was himself strongly conscious of the duality in his work and while he acknowledged his debt to the English poetic tradition, he was also aware that he had to express his unique vision in his own, new terms:

Remote from the cliques and coteries, I evolved for myself a style that, founded, I hope, on the traditions I love and honour, had its own adaptations to meet a new timeless challenge.

("Literary Oscar '72" 3)

This seems a clear indication that Brettell himself recognised that what he had produced was in some way quite new: neither familiarly English nor familiarly African, but something fresh and individual. In "On an Inyanga Road", which is dedicated to Edward Thomas, Brettell identifies strongly with the older poet,

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<sup>61</sup>Brettell, N.H. Interview. By Guy Butler. 16 May 1987. Audiotape. NELM MS: 98.33.14.

<sup>62</sup>Walter de la Mare (1873-1956). For biographical detail see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>63</sup>Ronald Stuart Thomas (1913-2000). For biographical detail see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.





landscape with a mythological Eastern one. Through his choice of striking metaphor and his powerful direct opening Brettell vividly encapsulates the massive bulk and majesty of this huge animal and presents it to the reader as a living creature, rather than as a mere description:

Slowly the great head turned  
And the late sunlight slept on massive flanks...

Slowly the great limbs moved:  
The monstrous pistons in the wrinkled sheath.

(ll. 1-2, 11-12)

Brettell achieves cohesion in this poem through the skilful extension of each metaphor into a comparison of the prehistoric with the modern world and, characteristically, the reflection is complete: each world mirrors the other and the interplay between them heightens the reader's awareness of both. Perhaps it is in part this neat closure in his work that prompted Mary Bock to remark that Brettell's poetry, though that of "a meticulous craftsman and a thoughtful man" does not "challenge emotionally or philosophically" (Bock "Hearing the voice of the earth" 77).

Given the controlled, highly disciplined way in which Brettell writes, Bock's comments are understandable but not, I believe, justifiable. Brettell in his quiet reflective way observes the world around him and repeatedly questions his own position in it. As an Englishman in Africa his sense of intrusiveness is accentuated to a higher degree than it would have been if he had remained in England, but despite this, the poet seeks to understand life as honestly as possible.

Brettell noted in his autobiography that he had "always lived on the edges: seldom the sword edges of excitement, habitually the blurred edges of solitude" which for most of his life meant on "the tattered edge of the backveld in a remote and unimportant country" (*SGS* 6). Yet it was this very backveld of this remote country that provided the nurturing environment for the seeds of Brettell's own poetic writing to germinate in.

An important aspect of the "nature" component of Brettell's poetry is the presence of wild animals and birds in his work. While ostensibly Brettell's poems are about the animals or birds they describe, on another level, they are about much more, often revealing interesting aspects of the personal life of the poet. In a letter to the Finns dated 27 September 1973 Brettell wrote:

Surely it's inescapable that all poetry ... (with a few exceptions) is about people—or one person—either directly or by implication. I suppose some

think of me as a nature poet: but it's still there, even in Duiker and Elephant, Antbear or Crowned Cranes.

(NELM MS: 96.19.138)

Later, in an interview with Guy Butler in 1987, Brettell readily admitted that the animals in his poetry often acted as a *stalking horse* through which he was able to express his ideas. "I don't suppose" he once noted "any of my things are really about the animal itself."<sup>64</sup> These statements are revealing about Brettell's poetry in general. His habit of linking disparate images or ideas in unexpected ways frequently leads him on from the ostensible subject or starting point of the poem to an unexpected, imaginative and often radically original conclusion. Often in his poetry the reader has the sense that Brettell is scrutinising himself with remorseless honesty. A telling instance of this is found in "Wind and an Eagle Owl".

The poem opens with the memory of a domestic quarrel the previous evening, after which

I blew our little candle out,  
And you to corner, I to wall,  
Turned like sullen girl and boy,  
Denying all, denying all.

(ll. 3-6)

From the hot air of the argument, to the breath used to extinguish the candle, the foundations are laid for the metaphor of the wind which is to be sustained throughout, for:

...all the wakeful night, like bird or mouse,  
The wind went on its business stealthily  
And crept around the angles of the house,  
With cunning orthopaedic fingers flouting  
Malignant dreams.

(ll. 7-11)

With the new day comes a restoration of peace to the household, but the wind is still blowing outside and when the speaker and his wife ride out on horseback they come across an eagle owl "trapped and dying", having been blown into a fence during the course of the night. Now, hooked, spread-eagled, on the barbed wire, it waits to die. The speaker prepares to put the bird out of its misery, but feels intense pity for it, even assuming part responsibility for its fate.

You luckless fellow of our night of wind,  
Who through the breathing solitudes had hunted,

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<sup>64</sup>Brettell, N.H. Interview. By Guy Butler. 16 May 1987. Audiotape. NELM MS: 98.33.13.

And blindly struck, like us, suddenly pinned  
And broken on the barbs that we had blunted.  
(*ll.* 26-29)

Brettell identifies closely with the bird, and sees in its predicament a reflection of his own in the argument of the night before. Here natural and personal landscapes merge as Brettell reaches out to kill the bird and the result is all the more startling, for the hatred in the bird's "wildwood eyes" recalls the argument of the night before, just as the "barbs we had blunted" echoes their quarrel about a "blunted pin".

Brettell's imagery is exact, but as one critic has noted, it is "enlarged by emotions beyond the momentary flow of words."<sup>65</sup> Brettell reaches out across the obvious species difference and identifies closely with the animals and birds he describes in his poetry but, as suggested earlier, in many cases they are a front or ploy which allows him to reveal a private side of himself to the reader.

While it may be tempting to classify Brettell as simply a "nature poet", to do so would not be accurate. Although it is true that throughout his life he felt a strong kinship with nature—as his autobiography amply demonstrates—and that he regarded himself as essentially a countryman, political change and upheaval and social injustice were also matters of which he was strongly aware. The natural landscape and the animals and people that co-inhabit that landscape feature prominently in his poetry, as he uses these, too, as a vehicle to contemplate and come to terms with the unknown. Therefore, while nature imagery predominates in his poetry, it is inaccurate to classify him as merely a "nature poet". Brettell's nature poetry is evidence of much more than a mere or facile celebration of an idyllic pastoral world. His vision and expressive range preclude simple classification. In any case the issue of such classifications was not of much concern to the poet himself for as he noted in his autobiography:

"whether I have become a 'nature' poet or not, is irrelevant", adding:

The natural scene of Mashonaland is the air I have breathed for most of a lifetime rather than the 'inspiration' that is so risky a word to use. The impulse, I am prepared to concede, has come from myself not from the 'vernal wood'<sup>66</sup>.... The land is innocent still, with its allure to be recollected by some, to be recognised afresh by others.

(*SGS* 173-174)

Brettell, however, repeatedly recognises that he is not indigenous to Africa. Poems like "Harvest at Horsebridge" and "The Cabbage Seller" poignantly portray

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<sup>65</sup> S.D. "Not to be Ignored." [n.d.].

<sup>66</sup> An allusion to line 21 of William Wordsworth's poem "The Tables Turned".

the haunting ambivalence of a love for a land that is not one's own. At the same time the poet / speaker continually reaches out to the alien but deeply loved unknown that surrounds him in an attempt to understand it and himself in relation to it. His poetry could thus be regarded as a fusion of known and unknown landscapes. Brettell never speculates or philosophises abstractly. Always he returns to the question of *me*—*where do I fit in, how does this affect me*—and, as Borrell remarks, “the honesty of such a mind, searching for himself and us, is a powerful comfort even when the poet is close to despair” (*SGS* xxi).

Throughout his time in Rhodesia / Zimbabwe Brettell was continually in amicable contact with native African people. Whether his relationship with black people was as employer to employee, or teacher to pupil, or as one artist to another, Brettell continually ponders their present positions and their likely futures. As early as 1931, after being in Rhodesia for only a few months, Brettell found himself disgusted with the racist behaviour of white Rhodesians around him, as the following extract from an undated early letter written sometime during January 1931 makes clear. After a term teaching at Ruzawi School, Brettell spent his Christmas holiday on a nearby farm, where this letter was most likely written.

I also got a little deeper insight into the question of the native: they were treated well here on the whole: but the attitude of the white was practically that of an owner to a slave. It's based a bit on fear too—we must keep them under or they'll be marrying our daughters and making a jolly sight better farmers than we are. Some of the things—in the towns particularly—were enough to make me sick of this hectoring Colonial who even has a nigger to pass a plate down the table. In the Grand Hotel where I stayed for a couple of nights, the black waiters might have been mechanical waiters for all the white diners seemed to care. To say 'please' or 'thanks' which would be courtesy to the meanest malkin of a barmaid in England is out of the question here. 'Chicken!' 'Cabbage!' 'Pudding!' they grunt looking fixed at vacancy: and if the poor nigger doesn't hear, he gets sworn at like an ox. Tips of course are beyond the question. It's really damnable. I can't understand it—the white people apart from this are almost wholly charming—Why, even in the name of pure logic, shouldn't a fellow be accepted as a jolly sight smarter and politer waiter than most English flunkeys are—the one I had was a marvellous fellow: walked on tiptoes and flashed with teeth and produced the menu with a splendid flourish—as if he were a conjurer finding it anew at every course in his sleeve. There are difficulties in the question of course: the semi-educated negro—like those from the mission stations—is a really insupportable fellow: he's such a child that a little knowledge is for him so dangerous a thing: it does make him self complacent and presumptuous: but that's an inevitable stage in any sort of education—I've met here schoolboys of 17—like me at 17—whom I would heartily liked to have kicked—hard. But even so, there's no excuse whatever for the Rhodesians to play down to the natives—to really

assume the part of the supercilious boor that the native necessarily gives them. It is a terribly degrading influence, this old native problem: no nation is going to be healthy when it's made up of pseudo aristocrats and a depressed lower class—it has all the last anomalies and brutality of the feudal system.

(NELM MS 2002.17.7)

Brettell's obvious indignation, however, is oddly confused with a share of the same prejudice for which he berates the white colonials around him. In this letter and in his early poetry, the space occupied by black Africans is one of nameless faces in the background.<sup>67</sup> Most of Brettell's early poetry, however, makes no mention of black people at all and it is perhaps this omission that is most telling. Brettell's poetic mind was captured by the strangeness, beauty and vitality of the new world he found himself in, but while, as the above letter proves, he was sympathetic to the black Africans he came into contact with, their existence for him, as for the majority of white Rhodesians, was largely inconsequential. For them Black Rhodesians were part of the African backdrop, a naive, simple, uneducated or semi-educated people, peasants and servants in an almost feudal system. Reading Brettell's early poetry one might be forgiven for thinking that there were no black people in Rhodesia for all the mention they get.

To criticise a poet for what he did not write about is perhaps unjust. In all likelihood Brettell, initially, either felt unable or uninspired to write about the indigenous population, concentrating his mind instead on natural imagery or on the Second World War,<sup>68</sup> but from the mid-1950s onwards, black African people do begin to feature in Brettell's poetry, and not merely as part of an idyllic backdrop.

A recurrent theme explored in Brettell's poetry from the 1950s on is the place of the indigenous African in colonial and post-colonial Africa. In an article in the *Rhodesia Herald* in 1972, Neil Tully noted: "Noel Brettell does not slide away from awkward problems; he meets them head on" (Tully 17). The most obvious of these awkward problems, given the time and place in which Brettell lived, was undoubtedly the question of race relations.

Brettell, in his own controlled and compassionate way, tackles the issue of race relations on a personal level. The African people who feature in his poems are actual people, encountered as individuals, not as examples for generalisation. As the Zimbabwean poet Musaemura Zimunya notes "Brettell's Africans have a human and

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<sup>67</sup> See Brettell's poem "Heard at Inyanga".

<sup>68</sup> See poems "War and Peace" and "From Africa 1941".

not a chimpanzee personality". They are "less strange than other pens would contrive to make them" (Zimunya 8). Brettell was highly conscious of the insensitivity of other white Rhodesians—he noted in a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn:

Look back at the Rhodesian poetry booklets: it's only about 1961 that you get any hint that we haven't been living in an arcadia of jacaranda and sunshine—surely an index of the frightful insensitivity that has landed us where we are.  
(March 15, 1967. NELM MS: 96.19.72)

Accordingly, Zimunya exempts Brettell from his general condemnation of white Rhodesian poets. In an article in the *Zimbabwe Herald* in January 2000 (nine years after Brettell's death and twenty after Zimbabwe had achieved independence) he noted that Brettell's poetry "exudes a generous empathy with any subject he may choose, without being unduly facile or sentimental."

Brettell's poetry is seldom openly critical of other whites or of colonial policy, but he is self-consciously aware of himself and his position in Africa. After forty years in Rhodesia he noted in 1972:

I still consider myself an Englishman who happens to be living south of the Zambezi... I feel that I am wandering around on the fringe trying to deal with symbols I don't understand. ... Behind it all, the African has something we will never fathom.

(Tully 17)

Brettell seems "driven by a desire to understand and relate to Africa, its people, land and animals" (Zimunya 8). In his poem "Mother and Child" subtitled "For Job Kekana, wood-carver" Brettell "comes clos[er] to a race-free sensibility than any poet, black or white, has ever done in this country" (*Ibid.*). The poem is inspired by the work of the black sculptor to whom the poem is dedicated.

He knew that haloes never grow from mukwa  
Nor wings sprout from any upflung timber.  
This is a plain girl, sprung from the stubborn earth,  
Up from the splayed discarded roots, the pliant lines  
Follow the living grain through bend of shoulder,  
Falling through fold of doek...

(ll. 1-6)

Brettell sees two of Kekana's carvings as, in Zimunya's words, a "local perception of the Madonna and Child" and of the crucified Christ: "Till wood and flesh and god are one" (l. 24). Without reference to race or skin colour, this madonna and her son share the humanity and suffering common to all humankind. The Christian mystery of the Incarnation becomes symbolically accessible through the skill of African hands carving native African hardwoods into concrete objects to

imbue them with timeless universal significance. So, through the medium of poetry, does the poet's description of them. It may be said without irreverence that in Brettell's "Mother and Child" the word and the wood become flesh among us (Jn.1:14).

In another example, "African Student (Shakespeare for A-level)", the figure of a young African is the focus of the English teacher's poetic eye. Helping a student prepare for his A-level examinations (something which Brettell himself did for years, without remuneration, as a practical means of assisting in the advancement of young Africans), the poet watches as a young man pores over *Twelfth Night* while "the pressure lamp hisses into silence" (l. 1). Throughout the poem images and phrases from that play recur and form the matrix for the primary focus on innocence under threat of corruption, and freedom in the face of mindless, possibly malevolent, convention.

Brettell observes the young man studying and trying to comprehend and interpret the text before him. As he engages with Shakespeare, the specifics of time, setting and even language become irrelevant: Illyria, Arcady, Elizabethan England and Rhodesia merge into a reflection on the human condition itself. On another level, the poem may be read as questioning the specific condition of colonial Rhodesia. Brettell contemplates both the young African's and his own positions in Rhodesia, and their possible roles in a future post-colonial dispensation.

Black scholar intent, impassive still, you have no place  
In time or language: as, pages rapidly flicking,  
You turn from text to gloss to commentary,  
Or now, as one listening to music might  
Stare through the face of a friend,  
You with poised pencil point look up, question the night,  
Midnight, *Twelfth Night*, or what you will.  
Or what you will: Illyria or Arcady,  
The polity that never was but could be now,  
(ll. 5-13)

Brettell now introduces the concept of the pastoral ideal, and wonders if what has never existed anywhere else could possibly be brought about in a post-colonial Rhodesia. With the end of colonialism and the exit of the "wit weary courtiers" that upheld the status quo, will the young man before him be able to "Sort out the faceless fragments into place" (l. 18) and on the darkness print his

... project's clean impress  
With ridge and furrow the uncouth landscape combing,  
To every Hodge his acre, every Jack his mistress— [?]  
(ll. 19-21)

The pastoral and egalitarian ideal envisaged for Rhodesia / Zimbabwe is further contemplated in the third stanza where the student is encouraged by the speaker to “keep your wild hills for roaming” and to find contentment in the natural world rather than in an imported sophistication remote from the wellsprings of his traditional culture. (In this Brettell is articulating his wish that the pupil follow the teacher's example: these were precisely the choices which Brettell himself made and from which he derived deep personal fulfilment.) For as Brettell notes

The land is innocent still: so, keep innocency,  
Keep the half-naked thing you were  
When that you were and a little tiny boy.  
(ll. 31-33)

The archaic injunction: “keep innocency”, associated unmistakably with the traditional Anglican service of confirmation, has a profound poignancy in this context. This verse from Psalm 37 verse 37 as rendered in the sixteenth-century Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* was customarily given to confirmands in the form: “Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last.” Used here, in the context of looming political upheaval and all the temptations open to educated and upwardly mobile young Africans in a post-colonial dispensation, the phrase is imbued with increased significance. As Brettell has seen, the promises of politicians have a habit of leading, not to “peace at the last”, but to war. Poet and student (“Boy now no longer”) stare together, “eye for eye // Into the dark that tilts towards some dawn” (l. 35). A new post-colonial era may be dawning, but the poet questions whether he and the student can accept

...these half-surmised replies,  
That benign irony that still could make  
Its chorus of the necessary clown,  
Strolling aloof through knot-garden and gallery,  
Accosting duke and dunce indifferently—  
(ll. 36-40)

whether they can accept “the final self-withdrawn surrender” (l. 41) of the colonial establishment, the “god-like hands that jerked the puppet strings” (l. 43), and whether in all honesty they could endure the “golden franchise” by which Shakespeare's mind



...embraced them all—  
The knave, the gull, the Jew, the blackamoor?  
(ll. 45-46)

The question of whether either teacher or student has Shakespeare's capacity for the Biblical loving kindness—perhaps for what in South Africa nowadays might be termed *ubuntu*<sup>69</sup>—is left unanswered, but the implied answer seems negative. While Brettell here ponders the pastoral ideal and the dream of equality amongst men, he does not seem convinced that either is any more likely in a post-colonial Rhodesia than elsewhere in the world.

The poem is carefully crafted, with the final word or phrase of each stanza being used to begin the next (thus subtly emphasising a sense of perceived continuity), while the words and images of *Twelfth Night* form the embedding matrix for the ideas being expressed. The political and natural landscapes of modern Africa merge with the political and cultural landscapes of sixteenth-century England. Through this fusion, Brettell tries to comprehend what the future holds in store for Rhodesia.

Not all Brettell's poetry dealing with black African people is unproblematic, however. Brettell, while a man ahead of his time, is still a product of his time and his depiction of black Rhodesians can appear patronising to twenty-first century readers. For instance, in his poem "Hunchback: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for O-level", Brettell's imagination focuses on a struggling student called Gumbo whose perceptions "almost like bruises" "knock // Against the edge of alien tongue and rhyme" (ll. 5-6). The setting is an O-level examination and the student sits "glowering at his untouched script" (l. 7), his heavy shoulders slumped forward, until all of a sudden

...a dredged-up recollection  
Illumes the lubbard visage with a grin,  
And fused with spark of some remembered quip  
He scribbles furiously against the clock.  
(ll. 7-10)

Brettell the invigilator is intrigued. "What fingering ray lit up the dark recesses?" (l. 11) he wonders.

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<sup>69</sup> The African philosophy of humanism which emphasises the link between the individual and the collective.

Does he, across the centuries, smell the reek  
Civet and garlic in the gaudy dresses,  
Grandee and prentice crackling with applause  
For tumbling pun, the lewd and loutish glance,  
The pounded measures of the bergomask?

(ll. 14-18)

The student's reaction leads Brettell to see the candidate in a new and Shakespearean light. Gumbo joins the ranks of Shakespeare's clowns:

... Gobbo, Dogberry and Lance,  
Cocking their heyday snook against the humdrum week:

(ll. 19-20)

and as in "African Student" this student, too, is encouraged to

Go back to the earth for the good things you ask,  
The snug enticements of the hut,  
Three logs, smouldering nose to nose  
The fluttering flames beneath the pot  
The firelight's caricature of shadow-shows.

(ll. 22-26)

Brettell's depiction of "Gumbo" and his advice to him may be disturbing and might even, if taken out of context, be construed as racist. While Brettell is perhaps insensitive in his portrayal of "Gumbo", he does not suggest that Gumbo is representative of black people in general. In fact, the likely setting for the poem, given the political context of 1970s Rhodesia and Brettell's involvement with teaching at a black mission school, is that all the other candidates who are sitting the examination are also black.

As advice to Gumbo, Brettell's words, though possibly inappropriate, are free of racism for it is advice that Brettell himself followed. In his retirement Brettell retreated into nature to live a rustic life in the rural Eastern highlands of Zimbabwe. His words thus fall within the poetic tradition of Wordsworth, Hardy and Housman, among others, where answers to life's teasing questions are found in natural simplicity. It is therefore neither surprising nor out of character for him to encourage others to do as he himself has done. While "Gumbo" is no "Michael" or "Shropshire lad", the same principle is at work and Brettell warns his student against the danger of becoming like Caliban "with his new master the new man". Brettell recommends instead that Gumbo should

Infuse your pleasures while you can,  
With cue from Quince, applause from Snout

For Puck's hobgoblin knockabout,

...

Where Falstaff cracks with Prospero,  
Where Snug, the slow of study, roars his fill  
And glorious Bottom rolls in asphodel.

(*ll.* 27-29; 36-38)

Brettell directs the student to the wholesome world of Shakespearean comedy and suggests that in addition to going back to nature he should look to Puck and Bottom for instruction on how to enjoy life. Since laughter is a true leveller and the creator of a genuine equality, Brettell suggests that it may be the most realistic vehicle for bringing about universal equality and contentment. A world where Falstaff and Prospero can joke together and where "Snug, the slow of study, roars his fill" is, Brettell would have one believe, a better world than the one he and Gumbo find themselves in.

Another possibly problematic poem is Brettell's "Arson". Here Brettell questions the blithe assumptions of white Rhodesians about maintaining peace and "civilisation" in the face of violence. The opening scene depicts the aftermath of an arson attack on a house, and in its attention to detail and its description of the helplessness of the observers, it is chillingly accurate.

Before the black still fuming ruin  
The molten panes dripping hot icicles,  
The scorched wisteria draping  
Forlorn festoon of purple in the morning,  
We stand, guns useless under the armpit;  
Like mimic shots, the msasa pods split and burst

(*ll.* 1-6)

The bursting msasa pods draw the poet's attention to his surroundings as day breaks. The "green light" seeps "through the pines", the garden brook "runs on its muted murmur". In the concrete pond Tennysonian goldfish swim. In direct contrast to the violated house, all is peaceful, and amongst the "sworded iris" the unperturbed

...fatuous plaster gnome  
Still trails his useless angle in the water  
Lay figure of a tragedy unrehearsed  
Now in the chill pool of epilogue immersed.

(*ll.* 11-14)

This striking contrast—the Wordsworthian tranquillity of the natural world and the helplessness of the observers in the aftermath of human-inflicted violence—leads

Brettell to reflect on other, historical acts of arson and to draw parallels between the past and the present.

And did they stand, the angry legionaries  
Before some blackened steading outside Uricon,  
The slim pilasters shattered, the cracked arch  
Dropped in the scorched gullet of the hypocaust,  
And by the marble font  
A bronze nymph smiled her image in the fountain—  
Signifer and centurion with spears reversed  
When the barbarian had done his worst?

(*ll.* 15-22)

As with the gnome, the bronze nymph now becomes the focus of the poem. Both were created in times of peace as ornaments for aesthetic pleasure. Both are symbolic of tranquillity and a peaceful cultured lifestyle. Yet both, as the poem makes obvious, are eventually destroyed by the passage of time, a process accelerated by the marauding “barbarian”.

Naiad or gnome: which can we comprehend—  
Portly or slender, both reduced by time,  
The painted plaster flaking, verdigris  
Dimming the slim profile of the dream;

(*ll.* 23-26)

In this instance the dream is one of a peaceful co-existence where art and gracious culture can live and grow in harmony. It is important, though, to examine the parallel created between the “barbarian” in *l.* 22 and the attackers who, given the context of 1970s Rhodesia are almost certainly black “freedom fighters”. Brettell does not imply that black people per se are barbarians. Instead, he suggests that those who threaten the political stability essential for the survival and growth of the arts and the development of a technologically and economically sophisticated civilisation deserve this label. Brettell is conscious of the violence that brought about the collapse of the Roman Empire, violence that plunged Europe into the dark ages where very little enduring art or humane culture was able to flourish—“fond projects by reality dispersed” (*l.* 30)—and fears that that history might repeat itself. The poem is aware of a possible parallel between the late-Roman world and a decolonised Zimbabwe, but the poet’s concern is not for the survival of the old political system. Whether the system of government for ensuring peace is just or unjust is ignored. Instead, Brettell’s primary concern is for the survival of humane values and a culture of tolerance in the face of violence. A letter, which Brettell wrote six years earlier on 11 June 1973 to Betty and Hugh Finn, includes the following observation:

It is very gloomy—and none the better for being the future we've earned and which I've seen for the last twenty years. It was, I think, just about twenty years ago that I put it into words, more or less, in my poem 'Harvest at Horsebridge' ... I've been haunted ever since, and especially now, by the thought of how like we are to Roman Britain—that close and elegant sophistication with the barbarians just beyond the wall and the sea. What perplexes me more than anything is the way the whole culture vanished—absolutely nothing left except scraps of mosaic and broken masonry. Don't you think it's extraordinary that no literature is left out of it—those four centuries of solid and elegant country villas and all the ease and grace that must have gone with it[?] With the Augustan tradition behind it, there must have been an immense amount of poetry written and yet just nothing has survived. Very much like us, isn't it—and all our vain scribblings will probably go the same way into sheer oblivion. And what is our interlude of seventy years beside their four centuries! ... Of course, it flowered again in the works of Christendom and there was always Gaul to become France. But Roman Britain no: nothing beyond the Channel. Perhaps with us it may be beyond the Zambezi or the Limpopo.

(NELM MS: 96.19.134)

Yet in "Arson" it is not the gloom expressed above which comes to the fore. Here Brettell attempts to draw hope from remembering that Wilfred Owen faced much worse acts of violence and transformed them into enduring poetry, and that Vergil contemplated a far larger ruin in Troy than Brettell does in the smoking house. It is with thoughts such as these that he comforts himself. So, while the poem challenges his belief in the survival of humane values, it also reinforces it, and the last line even contains an element of humour where Vergil and Owen's musings are compared to those of the observer:

...such easy hopes we nursed:  
But not, like theirs, in noble numbers versed.  
(ll. 38-39)

Brettell's tone in this poem is neither hysterical nor paranoid. By focusing on human values such as tranquillity, peace, culture and civilised society rather than on the image of the "still fuming ruin" (l. 1), Brettell reminds one of the continuance of such things, even in times of crisis. By reflecting on the survival of the works of Owen and Vergil, Brettell finds hope for a humane future in Rhodesia. While his fears about a return to the dark ages may have been unjustified, they are nevertheless understandable. It is characteristic of Brettell that through the shifting scenes and changing moods of his poetry he continually attempts to understand his surroundings, even though he is continually confronted by imponderables. As he once noted:

We in Rhodesia are surrounded by question marks. There is so much in Africa that we cannot explain. And part of the trouble is that people are not facing up

to the real questions. At the moment, the poet's role is to face the facts and ask the questions honestly. It is not our business to find the answers; we must first ask the questions.

(Tully 17)

In his poetry Brettell tries to face up to the real questions honestly, but his love for Western civilisation and culture occasionally results in his assuming a stance towards black Africans which twenty-first century readers might find problematic. His treatment of black people is never intentionally insensitive, but one might argue that there is an element of implied racism in his portrayal of them. It must be said, though, that this accusation would have troubled him deeply.

A poem which is critical of twentieth-century Western values, however, is "Ballad: Madonna and Baobab". In this poem Brettell reinterprets the story of the Nativity in a twentieth-century African setting. This Christmas story, however, is not set in a stable with the cattle lowing and angels, shepherds and magi in attendance. Instead this black Madonna sits alone in the shade of a baobab while motor cars drive past

...unknowing of the miracle;  
No star beckons, only the stark  
Glass-eyed towers with their neon stare  
Betray to grey the crimson dark.  
Below the thundering avenues  
Tycoon and trickster, lips aslant,  
With all the greed of baobab  
Suck at the springs of the rand.

. . . .  
They pass. The dust blows off. They miss the stable  
And go back to Herod. She sits and understands,  
Dumb and demure, unseeing in the veld,  
And holds their fortunes in her slender hands.

(ll. 13-20, 32-25)

By resetting one of the most important stories in the Christian canon, Brettell tries to examine honestly the likely scenario of what would happen if Christ were born in a twentieth-century Zimbabwean context. His answer is not a comforting one. The indictment of a capitalistic society which ignores the miracle of the birth of its Saviour is clear and Brettell's sympathy is with the black mother sitting by the side of the road. In this poem Western culture is examined in an African context and Brettell is unflinching in his unforgiving contrast between twentieth-century Western values and those of Christianity.

Politically, Brettell might be described as a liberal, both in deed and action. It is a matter of record that he actively opposed Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front party and worked energetically, despite his age, for the rival Centre Party. He consistently opposed the white supremacist party and did not acquiesce in UDI. His reasons for doing so were, again, humane ones. "There is," he wrote on November 25, 1967, "something stultifying in the thought that one is being governed unworthily—the feeling, I suppose, of Wordsworth's 'fear of stagnant waters'" (Letter to Betty Finn. 25 November 1967. NELM MS: 96.19.82). Consequently, as personal letters of the time make clear, he and Eva threw their weight into the campaign against the 1969 Referendum which led the Smith regime to proclaim Rhodesia a republic. Later one finds Brettell actively working to promote the political interests of black Rhodesians: a letter dated March 10, 1970 states: "We are putting up candidates in a rather forlorn hope in Umtali ... We have a good African candidate, probably our best bet" (Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn. 10 March 1970. NELM MS: 96.19.96).

Unlike many Rhodesians Brettell did not ignore the question or attempt to delude himself about the likely future of "white" Rhodesia. In poems like "Harvest at Horsebridge", "Arson" and "The Wall" he earnestly contemplates Rhodesia's possible future. The conclusions he draws are not comforting. He noted in a letter to the Finns dated 17 November 1974:

I was appalled, copying out some of my twenty-year old verses to send to a friend in England, to see how what I said then is now in the terrifying process of coming about. What's the use of Owen saying that all a poet can do is to warn—nobody took much notice of his warning.

Sorry if this is a bit glum. I feel a bit nauseated by the complacent platitudes of the Prime Minister and others. Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive—so it is, but only the red dawn over the hills.

(NELM MS 96.19.143)

In another letter to the Finns written on 31 July 1975 Brettell wrote:

I get more and more oppressed and depressed by the circumambient atmosphere of hatred and contempt. As I said, what I wrote thirty years ago is what I could be writing now, and that's no comfort. Maybe the answer to that is to write something that'll be relevant thirty years hence. I try, but get nowhere—nothing that is worth showing even to my closest and most understanding friends.

(NELM MS: 96.19.146)

Brettell's poetry contains warnings for the future, but it never becomes protest poetry. Part of the reason for this was that Brettell felt unequal to the task as he understood it. In a letter to the Finns dated 9 July 1974 he noted:

I write nothing, or at least nothing of any value, these days. Bit of a quandary, really. All I think I could write would be some sort of social commentary and that I find increasingly impossible as I think poetry should end up in hope and I can see little of that in this distressful country. Our poor Centre Party is drawing its last breath: it was premature, the critics say—but that’s nonsense as it ought to have been born thirty years ago.

(NELM MS: 96.19.141)

In an earlier letter to the Finns dated 10 December 1971 he had written bitterly:

I’m afraid I can’t share in the general euphoria about the ‘settlement’:<sup>70</sup> better than nothing and a step forward back to about 1961 is all I can say for it. People who only know Africans as obsequious lackeys have no idea of the frightening and deepening feeling of hatred and suspicion. It makes me angry to hear our politicians talking so blithely. You remember the sombre prophecy in ‘Cry the Beloved Country’—‘when they turned to loving, we shall be turned to hating’. Sorry—I’ve just had a depressing and frustrating meeting with our Bonda tenants, who are in the same uncertain position as the people at Epworth and Targwena. I’ve sweated blood ... on their behalf, but this was the first time I’ve felt they included me in their general distrust of all white men. It’s not an air that poetry [thri]ves in. I wish I had the tongue of a satirist!

(NELM MS: 96.19.119)

Brettell felt nothing but disgust, however, for those poets who had previously been oblivious to the evils of white supremacy and who suddenly in the 1970s attempted to use social injustice as a platform for self-publicity and recognition.

It haunts and terrifies me that 30 years back I was trying to face the problems and dilemmas that I know now I shall die before I answer; and every year there seems less ‘cause for carolling’. I can’t help but despise the posing of our 1970 poetasters who pretend to have just discovered the things that tormented Cripps at the beginning of the century—surely a social insensitivity almost unequalled in the history of human relations.

(Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn. 27  
September 1973. NELM MS: 96.19.138)

Brettell’s criticism was not reserved only for his fellow whites. He was conscious of the atrocities committed by both sides in the Rhodesian bush war and his

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<sup>70</sup> Following Ian Smith’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1965 relationships between Rhodesia and Britain soured, with Britain and the rest of the world refusing to recognise Rhodesia’s independence. In 1971, however, talks were held between the then British Prime Minister Sir Edward Heath, the British Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home and Smith with a view to “organising a legal settlement that would ensure the equality of land rights between Africans and Europeans” <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/uk\\_confidential/1711382.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/uk_confidential/1711382.stm)>. Smith agreed to a settlement that, at least in theory, accepted the principle of majority rule in the long term, while the British government agreed to recognize an amended version of the 1969 constitution and on 24 November 1971 the Anglo-Rhodesian Agreement was signed. By May 1972, however, the agreement was in tatters. Despite the exclusion of African representatives at the Anglo-Rhodesian negotiations a clause in the agreement gave black Rhodesians the right to veto the agreement. When they went to vote 97% of Africans polled rejected the agreement. For more details see *Rhodesians Never Die: The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c.1970-1980* by Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock.



heart went out to the ordinary people caught in the middle, as the following extract makes clear:

The army appears to have made a clean sweep of the Manyika TTL,<sup>71</sup> but the plight of the people is distressing, bullied by security on one side and terrified of the guerrillas on the other. What endless animosities are building up is frightening and I cant [*sic*] see anything like normal relations, at least not in the decade that's left to me. I wish I could share your views about the future. Our new African parson at Bonda is a case in point, a dear and dour old fellow (well, not so old as I am, perhaps) whom I knew as a young teacher over fifty years ago, and with whom I have a lot in common.... A month or so ago we had him and his wife over to lunch and they so evidently enjoyed it that last week we asked them again: but, after a bit of shamefaced demurring, he said quite frankly that he'd rather not, as he was afraid if he was seen to have too much to do with whites, he would be in for it. It is tragically hard on these old and quite devoted Christians—one of his fellow priests down in Nyomaropa has been threatened that if he goes on celebrating the Mass, he'll have his hands cut off. It's going to take more than a generation to get this horrible poison out of our body politic. Don't you think it's a delusion of ours not to realise that the tide of white supremacy has receded all over the world and we here were at the limit of the flood and now have either to retreat with it or be left stranded on "the naked shingles of the world".

(Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn, 3 July 1977. NELM MS: 96.19.174)

It is one thing to be a critical or sympathetic bystander but quite another to be the victim of aggression. On 12 February 1979 the Brettells woke up to rocket and machine gun fire as some 20 insurgents attacked their home. The house was destroyed, but miraculously the seventy-year-old Brettell and his elderly wife escaped unharmed, perhaps because of their bravery in returning fire. What is remarkable is that nowhere in Brettell's poetry, letters, or any other subsequent known writing is there any trace of bitterness or resentment towards those who had destroyed the idyllic life he and his wife had shared on their mountain smallholding for twenty years. Rather there is only joy in being alive and stoic acceptance of the future.<sup>72</sup> As Brettell was to note in "Eva 1984":

That is the end, we said, as we drove along the road for the last time; we held hands, clasped tight with white knuckles, and did not look to the left to the top of the rise. ...

And yet we came, soon enough, to look back on it without regret. It was ... a lovely twenty-year holiday, and nobody with any sense can be heart-

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<sup>71</sup> Tribal Trust Land: designated rural areas in Rhodesia which served as 'native' reserves where black Rhodesians could, supposedly, continue to live as they had done for hundreds of years.

<sup>72</sup> See NELM MS: 96.19.196 in notes to "Aubade for Orpheus".

broken when a holiday comes to an end.

(Brettell, "Eva 1984" 41)

Perhaps the most telling evidence for Brettell's sense of social responsibility is that despite his apprehension about what the future might hold, he and his wife chose to remain in the new Zimbabwe and work towards making it a better country. Again and again it is the honesty, humanity and Christian charity of this quiet, unassuming man that shines through.

Brettell's name remained largely unknown outside South African and Rhodesian literary circles during his lifetime and since his death in 1991 it has all but been forgotten. Reclusive, retiring, intensely private, Brettell avoided social gatherings as much as possible, preferring to live his life on the edges of society where he could keep the world at arm's length and so gain greater perspective on what surrounded him. Although he apparently enjoyed company, and was the "life and soul" of the parties he attended,<sup>73</sup> the anticipation of interacting with people, with the exception of family and a few close friends, seems to have filled him with apprehension.<sup>74</sup> What caused these feelings of insecurity is unclear but the result was that few people got to know him well.

Poetry for Brettell was also a private affair and while much of his work was published either in anthologies, journals or in his two solo collections, he preferred to circulate his poems amongst family and close friends in the form of privately produced poetry collections.<sup>75</sup> He distrusted his own ability as a poet and while he held strong views on what did and did not constitute poetry he found the writing of it both difficult and very personal. As a result it was only when he was directly asked to do so that he would offer advice to other poets on how to write or rework their poems.

Both socially and poetically then Brettell's influence on those around him was limited. It is unclear if any of the small number of poets who read his work were influenced in their own work by his poetry, but if they were, such influence was almost certainly limited. No one seems to have tried to write like Brettell. There was, however, great respect for his careful craftsmanship as can be seen in the praise his work elicited from fellow southern African poets as different as Douglas

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<sup>73</sup>Brettell, Rosemary. Personal interview conducted 2 August 2004.

<sup>74</sup>Brettell, Rosemary. Personal interview conducted 2 August 2004.

<sup>75</sup> See Textual Introduction for more on this.

Livingstone,<sup>76</sup> Guy Butler,<sup>77</sup> Hugh Finn,<sup>78</sup> Colin Style,<sup>79</sup> Francis Carey Slater<sup>80</sup> and A.S Cripps. The English poet Richard Church<sup>81</sup> called him an important voice in the poetry of Africa,<sup>82</sup> T.S. Eliot noted his talent,<sup>83</sup> Francis Brett Young and Edmund Blunden helped him get his first volume of poetry published, yet Brettell's influence on other writers was limited at best. He was a loner, an outsider and although he was elected president of the P.E.N. Centre of Rhodesia<sup>84</sup> in 1977, it is unlikely that his views on literature received much more than a perfunctory nod from those around him.

His limited poetic influence on those around him, however, does not negate his importance as an English / southern African poet. His best poems, such as "Wind and an Eagle Owl" and "Attic Shape" are more carefully crafted, honest and skilful than much of what has been published in the twentieth century and his genuine talent is indisputable. Whether he will be remembered as a poet, or whether his poetry will still be read in years to come, are questions that must for the moment remain unanswered. Unfortunately though, it seems unlikely that in a post-colonial, post-post-modern world many will take the time to read the poetry of a quiet, unassuming white

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<sup>76</sup> Livingstone described Brettell as "the undoubted giant of poetry in Southern Africa, and probably in this continent" (Livingstone, *Rhodesian Poetry* 13 5).

<sup>77</sup> Butler once noted that Brettell was "possibly the finest poet Southern Africa has ever produced" (conversation with Guy Butler, 1999).

<sup>78</sup> At Brettell's funeral Hugh Finn, in his eulogy, described Brettell as a "major poet".

<sup>79</sup> Style in 1992 described Brettell as "the finest [Zimbabwean] poet to date" (Style, "Noel Brettell" 46).

<sup>80</sup> See notes to *Bronze Frieze* for transcription of letter from F.C. Slater to T.S. Eliot (NELM MS 475/5).

<sup>81</sup> Richard Church (1893-1972). For biographical detail see *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>82</sup> See D.E. Borrell's "Foreword" to Brettell's *Side-Gate and Stile*.

<sup>83</sup> See notes to *Bronze Frieze* for transcription of letter from T.S. Eliot to F.C. Slater (NELM MS 475/6) commenting on Brettell's poetry.

<sup>84</sup> The P.E.N. Centre of Rhodesia was affiliated to International P.E.N., "the world's oldest human rights organization and the oldest international literary organization." International P.E.N. was "founded in 1921 to dispel national, ethnic, and racial hatreds and to promote understanding among all countries." P.E.N. associations work "to advance literature, to defend free expression, and to foster international literary fellowship" < <http://www.pen.org/page.php/prmID/142>>.

Zimbabwean poet who was more interested in humanity than politics and who preferred the society of nature to that of man.

\* \* \*

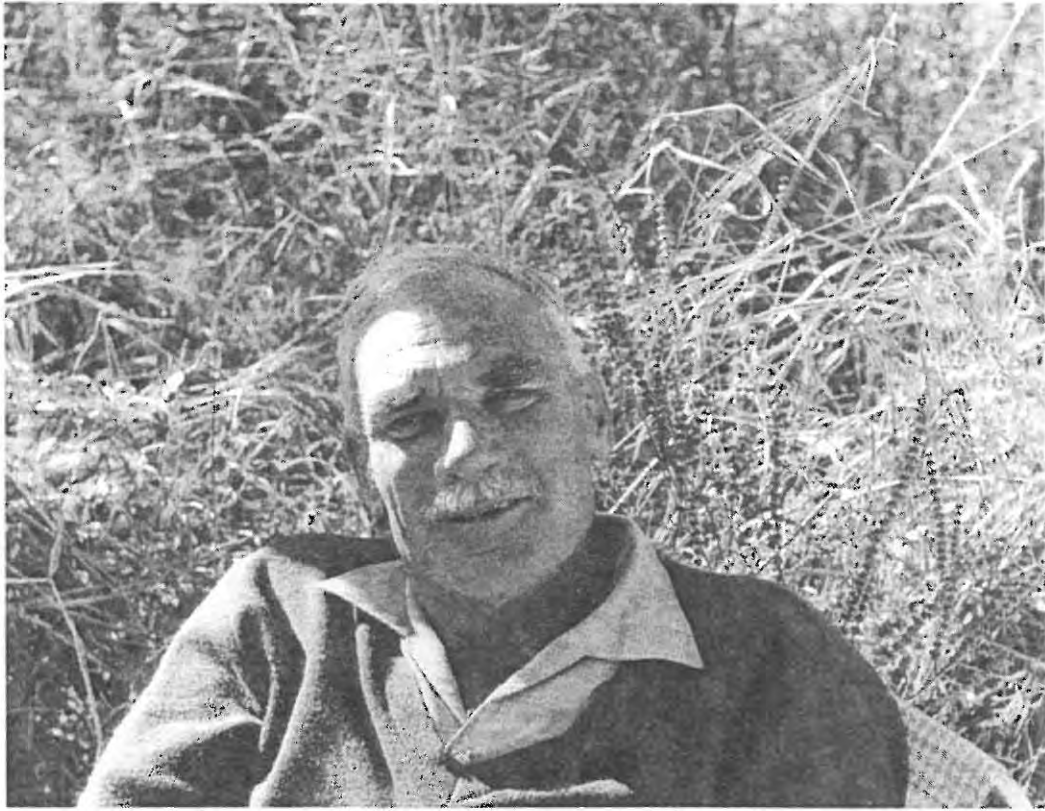
Colin Style once noted that Brettell's "message for Africa" is expressed in terms of "showing this self-conscious continent that ideas and situations in Man and nature have parallels and duplications outside time and place" (Style, "Rhodesian Poets" 4) and perhaps this sums up Brettell's work best. In his poetry the worlds he lived in fuse to form a rich, complex landscape in which he is able to examine and attempt to reconcile the complexities and mysteries of the particular life which he experienced. Carefully crafted, slightly old fashioned, scrupulously honest, Brettell's poetry displays both his talent and his humanity as he questions the world around him and his place in it. While his poetry never attempts to offer easy solutions to the world's problems and is free of glib moralising, his depth of insight is often startling and the images and allusions that fill his poems indicate the presence of a sensitive and retentive mind.

When Brettell died, his friend and admirer, Douglas Livingstone—himself a signally important South African poet—wrote the following tribute which provides an accurate summation of Brettell's talent:

It is arguable which star shines brightest in the poetic diadem: felicitous language, contact with the essential pulses of the good earth, insight into man's and therefore history's foibles, generosity of spirit or precision of imagery. Brettell has the constellation and this [is] ever apparent in his poetry.

(Livingstone "Noel Brettell" 6)

Such a constellation may be obscured or even ignored, as the whims of literary and political fashion dictate, but it will not disappear. A diligent reader of poetry may yet be delighted to discover in Brettell's work an honest and heartfelt statement of the verities embodied in his imaginative, unassuming and humane attempts to reconcile contrasting perceptions and attitudes. In an increasingly polarised world, such poems of reconciliation will continue to be relevant.



*Noel Brettell (undated photograph)  
Reproduced with permission of Rosemary Brettell.*

## TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

### THE TEXTS

#### Provenance:

#### *Brettell holdings at the National English Literary Museum (NELM).*

After Brettell's death, his son John, with the assistance of Brettell's friends, the poets Hugh and Betty Finn, compiled and attempted to publish a comprehensive collection of his father's poems. When this was unsuccessful, John Brettell deposited his father's manuscripts and papers at the National English Literary Museum in Grahamstown, where they are currently located. Several of Brettell's other literary friends added Brettell manuscripts to the Museum holdings.<sup>85</sup> Following Jeremy Fogg's research trip to Brettell's *alma mater* Birmingham University and my trips to Brettell's children John and Rosemary Brettell (living in Kadoma, Zimbabwe, and Knysna, South Africa, respectively) previously unknown Brettell material was deposited at NELM. NELM's manuscript holdings on Brettell are substantial and consist of over 700 items occupying 1,4m of shelf space.

#### *The Finn Compilation.*

Hugh Finn's compilation for the unpublished collected poems (henceforth referred to by its NELM accession number: NELM MS 98.4.10) consists of photostatic copies of Brettell poems from various published and unpublished sources. Finn's editorial policy made little or no attempt to compare different versions of Brettell poems. He chose those versions most readily to hand. With the exception of eleven poems<sup>86</sup> and the collection "Lakeside" all the original sources for the Finn compilation have been identified.

As the originals of the majority of the poems in NELM MS 98.4.10 have been traced and as Brettell left no instructions authorising the selection and ordering of the poems in the Finn compilation, the photostatic copies of the poems in NELM MS 98.4.10 have not been afforded independent manuscript status, except in the instances highlighted above where no original version of the poem could be traced.

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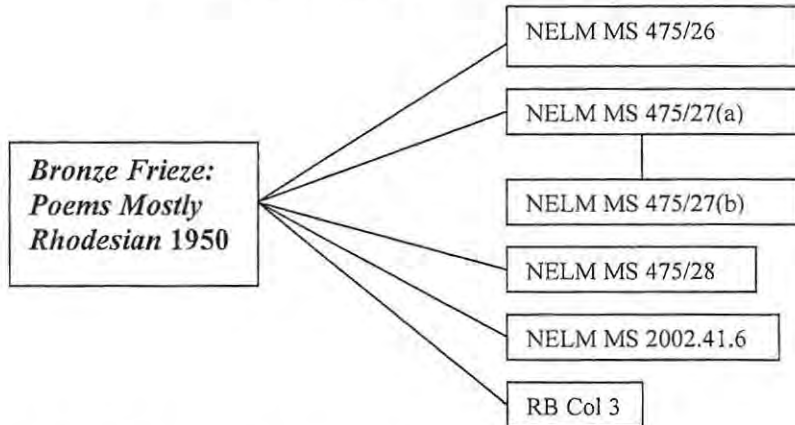
<sup>85</sup> Guy Butler, Hugh and Betty Finn, Douglas Livingstone.

<sup>86</sup> "Southern Cross & Charlie's Wain", "On Clent Hill", "A Chinese Screen", "Zimbabwe", "Expecting Peace", "At Home", "From a Hotel Window", "Early Hour", "Transit", "Posthumous publication of a poet blown up by a landmine", "Safe Interior".

**DESCRIPTION OF SOURCES,**  
*ordered chronologically by manuscript collection.*

**Note:** The schematic diagrams that appear below show how the relationship of the contents of the collections may be represented. These diagrams are not a stemma, but rather a map displaying schematically how material occurs in more than one manuscript / collection.

***BRONZE FRIEZE: POEMS MOSTLY RHODESIAN***



**NELM MS 475/26(b):** printed, paginated booklet measuring 19,2cm x 12,9cm containing the poems “Maronda Mashanu”, “War and Peace”, “Antelope and Mad Baboon”, “Vox Populi”, “Donkey Cart”, “Locust Birds”, “Heard at Inyanga”, “From Africa: 1941”, “Umsasa”, “L’Après-Midi D’un Faune”, “No Prayer for Rain” and a contents page for *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*.

**NELM MS 475/27(a):** twenty printed, paginated, galley-copy pages measuring 69cm x 16,7cm.

**NELM MS 475/27(b):** twenty printed, paginated, galley-copy pages measuring 69cm x 16,7cm.

**NELM MS 475/28:** carbon copy, typescript printers proof consisting of 77 loose leaves measuring 25,3cm x 20,1cm. The volume bears the original title of the collection: “Antelope and Mad Baboon: Poems Mostly Rhodesian”. “Antelope and Mad Baboon” has been crossed out and “Bronze Frieze” inserted by hand. This collection contains Brettell’s handwritten emendations and the typesetter’s markup.

**NELM MS 2002.41.6:** four photostatic, typescript, loose leaves measuring 21cm x 29,7cm containing poems: “Crowned Cranes”, “Locust Birds”, “Wagtail”, “Dikkop”. Illustrated original is in the possession of Dr John Brettell.

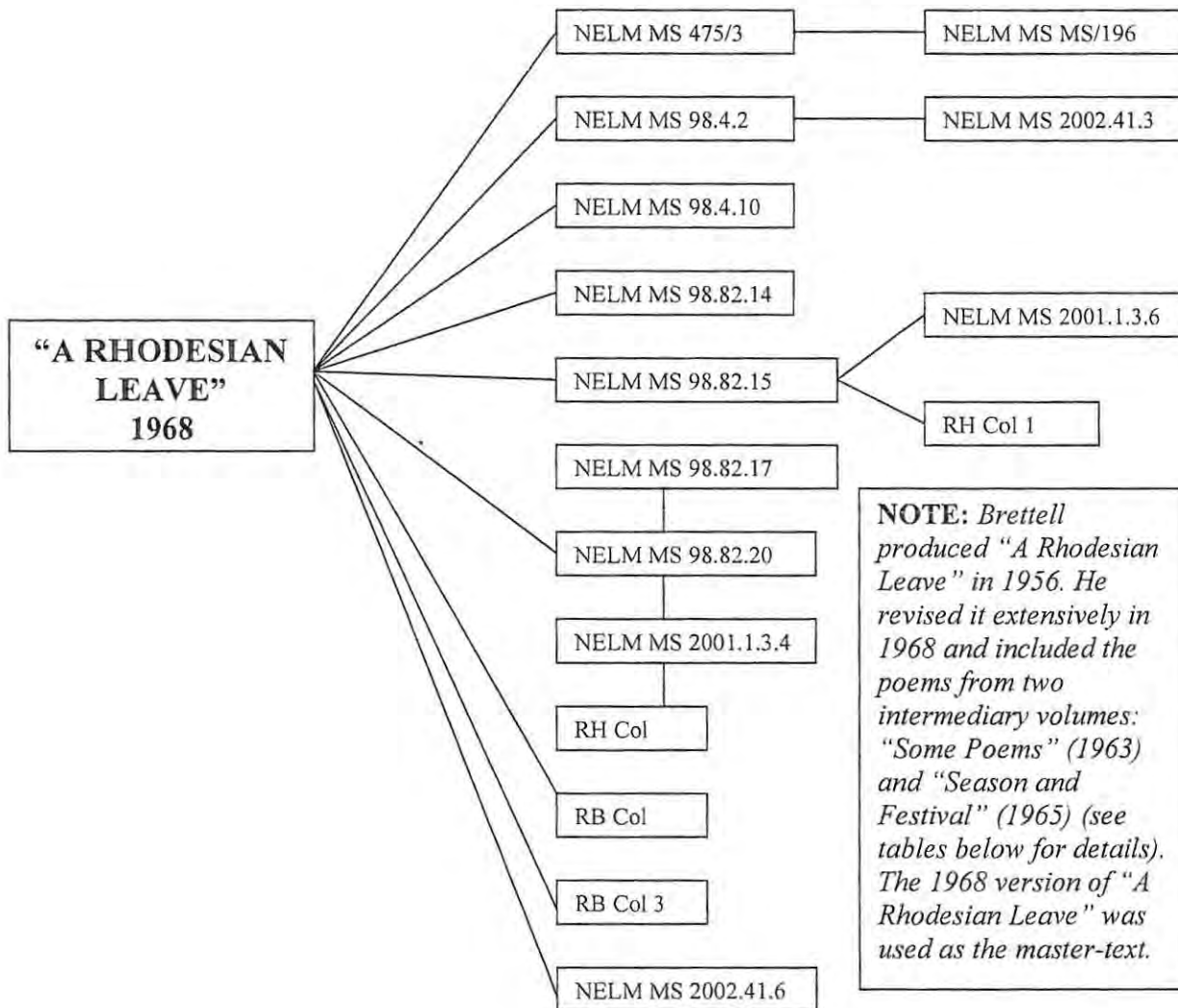
**RB Col 3:** Untitled privately produced, illustrated, typescript booklet 21,7cm x 16,8cm containing poems: “Crowned Cranes”, “Locust Birds”, “Wagtail”, “Dikkop”.

Comparative table displaying Brettell's selection and ordering of the poems  
in *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*.

NELM MS 475/26	NELM MS 475/27(a) = NELM MS 475/27(b)	NELM MS 475/28	NELM MS 2002.41.6 and RB Col 3
<i>Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian 1950</i>	<i>Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian 1950</i>	<del>Antelope and Mad Baboon</del> * <i>Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian 1950</i>	
<b>I. African</b>	<b>I. African</b>	<b>I. African</b>	
Maronda Mashanu War and Peace Antelope and Mad Baboon Vox Populi Donkey Cart Locust Birds Heard at Inyanga From Africa: 1941 Umsasa "L'Après-midi d'un Faune" No Prayer for Rain	Maronda Mashanu War and Peace Antelope and Mad Baboon Vox Populi Donkey Cart Locust Birds Heard at Inyanga From Africa: 1941 Umsasa "L'Après-midi d'un Faune" No Prayer for Rain Autumn Song Christmas Carol	Maronda Mashanu War and Peace Antelope and Mad Baboon Vox Populi Donkey Cart Locust Birds Heard at Inyanga From Africa: 1941 Umsasa "L'Après-midi d'un Faune" No Prayer for Rain Autumn Song Christmas Carol	Crowned Cranes Locust Birds Wagtail Dikkop
	<b>II. Occasional</b>	<b>II. Occasional</b>	
	Books and Toys Christmas Tree Bougainvilia	Books and Toys Christmas Tree Bougainvilia <del>Expecting Peace</del> *	
	<b>III. Personal</b>	<b>III. Personal</b>	
	Flower of the Clove Departure Platform In the Train Cophetua To an Old Man, Dying Wind at the Funeral Frost Fancy's Knell The Hill	Flower of the Clove Departure Platform In the Train Cophetua To an Old Man, Dying Wind at the Funeral Frost Fancy's Knell The Hill	
	<b>IV. Trivial</b>	<b>IV. Trivial</b>	
	Birthday of a Sloth Ease Spring Song Song Sanctuary in Africa To Rosemary Wood-smoke Dwarfs' Chorus Escape by Water Epilogue: No Road	Birthday of a Sloth Ease Spring Song <del>End of Year Returns</del> * Song Sanctuary in Africa To Rosemary Wood-smoke Dwarfs' Chorus <del>The Lamplight</del> * Escape by Water Epilogue: No Road	
		* <i>The original name for NELM MS 475/28 was emended and the poems "Expecting Peace", "End of Year Returns" and "The Lamplight" were removed and their titles struck through in the index.</i>	



**“A RHODESIAN LEAVE”**



**NOTE:** *Brettell produced “A Rhodesian Leave” in 1956. He revised it extensively in 1968 and included the poems from two intermediary volumes: “Some Poems” (1963) and “Season and Festival” (1965) (see tables below for details). The 1968 version of “A Rhodesian Leave” was used as the master-text.*

NELM MS 475/3: privately produced typescript edition titled: “A Rhodesian Leave”, measuring 25,9cm x 20,6cm. Provenance history unknown.

NELM MS MS/196: untitled, photostatic copy of NELM MS 475/3, consisting of sixty-one typescript loose leaves measuring 25,2cm x 20,4cm. Provenance history unknown.

NELM MS 98.4.2: machine-copy<sup>87</sup> from the same source as NELM 2002.41.3 titled: “A Rhodesian Leave”. NELM MS 98.4.2 is a privately produced, illustrated typescript edition measuring 25,8cm x 20,9cm, inscribed: “To Douglas Livingstone // with best wishes // NH Brettell // 1968.” Enclosed in this volume is a copy of

<sup>87</sup> Brettell built a press, similar to a mimeograph press, for reproducing his poetry. As mimeograph refers to a make of duplicating machines, where mimeograph-like duplicates of Brettell’s poems exist, these are described as “machine-copies” to distinguish them from photostatic copies.

Livingstone's letter of thanks for the volume and a copy of a three-stanza Housman poem in Brettell's handwriting. Transcriptions of both are reproduced below.

10, IX. 68<sup>88</sup>

Dear NHB

Thank you very much for your collection A Rhodesian Leave. It is beautifully bound & the painting frontispiece is nothing short of superb. As to the contents: well, it is true I have seen many of them, but there are others that are new to me. It is good to have your choice personally bound like this, & I will hold it among those very few real treasures I possess. Thank you. And I hope you are still writing.

...

Dipping into A Rhodesian Leave here & there, you show me once again: you are still the far-striding effortless-seeming master of us all on this continent. I hope & pray you will consider taking steps anent another collection. This work is too good for a privileged few.

My Best Wishes

Sincerely

[Ed: no signature]<sup>89</sup>

I hoed and trenched and weeded,  
And took the flowers to fair:  
I brought them home unheeded—  
The line was not the wear.

So up and down I sow them,  
For lads like me to find,  
When I shall be below them,  
A dead man out of mind.

Some seed the birds devour,  
And some the season mars;  
But here and there will flower  
The solitary stars

A.E. Housman

who has said it all  
so much better.

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<sup>88</sup> 10 September 1968.

<sup>89</sup> There is no signature as this is Livingstone's copy of the letter and is not the original.

**NELM MS 98.4.10:** [Hugh Finn's compilation, from various sources, of Brettell poems for his projected "Collected Poems of N.H. Brettell". This was never published.] photostatic copy of seventy-one typescript loose leaves measuring 29,6cm x 20,8cm. The section that makes up "A Rhodesian Leave" contains photostatic copies of poems in NELM MS 98.82.15, NELM MS 98.82.18, NELM MS 98.82.20, NELM MS 98.82.26.4, and poems published in *Season and Pretext*, *Rhodesian Poetry* (4), *Poetry Review Salisbury* (1), (3), *P.E.N 1960: New South African Writing and a Survey of Fifty Years of Creative Achievement* as well as copies of poems whose source is unknown. It is possible that Hugh Finn typed some of these.

In NELM MS 98.4.10 Finn adhered to the selection and ordering of the poems in Brettell's 1956 volume of "A Rhodesian Leave"; Brettell, however, republished "A Rhodesian Leave" in 1968, including poems from two subsequent volumes: "Some Poems" also titled "The Owl and the Ivy", and "Season and Festival". While Finn subdivided NELM MS 98.4.10 to reflect Brettell's different privately produced volumes, i.e. the 1956 "A Rhodesian Leave", the 1963 "Some Poems" and the 1965 "Season and Festival" this ignores Brettell's 1968 selection and ordering. The latter has been observed in this edition.

**NELM MS 98.82.14:** typescript of fifty-one loose leaves with handwritten emendations by Hugh Finn titled: "Season and Pretext" measuring 25,4cm x 20,4cm. This was Hugh Finn's copy for the volume of the same name edited by Finn and published in 1977. *Season and Pretext* is a selection of Brettell's poems from 1950-1977.

**NELM MS 98.82.15:** privately produced, signed and dated, illustrated typescript edition titled "Season and Festival", measuring 39cm x 25,2cm, dated 1965. The volume contains a water-colour illustration by Brettell and four lino-cuts by his daughter Rosemary Brettell as well as handwritten emendations, but it is unclear if these are Brettell's or those of Hugh or Betty Finn, the recipients of the edition.

**NELM MS 98.82.17:** privately produced, signed and dated, illustrated machine-copy volume titled "The Owl and The Ivy", measuring 31,3cm x 20,0cm. It contains handwritten emendations by Brettell and is inscribed "Hugh & Betty Finn // with much gratitude for everything // Noel", dated 1964. This edition is a machine copy from the same source as NELM MS 98.82.20.

**NELM MS 98.82.20:** undated, privately produced, signed, illustrated machine-copy titled: "Some Poems", measuring 37,3cm x 24,8cm. The handwritten emendations are by either Brettell or Hugh Finn, or both.

**NELM MS 2001.1.3.4:** privately produced, signed, illustrated machine-copy edition titled "Some Poems 1963" measuring 33,3cm x 20,4cm. The handwritten emendations are by Brettell and the volume is accompanied by a card inscribed: "To Doug Livingstone, who has gone much // further // with my best wishes, N.H Brettell // December 1963". This edition is a machine copy from the same source as NELM MS 98.82.20.

**NELM MS 2001.1.3.6:** privately produced, signed, illustrated typescript machine-copy edition titled "Season and Festival // Some Poems — 1965", measuring 32,5cm x 20,2cm, inscribed "To Douglas Livingstone // with my best wishes // NH Brettell" and accompanied by a note saying: "With my best wishes, // Writing soon, I hope. // NHB". This volume contains a water-colour illustration by Brettell and four lino-cuts by his daughter Rosemary Brettell as well as handwritten emendations by Brettell. This edition is a machine-copy of NELM MS 98.82.15.

**NELM 2002.41.3:** photostat copy of a volume titled "A Rhodesian Leave", currently in the possession of Dr John Brettell, consisting of sixty three loose leaves measuring 21cm x 29,7.

**NELM MS 2002.41.6:** four photostatic, typescript, loose leaves measuring 21cm x 29,7cm containing poems: "Crowned Cranes", "Locust Birds", "Wagtail", "Dikkop". Illustrated original is in the possession of Dr John Brettell.

**RB Col:** privately produced, machine-copy edition titled: "A Rhodesian Leave" measuring 24,5cm x 20cm. The edition is inscribed: "Love to Rosemary // Daddy. // Riversdale 1956". This volume is currently in the possession of Ms Rosemary Brettell.

**RB Col 3:** Untitled privately produced, illustrated, typescript booklet measuring 21,7cm x 16,8cm containing poems: "Crowned Cranes", "Locust Birds", "Wagtail", "Dikkop".

**RH Col:** a privately produced, signed, illustrated machine-copy edition titled: "Some Poems 1963" measuring 32,6cm x 20,4cm. This edition is a machine-copy from the same source as NELM MS 98.82.20. RH Col is currently in the possession of Rev. Richard Holderness.

**RH Col 1:** privately produced, signed and dated, illustrated machine-copy titled: "Season and Festival — Some Poems — 1965", measuring 32,6cm x 20,5cm and inscribed: "Richard & Leonie // Holderness // with best wishes // Noel Brettell // 1966." This volume contains a water-colour illustration by Brettell and four lino-cuts by his daughter Rosemary Brettell, as well as handwritten emendations by Brettell. This edition is a machine copy of NELM MS 98.82.15. RH Col 1 is currently edition in the possession of Rev. Richard Holderness.

*Comparative table displaying Brettell's selection and ordering of the poems in the 1956 volumes of "A Rhodesian Leave"*

<p><b>RB Col</b></p> <p>"A Rhodesian Leave"</p> <p>Threnody in Spring</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>On Leave</b></p> <p>Southern Cross and Charlie's Wain Columbus On Clent Hill Cataclysm Winter's Tale Chalton Mill Harvest at Horsebridge Leaving in September</p> <p>To Walter de la Mare To Eva Air Mail A Chinese Screen</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Return</b></p> <p>Elephant Giraffes Zimbabwe African Afternoon Walking in Woods Expecting Peace At Home From a Hotel Window Outside Kimberley Early Rain Early Hour Transit The Children Schoolmaster End of Year Returns Window in Between Wind and an Eagle Owl Hesitations : I Hesitations : II Hesitations : III After Published Verse</p>	<p><b>NELM MS 98.4.10</b></p> <p>"A Rhodesian Leave"</p> <p>Threnody in Spring</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>On Leave</b></p> <p>Southern Cross and Charlie's Wain Columbus On Clent Hill Cataclysm Winter's Tale Chalton Mill Harvest at Horsebridge Leaving England in September</p> <p>To Walter de la Mare To Eva Air Mail A Chinese Screen</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Return</b></p> <p>Elephant Giraffes Zimbabwe African Afternoon Walking in Woods Expecting Peace At Home From a Hotel Window Outside Kimberley Early Rain Early Hour Transit The Children Schoolmaster End of Year Returns Window in Between Wind and an Eagle Owl Hesitations : I Hesitations : II Hesitations : III After Published Verse</p>
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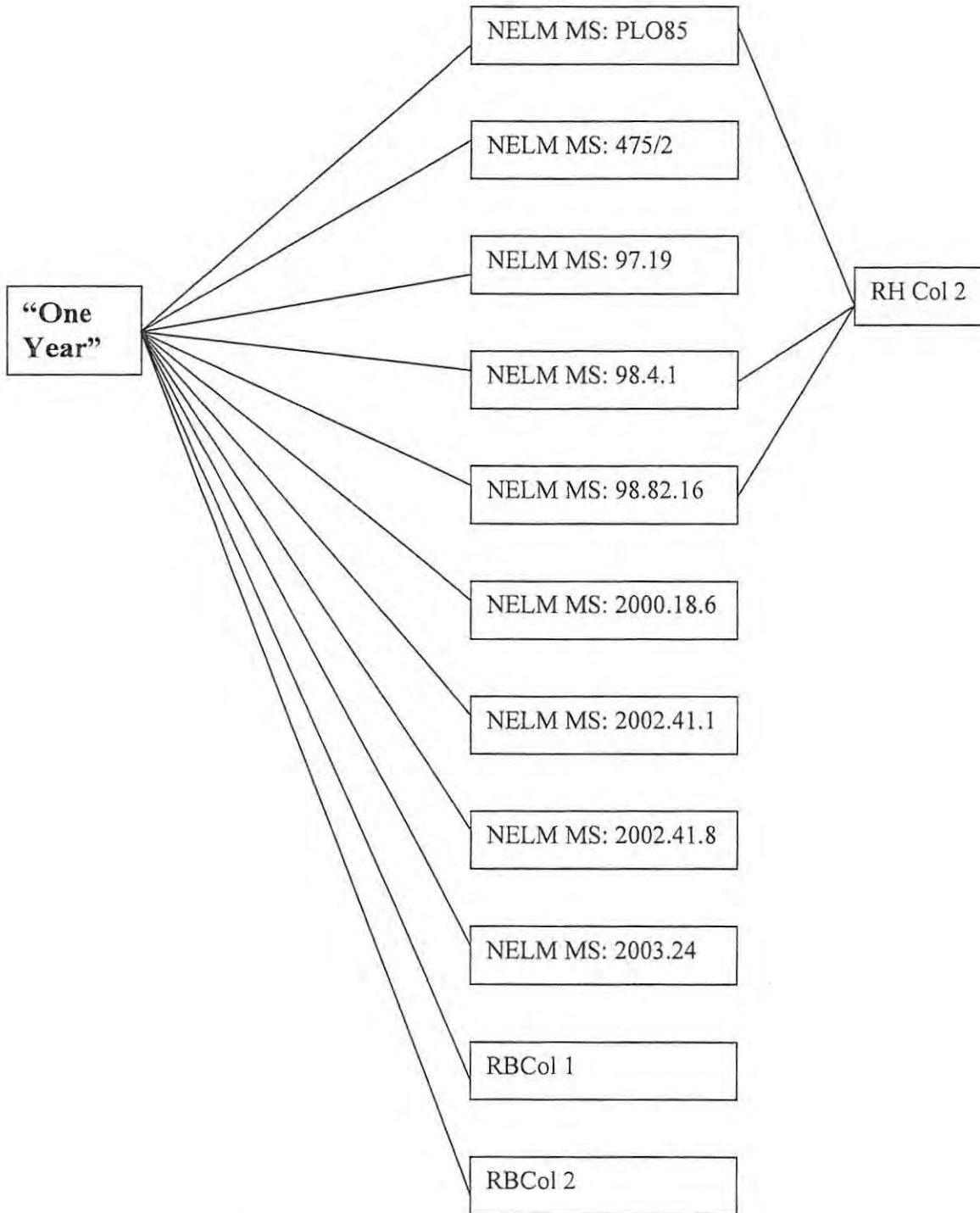
Comparative table displaying Brettell's selection, ordering and illustration of the poems in "Some Poems" and in "Season and Festival". The 1968 volume of "A Rhodesian Leave" included poems from these two previously printed collections. To view illustrations, see accompanying CD-Rom.

NELM MS 98.82.20	NELM MS 2001.1.3.4	RH Col	NELM MS 98.82.17	NELM MS 98.82.15 = NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 & RH.Col 1 *
"Some Poems" 1963	"Some Poems" 1963	"Some Poems" 1963	"The Owl and The Ivy" 1964	"Season and Festival: Some Poems" 1965
		<i>Illustration: Untitled watercolour of a mountainside and two antelope.</i>	<i>Illustration: Watercolour "The Gomo // Bonda"</i>	<i>Illustration: Watercolour: "White Harrier"</i>
The Owl and The Ivy	The Owl and The Ivy	The Owl and The Ivy	The Owl and The Ivy	Epiphany 1964 New Year Spring Song African Student No Road to Xanadu
<i>Illustration: Untitled lino-cut of a bird of prey by Rosemary Brettell.</i>				<i>Illustration: lino-cut by Rosemary Brettell titled: Summer</i>
On an Inyanga Road	On an Inyanga Road	On an Inyanga Road	On an Inyanga Road	Quartet: Ex Libris: I. Summer
	<i>Illustration: Watercolour "Rukotso"</i>			<i>Illustration: lino-cut by Rosemary Brettell titled: Autumn</i>
The Cabbage Seller	The Cabbage Seller	The Cabbage Seller	The Cabbage Seller	II. Autumn, after drought
			<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Evening ~ // Dziwa, Bonda"</i>	<i>Illustration: lino-cut by Rosemary Brettell titled: Winter</i>
The Eavesdropper Birth in Bethlehem	The Eavesdropper Birth in Bethlehem	The Eavesdropper Birth in Bethlehem	The Eavesdropper Birth in Bethlehem	III. Winter
<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Rukotso"</i>				<i>Illustration: lino-cut by Rosemary Brettell titled: Spring</i>
Weathercock Maronda Mashanu Revisited in time of crisis	Fantasia in Pseudo- Tudor The Nameless Bird Weathercock Maronda Mashanu Revisited in time of crisis	Fantasia in Pseudo- Tudor The Nameless Bird Weathercock Maronda Mashanu Revisited in time of crisis	Fantasia in Pseudo- Tudor The Nameless Bird Weathercock Maronda Mashanu Revisited in time of crisis	IV. Spring Wagtail Dikkop Crowned Cranes The White Harrier
			<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled "Kaffirboom"</i>	
A Boy is Born Duiker Doe Fantasia in Pseudo- Tudor The Nameless Bird	A Boy is Born	A Boy is Born	A Boy is Born	* While the texts of the poems in NELM MS 98.82.15 and RH Col 1 are the same the accompanying illustrations vary. I have only had access to a photostatic copy of the original of NELM MS 2001.1.3.6 in which the afore mentioned illustrations do not appear. I have been unable to establish what, if any, illustrations appear in this volume.
<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Meseri Mashanu, Bonda"</i>	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled "Mseri Mashanu // Bonda"</i>			
Song for Severn Song for Apples Song for Silver Skid	Song for Severn Song for Apples Song for Silver Skid	Song for Severn Song for Apples Song for Silver Skid	Song for Severn Song for Apples Song for Silver Skid	
			<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Wildcat"</i>	
Hoopoe	Duiker Doe Hoopoe	Duiker Doe Hoopoe	Duiker Doe Hoopoe	

Comparative table displaying Brettell's selection, ordering and illustration of the poems in the 1968 volumes of "A Rhodesian Leave", and in the draft for his edition *Season and Pretext*. To view illustration, see accompanying CD-Rom.

<p>NELM MS 475/3 = NELM MS MS/196</p> <p>"A Rhodesian Leave"</p> <p>Threnody in Spring</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>On Leave</b></p> <p>Southern Cross and Charles' Wain Columbus On Clent Hill Cataclysm A Winter's Tale Harvest at Horsebridge Chalton Mill Leaving in September</p> <p>To Walter de la Mare To Eva A Chinese Screen Air Mail</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Return</b></p> <p>On an Inyanga Road No Road to Xanadu The Eavesdropper African Student The Cabbage Seller Outside Kimberley From a Hotel Window Walking in Woods African Afternoon Fantasia in Pseudo-Tudor Weathercock Maronda Mashanu Revisited</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Owl and The Ivy</b></p> <p>The Owl and the Ivy Elephant Giraffes Duiker Doe Hoopoe Wagtail Dikkop Crowned Cranes The Nameless Bird The White Harrier</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Season and Festival</b></p> <p>New Year Spring Song: for a Hypertensive Quartet: Ex Libris: I. Summer II. Autumn III. Winter IV. Spring</p> <p>Epiphany 1965 A Boy is Born</p> <p>Song for Severn Song for Apples Song for Silver Window in Between Skid The Children Schoolmaster End of Year Returns Wind and an Eagle Owl After Published Verse</p>	<p>NELM MS 98.4.2 = NELM MS 2002.41.3</p> <p>"A Rhodesian Leave"</p> <p><i>Illustration: Watercolour: of two bushbuck (only appears in MS 98.4.2).</i></p> <p>Threnody in Spring</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>On Leave</b></p> <p>Southern Cross and Charles' Wain Columbus On Clent Hill Cataclysm A Winter's Tale Harvest at Horsebridge Chalton Mill Leaving in September</p> <p>To Walter de la Mare To Eva A Chinese Screen Air Mail</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Return</b></p> <p>On an Inyanga Road No Road to Xanadu The Eavesdropper African Student The Cabbage Seller Outside Kimberley From a Hotel Window Walking in Woods African Afternoon Fantasia in Pseudo-Tudor Weathercock Maronda Mashanu Revisited</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Owl and The Ivy</b></p> <p>The Owl and the Ivy Elephant Giraffes Duiker Doe Hoopoe Wagtail Dikkop Crowned Cranes The Nameless Bird The White Harrier</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Season and Festival</b></p> <p>New Year Spring Song: for a Hypertensive Quartet: Ex Libris: I. Summer II. Autumn III. Winter IV. Spring</p> <p>Epiphany 1965 A Boy is Born</p> <p>Song for Severn Song for Apples Song for Silver Window in Between Skid The Children Schoolmaster End of Year Returns Wind and an Eagle Owl After Published Verse</p>	<p>NELM MS 98.82.14</p> <p>[ms for <i>Season and Pretext</i> (published 1977)]</p> <p>Threnody in Spring</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>On Leave</b></p> <p>Columbus Cataclysm Harvest at Horsebridge Chalton Mill</p> <p>Air Mail</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Return</b></p> <p>No Road to Xanadu Eavesdropper The Cabbage Seller African Student Outside Kimberley Weathercock Ironworkers Kwashiorkor The Children Schoolmaster</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Beasts and Birds</b></p> <p>Elephant Giraffes Duiker Doe Antbear Hoopoe Wagtail Crowned Cranes The White Harrier Mantis and Moth</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Season and Pretext</b></p> <p>New Year Quartet: Ex Libris: I. Summer II. Autumn, after drought III. Winter IV. Spring</p> <p>A Boy is Born Mother and Child Song for Severn Song for Apples Window in Between Skid Deri-deri Felled Wattle Wind and an Eagle Owl Envoi: After published Verse</p>	<p>NELM MS 2002.41.6 and RB Col 3</p> <p>Crowned Cranes Locust Birds Wagtail Dikkop</p>
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“ONE YEAR”



NELM MS PL085: privately produced illustrated typescript and carbon copy edition titled “One Year”, measuring 29cm x 21,7cm and inscribed: “Guy Butler //





**NELM MS 2002.41.1:** photostatic copy of typescript edition of “One Year” consisting of twenty-five loose leaves measuring 21cm x 29,7cm. The original is currently in the possession of Dr John Brettell.

**NELM MS 2002.41.8:** photostatic copy of a typescript edition “Flower o’ The Clove” consisting of twenty-seven loose leaves measuring 29,7cm x 21cm. The original is currently in the possession of Dr John Brettell.

**NELM MS 2003.24:** privately produced, signed photostatic copy of typescript, illustrated edition titled “One Year”, measuring 20,8cm x 17cm. Provenance unknown.

**RB Col 1:** privately printed, typescript, illustrated edition titled “One Year”, measuring 28,8cm x 21,2cm, inscribed “To Rosemary with much love from your father, Christmas 1970.” This volume is currently in the possession of Ms Rosemary Brettell.

**RB Col 2:** privately printed, typescript, illustrated edition titled “One Year”, measuring 38cm x 25,5cm, accompanied by a note to Rosemary Brettell: “This was made for love of your mother; I’d rather you had it than anybody else. I think it has some of my most successful amateur attempts at water colour and the string of sonnets was just for us two—never been published”. The volume is inscribed: “For my wife. // especially the sonnets // NH Brettell”. This volume is currently in the possession of Ms Rosemary Brettell.

**RH Col 2:** privately produced, illustrated, signed and dated typescript edition titled “One Year”, measuring 28,1cm x 20,8cm, and inscribed: “Richard and Leonie Holderness // with best wishes // Noel H Brettell // Christmas 1970”. This volume is currently in the possession of Rev. Richard Holderness. Volume RH Col 2 contains carbon copies of poems in volumes NELM MS PLO85, NELM MS 98.4.1 and NELM 98.82.16, which suggests that these four editions were compiled at approximately the same time. For details on the origins of poems in volume RH Col 2 see variant information accompanying text.

Comparative tables displaying Brettell's selection, ordering and illustration of the poems in "One Year" and in his volumes "Not Time's Fool" and "Flower of the Clove" which included poems from "One Year". To view illustrations, see accompanying CD-Rom.

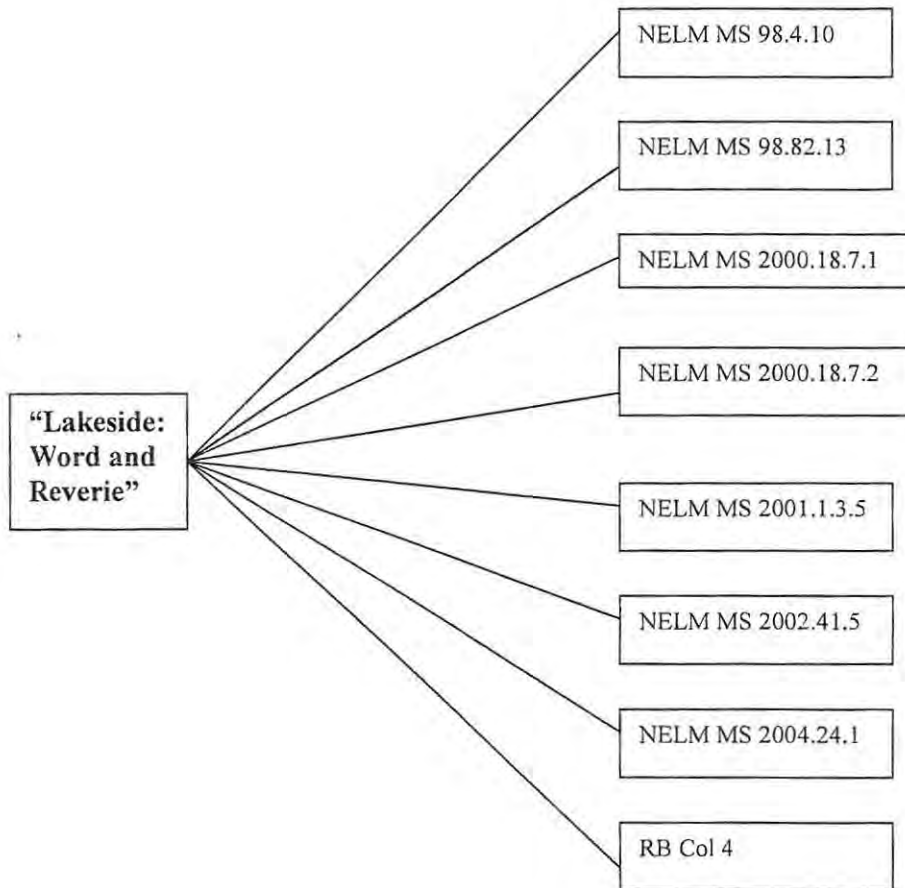
NELM MS PLO85	NELM MS 475/2	NELM MS 97.19	NELM MS 2002.41.8
<b>"One Year"</b>	<b>"One Year"</b>	<b>"Not Time's Fool"</b>	<b>"Flower of the clove"</b>
<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Winter Gutu Inyanga"</i>			
January	January	<b>I: One Year</b> January	<b>One Year</b> January
Mantis and Moth	Mantis and Moth	February	February
February	February	March	March
Cosmos	Cosmos	April	April
March	March	May	May
Cuckoo	Cuckoo	June	June
April	April	July	July
Traveller's Joy	Traveller's Joy	August	August
May	May	September	September
Ironworkers	Felled Wattle	October	October
June	June	November	November
Felled Wattle	Ironworkers	December	December
July	July		Nocturne
Antbear	Antbear	<b>II: Threnody with some echoes</b>	<b>Country into Town</b>
August	August	Sparrow	Sparrow
In the Wattle	In the Wattle	Sunset	Sunset
September	September	Spitting Cobra	Spitting Cobra
The Summit	The Summit	Thrush	Thrush
October	October	Fritz	Wild Orchids
Deri-Deri	Deri-Deri	Wild Orchids	Cloud
November	November	Cloud	Dung
Kwashiorkor	Kwashiorkor	Dung	Hengrave Hall
December	December	Hengrave Hall	Shadow Show
Mother and Child	Mother and Child	Shadow Show	Cloud
		Nocturne	Fritz
		Song by Owl-Light	Nocturne
		Air Line	Song by Owl-Light
		Cuckoo	Air Line
		Itchen Estuary: Bitterne	Cuckoo
		Severn: Above Bevere Lock	Itchen Estuary: Bitterne
		<i>Photostat of picture titled "Helen pouring wine for Priam"</i>	Severn: Above Bevere Lock
		Attic Shape	

<p>NELM MS 98.4.1</p> <p><b>"One Year" 1970</b></p> <p><i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Winter Gutu // Inyangani"</i></p> <p>January Mantis and Moth February Cosmos March Cuckoo April Felled Wattle May Traveller's Joy June Ironworkers</p> <p>July Antbear August In the Wattle September The Summit October Deri-Deri November Kwashiorkor</p> <p>December Mother and Child</p>	<p>NELM MS 98.82.16</p> <p><b>"One Year" (Christmas) 1970</b></p> <p><i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "The Watchers // Reenen Ridge, Bonda"</i></p> <p>January Mantis and Moth February Cosmos March Cuckoo April Traveller's Joy May Felled Wattle June Ironworkers</p> <p><i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Winter Gutu - . Inyangani"</i></p> <p>July Antbear August In the Wattle September The Summit October Deri-Deri November Kwashiorkor</p> <p><i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Madonna and Child' Rocks // Honde Valley"</i></p> <p>December Mother and Child</p>	<p>RH.Col</p> <p><b>"One Year"</b></p> <p><i>Illustration: watercolour titled: "Winter Gutu // Inyangani"</i></p> <p>January Mantis and Moth February Cosmos March Cuckoo April Traveller's Joy May Ironworkers June Felled Wattle</p> <p>July Antbear August In the Wattle September The Summit October Deri-Deri November Kwashiorkor</p> <p>December Mother and Child</p>	<p>NELM MS 2000.18.6</p> <p><b>"One Year". 1970</b></p> <p>January February March April May June</p> <p>July August September October November</p> <p>December</p>
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<p>NELM MS 2002.41.1</p> <p><b>"One Year"</b></p> <p>January Mantis and Moth</p> <p>February Cosmos</p>	<p>NELM MS 2003.24</p> <p><b>"One Year" 1970</b></p> <p><i>Illustration: Untitled watercolour depicting a man and woman on a hill.</i></p> <p>January</p> <p>February</p>	<p>RB COL 1</p> <p><b>"One Year" (Christmas) 1970</b></p> <p><i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "The Watchers // Reenen Ridge, Bonda",</i></p> <p>January Mantis and Moth</p> <p>February Cosmos</p>	<p>RB COL 2</p> <p><b>"One Year"</b></p> <p><i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Reenen Ridge, Bonda".</i></p> <p>January Mantis and Moth</p> <p><i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Elephant Rock // Honde Valley".</i></p> <p>February Cosmos</p>
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NELM MS 2002.41.1 <i>Continued</i>	NELM MS 2003.24 <i>Continued</i>	RB COL 1 <i>Continued</i>	RB COL 2 <i>Continued</i>
March Cuckoo	March	March Cuckoo	March Cuckoo  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Cuckoo".</i>
April Traveller's Joy	April	April Traveller's Joy	April Traveller's Joy  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Pine Wood // with // Ground Orchids".</i>
May Felled Wattle	May	May Ironworkers  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: Winter Guti // Inyangani.</i>	May Felled Wattle  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Rukotso // from Nyahokwe".</i>
June Ironworkers	June	June Felled Wattle	June Ironworkers  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Winter Guti // Inyanga".</i>
July Antbear	July	July Antbear	July Antbear  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Duiker in the Wattle".</i>
August In the Wattle	August	August In the Wattle  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Duiker in the Wattle".</i>	August In the Wattle:  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Spring Trees // Reenen".</i>
September The Summit	September	September The Summit	September The Summit  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Pungwe Gorge and // Inyangani".</i>
October Deri-Deri	October	October Deri-Deri	October Deri-Deri  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Sunset // Dziwa".</i>
November Kwashiorkor	November	November Kwashiorkor  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Madonna and Child' Rocks // Honde Valley".</i>	November Kwashiorkor  <i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Madonna and Child' Rocks // Honde Valley".</i>
December Mother and Child	December	December Mother and Child	December Mother and Child

## “LAKESIDE: WORD AND REVERIE”



**NELM MS 98.4.10:** [Hugh Finn’s compilation, from various sources, of Brettell poems for his “Collected Poems of N.H. Brettell”. The collection was never published] photostatic copy of nine typescript loose leaves measuring 29,8cm x 21cm. The whereabouts of the original are unknown, but it is possible that an unknown person, possibly Hugh Finn, typed the poems in the original of NELM MS 98.4.10 from an unknown source, as the typeface in this version of the collection is not that of Brettell’s typewriter. The poems are dated 1975.

**NELM MS 98.82.13:** privately produced, illustrated, signed and dated typescript carbon copy edition titled “Lakeside // word and reverie” measuring 24,8cm x 20,1cm, dated 1975. Donated to NELM by Mrs Betty Finn.

**NELM MS 2000.18.7.1:** privately produced typescript edition titled: “Lakeside // word and reverie” measuring 30cm x 21,6cm, dated 1975. Donated to NELM by Dr John Brettell.

**NELM MS 2000.18.7.2:** typescript carbon copy titled “Lakeside // word and reverie” measuring 25,4cm x 20,6cm, dated 1976. “Envoi” is a carbon copy of a poem in NELM MS: 2001.1.3.5. Donated to NELM by Dr John Brettell.

**NELM MS 2001.1.3.5:** privately produced, illustrated, signed and dated typescript carbon copy edition titled “Lakeside // word and reverie”, measuring 24,8cm x 20cm, dated 1975. This volume was originally sent to Douglas Livingstone.

**NELM MS 2002.41.5:** photostatic copy of a typescript edition titled: “Lakeside—Word and Reverie” consisting of five loose leaves measuring 29,7cm x 21cm. The original is currently in the possession of Dr John Brettell.

**NELM MS 2004.24.1:** privately produced, illustrated, signed and dated typescript edition titled “Lakeside // word and reverie”, measuring 20,3cm x 16,3cm, dated 1976. This volume was originally sent to Guy Butler.

**RB Col 4:** privately produced; illustrated typescript edition titled “Lakeside // word and reverie” measuring 35,5cm x 28,7cm and accompanied by an Easter greeting card and annotations (see commentary to “Lakeside: Word and Reverie”). The original is currently in the possession of Ms Rosemary Brettell.

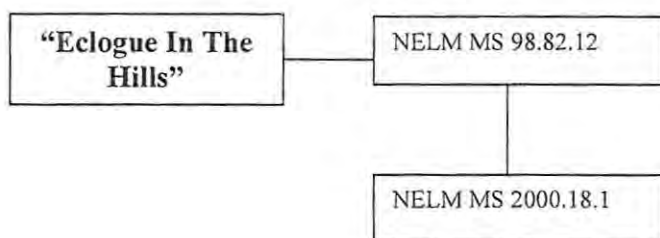
*Comparative tables displaying Brettell's selection, ordering and illustration of the poems in “Lakeside: Word and Reverie”. To view illustrations, see accompanying CD-Rom.*

NELM MS 98. 4. 10	NELM MS 98.82.13	NELM MS 2000.18.7.1	NELM MS 2000.18.7.2
“Lakeside: Word and Reverie: Sebakwe and Ngesi 1975”	“Lakeside: Word and Reverie”	“Lakeside: Word and Reverie”	“Lakeside: Word and Reverie”
	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: “Sebakwe”</i>		
I. “I lie and search the wind	I. “I lie and search the wind	I. “I lie and search the wind	I. “I lie and search the wind
II. “That boy the waters of Winander knew”	II. “That boy the waters of Winander knew”	II. “That boy the waters of Winander knew”	II. “That boy the waters of Winander knew”
III. “The concrete stands across the gorge”	III. “The concrete stands across the gorge”	III. “The concrete stands across the gorge”	III. “The concrete stands across the gorge”
IV. “Against the pallid front of dawn”	IV. “Against the pallid front of dawn”	IV. “Against the pallid front of dawn”	IV. “Against the pallid front of dawn”
	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: “Kudu Bay, Sebakwe”</i>		
Envoi: for my wife	Envoi: for my wife	Envoi: for my wife	Envoi: for my wife

NELM MS 2001.1.3.5	NELM MS 2002.41.5	NELM MS 2004.24.1	RB Col 4
<b>"Lakeside: Word and Reverie"</b>	<b>"Lakeside:Word and Reverie"</b>	<b>"Lakeside:Word and Reverie"</b>	<b>"Lakeside:Word and Reverie Sebakwe and Ngesi"</b>
<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Sebakwe"</i>		<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Sebakwe"</i>	
I. "I lie and search the wind"	I. "I lie and search the wind"	I. "I lie and search the wind"	I. "I lie and search the wind"
			<i>Illustration: Untitled watercolour of a lake.</i>
II. "That boy the waters of Winander knew"	II. "That boy the waters of Winander knew"	II. "That boy the waters of Winander knew"	II. "That boy the waters of Winander knew"
			<i>Illustration: Untitled watercolour of two kudu next to water.</i>
III. "The concrete stands across the gorge"	III. "The concrete stands across the gorge"	III. "The concrete stands across the gorge"	III. "The concrete stands across the gorge"
			<i>Illustration: Untitled watercolour of water cascading over a dam wall.</i>
IV. "Against the pallid front of dawn"	IV. "Against the pallid front of dawn"	IV. "Against the pallid front of dawn"	IV. "Against the pallid front of dawn"
			<i>Illustration: Untitled watercolour of birds in flight over water.</i>
Envoi: for my wife	Envoi: for my wife	Envoi: for my wife	Envoi: for my wife
			<i>Illustration: Untitled watercolour of a kudu next to water.</i>

\* \* \*

### "ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS"



NELM MS 98.82.12: twelve typescript, loose leaves titled "Eclogue in the Hills", measuring 25,3cm x 20,3cm and containing handwritten emendations by Brettell. This collection was originally sent to Hugh and Betty Finn.

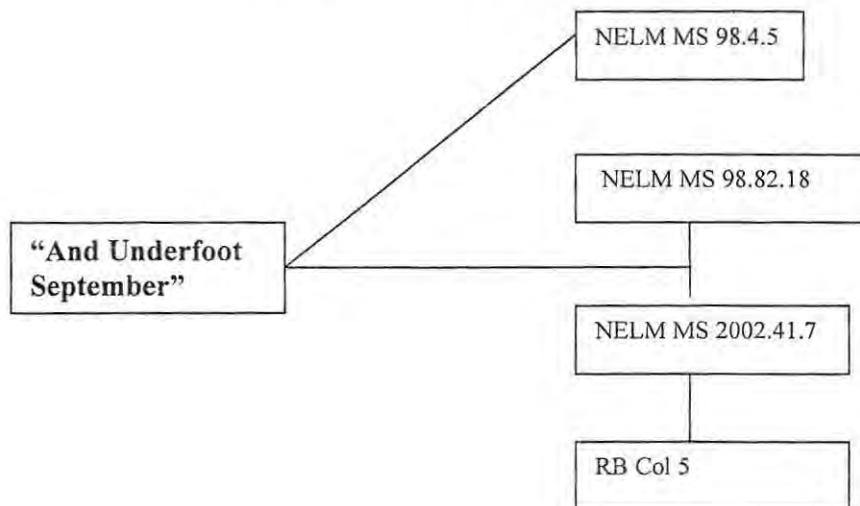


**NELM MS 2000.18.1:** twelve typescript, loose leaves, measuring 25,4cm x 20,4cm. NELM MS 2000.18.1 is a carbon copy of NELM MS 98.82.12, but is untitled. Donated to NELM by Dr John Brettell.

**NOTE:** *No comparative table for the poems in "Eclogue in the Hills" is provided as there are only two extant manuscript copies of this collection, of which NELM MS 2000.18.1 is a carbon copy of NELM MS 98.82.12. There are no illustrations in either and the ordering of the poems is the same in both.*

\* \* \*

**"AND UNDERFOOT SEPTEMBER"**



**NELM MS 98.4.5:** privately produced, illustrated typescript edition titled "Side-Gate and Stile", measuring 30,5cm x 22,2cm. The poems in "And Underfoot September" form a subsection of "Side-Gate and Stile". This copy of "Side-Gate and Stile" seems to be a typesetter's copy as there are character-graphic codes in the margins indicating "italics" etc. Provenance unknown.

**NELM MS 98.82.18:** privately produced, illustrated, signed and dated carbon-copy edition titled "And Underfoot September", measuring 29,6cm x 20,5cm and dated October 1977. This volume contains handwritten emendations by Brettell and was originally sent to Hugh and Betty Finn. This is a carbon copy from the same source as NELM MS 2002.41.7 and RB Col 5.

**NELM MS 2002.41.7:** photostatic copy of typescript edition "And Underfoot September", containing twenty-two loose leaves measuring 29,7cm x 21cm. The original is currently in the possession of Dr John Brettell. The original is a carbon copy from the same source as NELM MS 98.82.18 and RB Col 5.

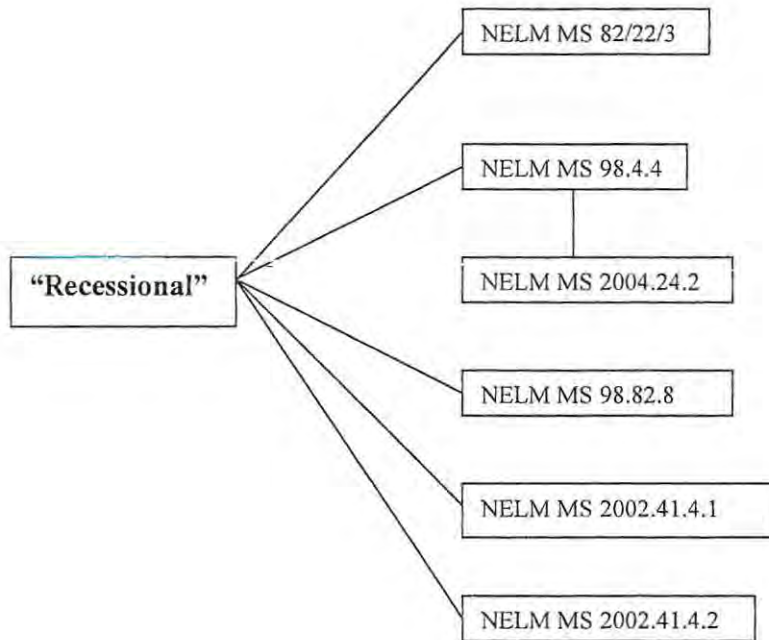
**RB Col 5:** privately produced, illustrated, signed and dated carbon copy titled “And Underfoot September”, measuring 30,3cm x 22cm. This volume is currently in the possession of Ms Rosemary Brettell and is inscribed: “Rosemary with love from Dad // Christmas 1977”. This is a carbon copy from the same source as NELM MS 98.82.18 and NELM MS 2002.41.7.

*Comparative table displaying Brettell’s selection, ordering and illustration of the poems in “And Underfoot September”. To view illustrations, see accompanying CD-Rom.*

NELM MS 98.4.5	NELM MS 98.82.18	NELM MS 2002.41.7	RB Col 5
“And Underfoot September”	“And Underfoot September”	“And Underfoot September”	“And Underfoot September”
	<i>Illustration: Watercolour frontispiece, untitled</i>		<i>Illustration: Watercolour inscribed “And Underfoot September”</i>
<b>I. (Proem)</b> Spring in the air Moon Arson	<b>I. (Proem)</b> Spring in the air Walking In Woods Moon Arson	<b>I. (Proem)</b> Spring in the air Walking In Woods Moon Arson	<b>I. (Proem)</b> Spring in the air Walking In Woods Moon Arson
<b>II. (Triumvirate of Silver)</b> Triumvirate of Silver Ausonius Claudian Prudentius	<b>II. (Triumvirate of Silver)</b> Triumvirate of Silver Ausonius Claudian Prudentius	<b>II. (Triumvirate of Silver)</b> Triumvirate of Silver Ausonius Claudian Prudentius	<b>II. (Triumvirate of Silver)</b> Triumvirate of Silver Ausonius Claudian Prudentius
<b>III. (Heirs to the Kingdom)</b> Agrippa Petty Thief	<b>III. (Heirs to the Kingdom)</b> Agrippa Petty Thief	<b>III. (Heirs to the Kingdom)</b> Agrippa Petty Thief	<b>III. (Heirs to the Kingdom)</b> Agrippa Petty Thief
The Birds: for Judith Moyo Schoolgirls Hunchback Gorse Spiderwebs	The Birds: for Judith Moyo Schoolgirls Hunchback Georgic Gorse Spiderwebs	The Birds: for Judith Moyo Schoolgirls Hunchback Georgic Gorse Spiderwebs	The Birds: for Judith Moyo Schoolgirls Hunchback Georgic Gorse Spiderwebs
<b>IV. (The Wall)</b> The Wall: a fable	<b>IV. (The Wall)</b> The Wall: a fable	<b>IV. (The Wall)</b> The Wall: a fable	<b>IV. (The Wall)</b> The Wall: a fable
Nocturne: for my wife	Nocturne: for my wife	Nocturne: for my wife	<i>Illustration: Untitled watercolour depicting a duiker in a wood</i> Nocturne: for my wife

\* \* \*

**“RECESSIONAL”**



**NELM MS 82/22/3:** privately produced, signed and dated, typescript edition titled “Recessional”, measuring 23,1cm x 17,9cm, dated 1981.

**NELM MS 98.4.4:** privately produced, signed and dated, illustrated typescript edition titled “Recessional”, measuring 21,6cm x 18cm, dated 1981. This volume was accompanied by a handwritten note to Douglas Livingstone, dated 11 December 1981:

Dear Douglas,  
I thought you'd like to have this— despite the obvious deterioration consequent on senility; it persists in coming, somehow. So if you're hoping for a relief when you reach your seventies, you'd better expect the worst.  
Best of luck,  
Noel.

**NELM MS 98.82.8:** privately produced, illustrated, signed and dated typescript edition titled “Recessional”, measuring 21,6cm x 16,3cm, dated 1981. It is a carbon copy of an untraced source. The volume was originally sent to Hugh and Betty Finn.

NELM MS 2002.41.4.1: privately produced, signed and dated, illustrated typescript edition titled "Recessional", measuring 23,4cm x 17,5cm, dated 1981. Donated to NELM by Dr John Brettell.

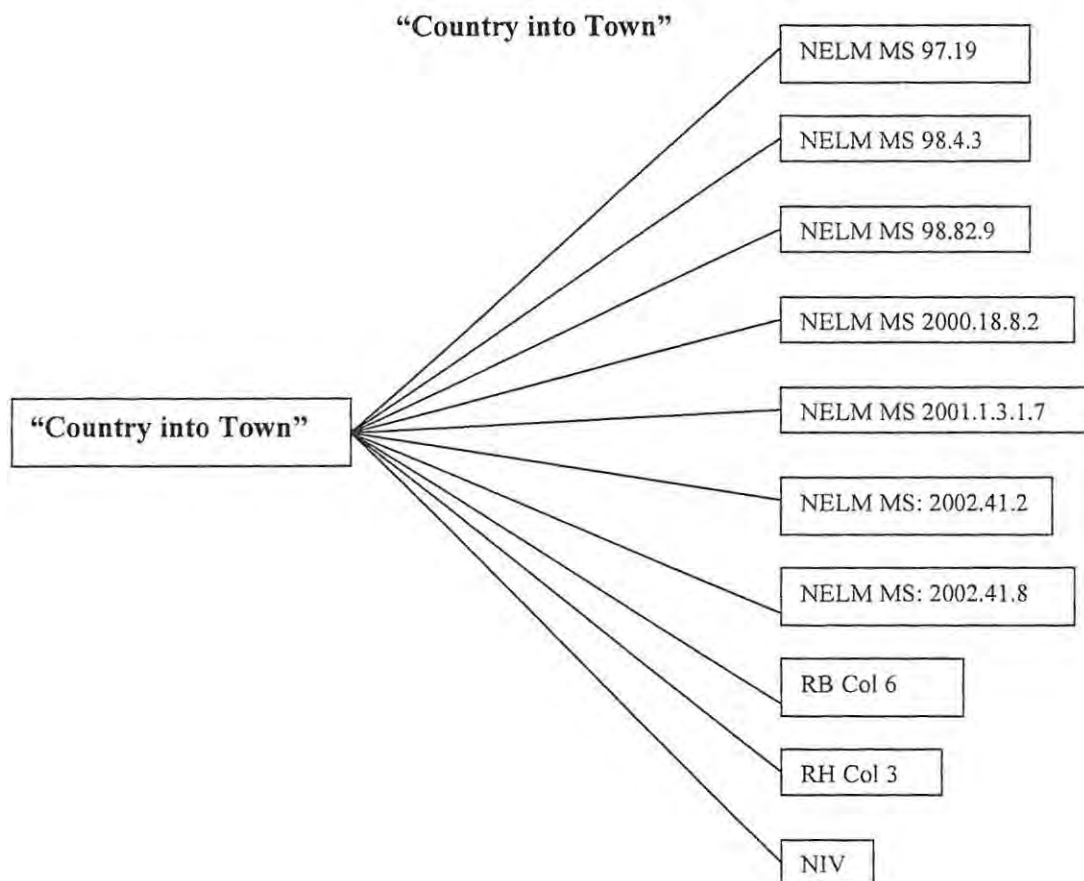
NELM MS 2002.41.4.2: sixteen loose leaves, photostatic copy of typescript titled "Recessional", measuring 21 cm x 29,7cm. This volume is currently in the possession of Dr John Brettell.

NELM MS 2004.24.2: illustrated, signed and dated typescript edition titled "Recessional", measuring 20,6cm X 16,5cm, dated 1981. This was found among Guy Butler's papers after his death. NELM MS 2004.24.2 2 is a carbon copy of NELM MS 98.4.4.

*Comparative table displaying Brettell's selection, ordering and illustration of the poems in "Recessional". To view illustrations, see accompanying CD-Rom.*

NELM MS 82.22.3	NELM MS 98.4.4 = NELM MS 2004.24.2	NELM MS 98.82.8	NELM MS 2002.41.4.1	NELM MS 2002.41.4.2
<b>"Recessional 1981"</b>	<b>"Recessional 1981"</b>	<b>"Recessional 1981"</b>	<b>"Recessional 1981"</b>	<b>"Recessional 1981"</b>
	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Nocturne ; Ngesi" (in 98.4.4) "Nocturne (in 2004.24.2)*</i>	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Nocturne: Ngesi"</i>	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Ngesi: Nocturne 1."</i>	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Nocturne 1."</i>
Prospect: Cape Point Naturalist Neighbour Clerk in Holy Orders Suicide	Prospect: Cape Point Naturalist Neighbour Clerk in Holy Orders Suicide	Prospect: Cape Point Naturalist Neighbour Clerk in Holy Orders Suicide	Prospect: Cape Point Naturalist Neighbour Clerk in Holy Orders Suicide	Prospect: Cape Point Naturalist Neighbour Clerk in Holy Orders Suicide
Poetess Village Headman Max Gate Aubade for Orpheus: to my wife	Poetess Village Headman Max Gate Aubade for Orpheus: to my wife	Poetess Village Headman Max Gate Aubade for Orpheus: to my wife	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Ngesi: Nocturne 2."</i>  Poetess Village Headman Max Gate Aubade for Orpheus: to my wife	Poetess Village Headman Max Gate Aubade for Orpheus: to my wife
<b>Endpiece: Incomprehension</b> (i) Spastic Child (ii) Dung Beetle	<b>Endpiece: Incomprehension</b> (i) Spastic Child (ii) Dung Beetle	<b>Endpiece: Incomprehension</b> (i) Spastic Child (ii) Dung Beetle	<b>Endpiece: Incomprehension</b> (i) Spastic Child (ii) Dung Beetle	<b>Endpiece: Incomprehension</b> (i) Spastic Child (ii) Dung Beetle
	<i>* While the poems in NELM MS 2004.24.2 are carbon copies of those in NELM MS 98.4.4 the illustration is not the same.</i>			

\* \* \*



**NELM MS 97.19:** privately produced typescript edition titled “Not Time’s Fool” measuring 30,7cm x 21,5cm and containing poems in volumes “One Year” and “Country into Town”. Volume accompanied by a letter to Douglas Reid Skinner (see p. lxxx).

**NELM MS 98.4.3:** privately produced, signed, illustrated typescript edition titled “Country into Town”, measuring 21,7cm x 16,5cm. Inserted in the edition is an unaddressed note of thanks from “Ruth” (Harnett).

**NELM MS 98.82.9:** privately produced, signed and dated carbon copy, illustrated edition titled “Country into Town”, measuring 21,6cm x 16,3cm, dated 1985. This volume was originally sent to Hugh and Betty Finn.

**NELM MS 2000.18.8.2:** nineteen typescript, carbon copy loose leaves titled “Country into Town”, measuring 21,6cm x 16,4cm. Donated to NELM by Dr John Brettell.

**NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7:** privately produced, signed, illustrated typescript edition titled “Country into Town”, measuring 22,2cm x 16,7cm. Enclosed in the edition the following letter to Douglas Livingstone:

39 Robert Taylor Drive  
Kadoma, Zimbabwe  
Sept 3 / 1985

Dear Douglas

Whether it's any good, you'll see better than I can. Nothing could be good enough. After twelve months, sixteen poems, and a visit to England (the first for over 30 years) the ache remains. I try to keep it to myself; perhaps writing a poem is just that. But never before have I written 16 poems in a month—and I certainly shan't again.

How goes it with you—and that all important pen of yours?

Yours  
Noel

Inserted in the edition next to the poem "Air line" is the following note in Brettell's hand: "'Dr. Bill'—My daughter in law thinks an annotation // necessary—he was Dr Wilson (Dr Bill, affectionately, to his // companions) in Scott's gang. His extraordinarily // delicate watercolours of Antarctica are one of the // most astounding things about the whole expedition. // (Sorry if it's uncalled for!)."

**NELM MS 2002.41.2:** eighteen photostatically copied loose leaves of a signed and dated typescript edition titled "Country into Town" measuring 29,7cm x 21cm and dated 1985. The original is currently in the possession of Dr John Brettell.

**NELM MS 2002.41.8:** twenty-seven photostatically copied loose leaves of a typescript edition titled "Flower o' The Clove" measuring 29,7cm x 21cm and containing poems in volumes "One Year" and "Country into Town". The original is currently in the possession of Dr John Brettell.

**RB Col 6:** privately produced typescript signed illustrated edition titled "Country into Town", measuring 22cm x 16,5cm. This volume is currently in the possession of Ms Rosemary Brettell. The volume is accompanied by handwritten annotations (see Commentary to "Country into Town") and the following letter:

Sept 5TH / 85

My Dearest Rosemary

You'd better have this. I have at last managed to get it down in verse, or at least some of it, and I think it's done me good. Whether it is any good, I dont know—nothing could be good enough. I feel desolate that I cant show it to her—as I always did all my poetry; but I bring myself up with the ironic reflection that

if she hadnt died, it couldnt have been  
written. Still—there we are.

I hope all goes well with  
you in the anxious times that South  
Africa is going through.

All my love, dear.  
Dad.

**RH Col:** privately produced, illustrated, signed typescript carbon copy edition  
titled “Country into Town”, measuring 22cm x 16,5cm. This volume is currently in  
the possession of Rev. Richard Holderness.

**NIV:** privately produced, signed typescript carbon copy edition titled  
“Country into Town”, measuring 21,6cm x 18cm. This volume is currently in the  
possession of Gregory Hacksley (a gift from George Niven).

*Comparative tables displaying Brettell's selection, ordering and illustration of the poems in “Country Into Town”.  
To view illustrations, see accompanying CD-Rom.*

NELM MS 98.4.3	NELM MS 98.82.9	NELM MS 2000.18.8.2	NELM MS 2001.1.3.1.7	NELM MS 2002.41.2
“Country into Town: Threnody with some echoes”	“Country into Town: Threnody with some echoes”	“Country into Town: Threnody with some echoes”	“Country into Town: Threnody with some echoes”	“Country into Town: Threnody with some echoes”
Sparrow	Sparrow	Sparrow	Sparrow	Sparrow
<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: “Kadoma Kopje in winter”</i>	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: “Itchen Estuary: Bitterne / near where Eva grew up ~”</i>		<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: “Itchen Estuary - Bitterne near where Eva grew up ~”</i>	
Sunset Spitting Cobra Thrush Wild Orchids Shadow Show Dung Hengrave Hall Cloud	Sunset Spitting Cobra Thrush Wild Orchids Cloud Dung Hengrave Hall Shadow Show	Sunset Spitting Cobra Thrush Cloud Wild Orchids Dung Hengrave Hall Shadow Show Shadow Show*	Sunset Spitting Cobra Thrush Wild Orchids Cloud Dung Hengrave Hall Shadow Show	Sunset Spitting Cobra Thrush Wild Orchids Cloud Dung Hengrave Hall Shadow Show
Fritz Nocturne Song by Owl-Light Air Line	Fritz Nocturne Song by Owl-Light Air Line	Fritz Nocturne Song by Owl-Light Air Line	Fritz Nocturne Song by Owl-Light Air Line	Fritz Nocturne Song by Owl-Light Air Line
<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: “Severn”</i>	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: “Severn”</i>		<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: “Severn”</i>	
Cuckoo Itchen Estuary: Bitterne Severn: Above Bever Lock	Cuckoo Itchen Estuary: Bitterne Severn: Above Bever Lock	Cuckoo Itchen Estuary: Bitterne Severn: Above Bever Lock <i>* appears twice.</i>	Cuckoo Itchen Estuary: Bitterne Severn: Above Bever Lock	Cuckoo Itchen Estuary: Bitterne Severn: Above Bever Lock

NELM MS 97.19	NELM MS 2002.41.8	RB Col 6	RH Col 3	NIV
"Not Time's Fool"	"Flower o' the clove"	"Country into Town: Threnody with some echoes"	"Country into Town: Threnody with some echoes"	"Country into Town: Threnody with some echoes"
<b>I: One Year</b> January February March April May June July August September October November December	<b>One Year</b> January February March April May June July August September October November December Nocturne			
<b>II: Threnody with some echoes</b>	<b>Country into Town</b>			
Sparrow	Sparrow	Sparrow	Sparrow	Sparrow
		<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Itchen Estuary - Bitterne near where Eva grew up ~"</i>	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Nocturne"</i>	
Sunset Spitting Cobra Thrush Fritz Wild Orchids Cloud Dung Hengrave Hall Shadow Show	Sunset Spitting Cobra Thrush  Wild Orchids  Dung Hengrave Hall Shadow Show Cloud Fritz Nocturne Song by Owl-Light Air Line	Sunset Spitting Cobra Thrush  Wild Orchids Cloud Dung Hengrave Hall Shadow Show  Fritz Nocturne Song by Owl-Light Air Line	Sunset Spitting Cobra Thrush  Wild Orchids Cloud Dung Hengrave Hall Shadow Show  Fritz Nocturne Song by Owl-Light Air Line	Sunset Spitting Cobra Thrush Cloud Wild Orchids  Dung Hengrave Hall Fritz Shadow Show  Nocturne Song by Owl-Light Air Line
Nocturne Song by Owl-Light Air Line		<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Severn"</i>	<i>Illustration: Watercolour titled: "Morning Mist - Broome, Worcestershire"</i>	
Cuckoo Itchen Estuary: Bitterne Severn: Above Bevere Lock  <i>Photostat of picture titled "Helen pouring wine for Priam"</i>	Cuckoo Itchen Estuary: Bitterne Severn: Above Bever Lock	Cuckoo Itchen Estuary: Bitterne Severn: Above Bever Lock	Cuckoo Itchen Estuary: Bitterne Severn: Above Bever Lock	Cuckoo Itchen Estuary: Bitterne Severn: Above Bevere Lock
Attic Shape				



## PUBLICATION HISTORY:

Brettell in his lifetime saw only one hundred and thirty-seven (67%) of his poems presented to the public in published form. While fourteen previously unpublished poems were printed after his death in a volume titled: *Selected Poems*, fifty five (27%) of his poems have never hitherto been published. Almost all of Brettell's poetry, however, was printed in some form, and distributed, usually in typescript or carbon copy, amongst his close friends. Often he presented these as gifts at Christmas time, illustrated with his own water-colour paintings (or his daughter Rosemary's linocuts) and bound by himself between cloth-covered boards. Brettell produced ten such collections during his lifetime,<sup>90</sup> but it is not known how many copies of each volume were made. While he often used carbon paper and had built a press, similar to a mimeograph press, for reproducing his poetry, these primitive methods of duplication could only render a limited number of copies before a collection of poems had to be retyped. That Brettell did retype collections is obvious, both from the accidental and substantive variants that occur in different copies of these homemade volumes, but a knowledge of the man suggests that he would have shied away from the dull task of typing numerous copies of the same thing. This supposition, and the relatively few known variant volumes of each collection, suggest that the number of versions of each collection produced was limited.

While Brettell's method of disseminating his poetry is not unique, it is interesting to note that he preferred this form of publication to commercial publishing. In a draft letter to fellow-poet Ben Gingell Brettell noted:

I was reluctant to publish anyway.... And on the printed page, the clumsiness, the loss-shots and near-misses of which one is so painfully aware and so impotent to rectify, stand out so glaringly.  
... I'm sending you separately a copy of my latest—at least latest completed—verses.<sup>91</sup> I think private circulation among one's peers is still the best form of publication: heresy, I suppose, to a publisher.

(NELM MS 98.4.75)

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<sup>90</sup>“A Rhodesian Leave” in 1956, “Some Poems” (also titled “The Owl and the Ivy”) in 1963, “Season and Festival” in 1965, “A Rhodesian Leave” (combining poems from his three previous collections) in 1968, “One Year” in 1970, “Lakeside” in 1975 / 76, “Eclogue in the Hills” in 1976 / 77, “And Underfoot September” in 1977, “Recessional” in 1981, “Country into Town” in 1985.

<sup>91</sup>Probably a reference to “And Underfoot September”

Brettell's privately printed and illustrated volumes clearly demonstrate authorial intent in more than just the lineal text and may perhaps be regarded as an example of twentieth-century scribal publication.<sup>92</sup> To regard privately produced and distributed *printed* texts as an example of *scribal* publication seems terminologically contradictory. If, however, one ignores the substitution of a typewriter for a pen or quill, Brettell's preferred method of publishing his poetry, though differing in several respects,<sup>93</sup> is reminiscent of the practice of seventeenth-century poets such as Donne, Marvell, Traherne and Rochester whose work was circulated primarily as a result of scribal publication. Profitable comparisons may also be drawn with eighteenth-century poets such as Pope and Blake. Harold Love's comment that Pope "saw scribal transmission as having its own integrity, independently of print-publishing" (Love 37) could justifiably be applied to Brettell if "scribal publication" is inserted in the place of "scribal transmission".

Love divides scribal publication into three broad categories: "author publication", "entrepreneurial publication" and "user publication" of which only the first is relevant to Brettell, as "author publication occurs when the production and distribution of copies takes place under the author's personal direction" (Love 47).

A comparison of author-published poetry may perhaps be drawn between Brettell and Donne, who both seem to have shared misgivings about disseminating their poetry to a larger public than the chosen group of friends amongst whom their work was initially distributed.<sup>94</sup> Donne, too, chose to circulate his poetry in manuscript collections of various sizes, "structuring his output into groups determined by genre" and rarely shared copies of individual poems (Love 51). Brettell and Donne's circulation of poems had a further shared intention in that they "helped to confirm friendships with like-minded contemporaries" (Love 52) with the result that they occupied a quasi-private / public domain.

Brettell had no externally imposed motivation for privately producing and circulating volumes of his poetry, unlike writers who chose, or were forced, to

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<sup>92</sup> By scribal publication is meant work produced and distributed by the author in manuscript form in non-commercial editions. For more on this see Harold Love's *Scribal Publication In Seventeenth-Century England*.

<sup>93</sup> Brettell's volumes were not produced in the hope of gaining favour or patronage. They were not reproduced and recirculated by others.

<sup>94</sup> see Harold Love's *Scribal Publication In Seventeenth-Century England*, 51.

circulate their work through scribal publication for political reasons and / or to avoid censorship. Though censorship and political unrest was increasingly present in the last years of Rhodesia before its transition to Zimbabwe, Brettell, while politically aware, was not a politically active poet. While one may speculate that the political situation in Rhodesia after UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) in 1965 might have militated against the commercial publication of poetry<sup>95</sup> and thus encouraged scribal publication, no evidence that other Rhodesian poets followed Brettell's lead in this regard has come to light. Although individual poems were almost certainly informally circulated in Rhodesia, the creation and circulation of whole volumes over a number of years is, I believe, unique to Brettell.

The most likely explanation for Brettell's choice of scribal publication is simply that he gained satisfaction not only from writing poetry but also from presenting it. While the extant volumes are free of evidence of a desire for frequent textual revision, Brettell clearly enjoyed exercising control over his compositions. Freed of the restrictions imposed by a commercial publisher, Brettell was at liberty to rework and reorder his poetry and illustrate and bind his volumes in a way he saw fit. The result was that handsome presentation copies and more modest versions of the same collections exist side-by-side.<sup>96</sup>

Brettell's privately printed collections also have a social function as most seem to have been produced with a specific reader in mind. This fact in turn informs the reading of Brettell's work in its original form as one is conscious of the relationship between the author and the intended / first reader. Evidence of this relationship is invariably concealed or lost, however, when a privately produced volume is reprinted.

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<sup>95</sup> International sanctions imposed on Rhodesia after UDI meant that the already small market for Rhodesian poetry became much smaller and more parochial. The publication of poetry is not, generally speaking, commercially viable and with the large international presses reluctant to publish Rhodesian verse, and Rhodesian presses hesitant to enter into projects which were unlikely to recoup costs, the environment for the publication of poetry after UDI was an unfavourable one.

<sup>96</sup> Brettell's numerous copies of his collection "One Year" is a case in point, where manuscript RB Col 2 is a presentation copy made especially for his wife. It is typed on quality paper, contains twelve water-colour illustrations, measures 38cm x 25,5cm and is bound between cloth-covered boards. NELM MS MS 475/2, however, is a carbon-copy edition of "One Year" produced on thin paper, without illustrations, measures 25,1cm x 20,5cm and is bound with soft card. "Not Time's Fool" (NELM MS 97.19), in turn is a compilation of the twelve sonnets from "One Year" bound together with Brettell's later collection "Country into Town". It is typed on thin paper, contains no illustrations, measures 30,7cm x 21,5cm and is bound with soft card.

While Brettell's presentation of his collections exhibits considerable variations in the poems themselves, there are few substantial variants between individual collections. Once a poem was typed and included in a volume, Brettell seems to have lost interest in revising it, regarding it as all but final. The following extract from a letter to his poet friends Hugh and Betty Finn details not only his method for revising poetry but also shows his aversion to the finality of a published text.

I know poets vary enormously in this, but I really think my own dilatory tactics might be of some use—after the written draft (which may take a day or may take a year), put it through the typewriter to erase the false air of subjectivity your handwriting gives it and helps you to stand back from the poem, and then shove it away for at least six months, re-reading it now and then and removing the discords as you notice them. After that, or even longer, you can see coolly whether it is good enough or whether it ought to be discarded—a process which should be done ruthlessly, though you can keep a line or two or an image here and there that might come in handy later. I'm quite sure you should show it to nobody else until this has been done ... I throw away far more than I keep: I'd gladly ditch at least nine tenths of 'Bronze Frieze'—another reason why I don't like printing—print is so appallingly final: like a tombstone. You've got to avoid over-polish, of course: but it isn't really that at all—I'm not thinking of grooming the damn things for show purposes, but to make sure that you have done the utmost justice to the theme and the inspiration. ... Poems aren't tossed off like leaves from an autumn tree, even though Keats was right to say they should come as easily as leaves to a (spring) tree.

(Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 31  
December 1964. NELM MS 96.19.47)

Other reasons for Brettell's adoption of a modern form of scribal publication include his reticence about publicity, his relative isolation (albeit self-imposed) from society, the small market for verse in Rhodesia and his ambivalent attitude towards his poetry. As he noted in a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn, dated 10 May 1971:

But I don't think I shall do anything more about trying to get the rest into print. As you know, quite honestly I've never been anything but embarrassed about any sort of publication; and my own modest amateur efforts at 'publishing' have put it into the hands of everybody that I really care about.

(NELM MS 96.19.107)

Despite Brettell's aversion to commercial publication, however, 137 of his 206 extant poems were published during his lifetime. Briefly, the publication history of Brettell's poetry is as follows.

In 1950 Oxford University Press published Brettell's first volume of poetry: *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. In 1977 Brettell's second solo volume was

published by The Poetry Society of Rhodesia under the title: *Season and Pretext: Poems*. In 1981 Books of Zimbabwe published Brettell's *Side-Gate and Stile* which included a selection of his poems, some already published but some appearing for the first time. In 1982 formerly unpublished poems by Brettell and three other Zimbabwean poets appeared in an anthology titled: *Four Voices. Poetry from Zimbabwe*. After Brettell's death in 1991, an edition titled *Selected Poems* was brought out in 1994 by Snailpress.

Brettell's poems also appeared in the following books:<sup>97</sup>

*An Anthology of Commonwealth Verse*. London: 1963.

*Beneath a Rhodesian Sky*. Salisbury, Rhodesia: 1972, 1980.

*Birthright: A Selection of Poems from Southern Africa*. Harlow: 1989.

*A Book of South African Verse*. London: 1959.

*A Century of South African Poetry*. Johannesburg: 1981.

*Commonwealth Poems of Today*. London: 1967.

*Elected Friends: Poems for and about Edward Thomas*. London: 1991.

*Insights: Criticism of Zimbabwean and Other Poetry*. Gweru: 1994.

*Mambo Book of Zimbabwean Verse in English*. Gweru: 1986.

*A New Anthology of Rhodesian Verse*. Oxford: 1950.

*A New Book of South African Verse in English*. Cape Town: 1979.

*Out of the African Ark*. Craighall: 1988.

*P.E.N 1960: New South African Writing and a Survey of Fifty Years of Creative Achievement*. Johannesburg: 1960.

*The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*. London: 1989.

*Poetry in Rhodesia: 75 Years*. Salisbury, Rhodesia: 1968.

*Shades of Adamastor: Africa and the Portuguese Connection: An anthology of Poetry*. Grahamstown: 1988.

*Shadows of War*. Salisbury, Rhodesia: 1978.

*Twenty Five Years of English South African Poetry*. Grahamstown: 1989.

*Verse For You Book Three: A Collection of Verse for Senior Forms*. London: 1958, 1966.

*The Wilder Shores of Love*. Harare: 1982.

*Writing in Zimbabwe 1961-1979*. Zimbabwe: 1981.

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<sup>97</sup> For more detailed information see the Publication History section which is printed on the pages adjacent to the text of the poems.

In addition to the above, Brettell's poems also appeared in the following journals and magazines:

*The Blackcountryman*. Stourbridge.

*Chirimo*. Salisbury, Rhodesia.

*Illustrated Life Rhodesia*. Salisbury, Rhodesia.

*New Coin*. Grahamstown.

*New Contrast*. Cape Town.

*New South African Writing: The South African*. Cape Town.

*Occasional Papers & Reviews*. Grahamstown.

*Poetry Review Salisbury*. Salisbury, Rhodesia.

*Rhodesian Poetry*. Salisbury, Rhodesia.

*The Rhodesia Science News*. Salisbury, Rhodesia.

*Standpunte*. Parow.

*Two Tone: A Quarterly of Rhodesian Poetry*. Salisbury, Rhodesia.

*The University Gazette*. Birmingham.

*The Zimbabwe Poetry Review*. Harare.

## THE PRESENT TEXT

The aim in this study has been to produce a readable text of the latest state of revision of Brettell's privately produced collections of poems, and to provide in the critical apparatus detailed information describing variant readings that occur in all known published and manuscript typescript sources. Those Brettell poems which do not appear in the aforementioned collections have been placed in approximate chronological order in a section marked "Uncollected Poems".

Peter Shillingsburg notes that the compilation of a scholarly edition is "the interpretive best thinking of an editor and is NOT the establishment of a text for all times" (Shillingsburg "Script Acts" 105). Editing, for Shillingsburg, means "representing texts, delineating their textual and formal histories, and sorting out the agents of change in those histories". He also acknowledges that "no two editors would produce the same results" as editing "is not a science" (Shillingsburg "Script Acts" 105). As the best thinking of an editor, however, editing requires honesty and boldness, not obfuscation and timidity.

While there are numerous wrong ways of editing a work, there is not necessarily only one “right way” to do so. Editors are not ideal critics of ideal texts—such things do not exist—rather, the opposite is closer to the truth: that editors are flawed critics of flawed texts. Their authority comes from acknowledging this and laying it before the readers / users of their editions as they attempt to ‘mediate’ between the text / author and the reader. To quote Shillingsburg again, editing “should be reported straightforwardly and with the characteristic humility of first-rate criticism that offers itself to be considered and tested and used, if possible, as a tool in the arsenal of other critics” (Shillingsburg “Script Acts” 83-84).

The rationale behind selecting the latest datable version of each privately printed collection and of the poems in it as a master-text, despite the existence of later published versions of some individual poems, was influenced by the fact that though the concept of final authorial intent is problematic, these collections represent an endpoint which reflects the latest intentions of the poet in a form over which he alone had control. As far as substantive readings are concerned I have adhered to the texts in the following collections: Brettell’s first published collection *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*, NELM MS 2002.41.3 of “A Rhodesian Leave”, NELM MS PLO85 of “One Year”, NELM MS 2004.24.1 of “Lakeside”, NELM MS 98.82.12 of “Eclogue in the Hills”, NELM MS 98.4.5 of “And Underfoot September”, NELM MS 98.4.4 of “Recessional”, RB Col 6 of “Country into Town”. My reasons for selecting these collections are given below:

#### ***Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian***

*Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* was Brettell’s first published volume of poetry and most of the poems in it do not exist in any other form anywhere else. It was also only after the publication of *Bronze Frieze* and his retirement from teaching that Brettell began to produce his privately printed editions.

#### **“A Rhodesian Leave”**

NELM MS 2002.41.3 of “A Rhodesian Leave”, printed in 1968, was used as a copy-text for the poems that appear in “A Rhodesian Leave” as, judging from the handwritten emendations that occur in NELM MS 2002.41.3, this selection and ordering of poems is the latest version of this collection.

“A Rhodesian Leave” was Brettell’s first attempt at circulating his poems amongst friends and family in the form of a self-produced volume. Brettell reproduced this volume twice during his lifetime (see table in Description of Sources for different versions of “A Rhodesian Leave”). The earliest known copy was produced in 1956 and sent as a gift from Brettell to his daughter Rosemary. A revised, illustrated version of this volume, incorporating poems from two later Brettell poetry collections, “Some Poems” (privately printed in 1963 and also titled: “The Owl and The Ivy”) and “Season and Festival” (privately printed in 1965) was produced in 1968.

Since NELM MS 2002.41.3 includes all the poems from Brettell’s 1963 “Some Poems” (except “Birth in Bethlehem”) and his 1965 “Season and Festival”, these two collections are not represented in this edition as separate editions but rather as part of the 1968 version of “A Rhodesian Leave”.

### **“One Year”**

Three volumes titled “One Year” (NELM MS PLO85, RB Col 1 and RH Col 2) share the date Christmas 1970, the latest date for the collection as a whole. Of these three, NELM MS PLO85 of “One Year” was selected as the copy-text for the poems in “One Year” because it appears to be the latest version of the three judging from Brettell’s emendations.

While a volume titled “Not Time’s Fool” (NELM MS 97.19), dating from 1991, contains a compilation of the twelve sonnets from “One Year” and the poems in Brettell’s 1985 edition “Country into Town” it was not considered as a possible copy-text as it contains only half the poems in “One Year”.

### **“Lakeside: Word and Reverie”**

While two volumes of “Lakeside: Word and Reverie” (NELM MS 2000.18.7.2 and NELM MS 2004.24.1) are dated 1976 (the latest date for the collection) NELM MS 2004.24.1 was selected as the copy-text for the poems in “Lakeside” because it appears to be the latest version judging from Brettell’s emendations. NELM MS 2004.24.1 is also an original typescript whereas NELM MS 2000.18.7.2 is a carbon copy of a source whose whereabouts are unknown.



### **“Eclogue in the Hills”**

NELM MS 98.82.12 of “Eclogue in the Hills” was chosen as the copy-text for this collection as it is the typescript original of the only other known copy (the carbon copy) of this text (NELM MS 2000.18.1).

### **“And Underfoot September”**

NELM MS 98.4.5 of “And Underfoot September” was chosen as the copy-text for the poems in this collection as it is Brettell’s printer’s copy for an appendix to *Side-Gate and Stile* which was published in 1981. The only other datable extant copies of “And Underfoot September” are dated 1977.

### **“Recessional”**

NELM MS 98.4.4 of “Recessional” was chosen as the copy-text for the poems in this collection as it is the latest datable copy of “Recessional” by virtue of the fact that it is accompanied by a letter to Douglas Livingstone dated 11 December 1981.

### **“Country into Town”**

RB Col 6 of “Country into Town” was selected as the copy-text for the poems in this collection as it is the latest datable copy of “Country into Town” by virtue of the fact that it is accompanied by a letter to Rosemary Brettell dated 5 September 1985. While a volume titled “Not Time’s Fool” (NELM MS 97.19) contains a compilation of the twelve sonnets from “One Year” and the poems in “Country into Town” and dates from 1991 it was not considered as a possible copy text as the poems in “Country into Town” form only a section in this compilation.

The poems in this edition have been ordered chronologically using the collections listed above. The only exception is the section marked “Uncollected Poems” where the individual poems, as already mentioned, have been arranged in approximate chronological order. Ordering Brettell’s poems chronologically by collection reflects Brettell’s intentions and also his development as a poet.

In his privately produced collections, Brettell carefully ordered the poems he included and made only minor alterations to this ordering from one edition to another (cf. *Comparative Tables for Collections* above). Therefore, in each instance the latest

datable collection of poems has been selected and the poet's ordering and the selection of the poems in them has been adhered to.

To follow the ordering of poems in the latest datable privately produced collection, but not to present accurately the version of the poems that appear in that collection, however, seemed illogical. Therefore, despite the fact that Brettell, after printing and distributing his privately produced volumes of poetry amongst his friends, often selected and revised poems from these collections for publication in anthologies and journals, the poems presented here reflect those found in the latest datable collections of his poems. This has been done in an attempt to preserve the integrity of each collection, since to insert a revised version of a poem would present an inaccurate depiction of the foregrounded collection.

The editorial policy in this edition has been to intrude into the text as little as possible. Where intrusion has seemed justified and Brettell's spelling and punctuation have been emended, such changes have been recorded. The following misspellings were corrected:

- 'to-morrow' to 'tomorrow' in "Heard at Inyanga"
- 'doppelganger' to 'doppel-gänger' in "End of Year Returns"
- 'gillie-flowers' to 'gillyflowers' in "Cataclysm"
- 'jalouses' to 'jalousies' in "A Chinese Screen"
- 'handfull' to 'handful' in "From a Hotel Window"
- 'haysell' to 'haysel' in "Transit"
- 'fuhrer' to 'führer' in "Lakeside IV"
- 'silver-chandaliered' to 'silver-chandeliered' in "Eclogue in the Hills II: Dick"
- 'damescene' to 'damascene' in "Eclogue in the Hills II: Dick"
- 'Bobadill' to 'Bobadil' in "Birth in Bethlehem"
- 'facades' to 'façades' in "Birth in Bethlehem"
- 'meet' to 'meat' in "Georgic"
- 'millenia' to 'millennia' in "Attic Shape"
- 'millenium' to 'millennium' in "Madonna and Baobab"
- 'facades' to 'façades' in "Madonna and Baobab"
- 'bataleur' to 'bateleur' in "Rain for Zimbabwe Christmas"

and the following words changed:<sup>98</sup>

- 'was' to 'saw' in "Bougainvilia"
- 'Hephaestion' to 'Hephaestus' in "Ironworkers"
- 'school' to 'schooled' in "Birth in Bethlehem"
- 'Unspurts' to 'Upspurts' in "Lakeside IV".

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<sup>98</sup> See notes on these poems for the rationale that prompted these intrusions.

Emendations have not been done haphazardly and each alteration has been carefully evaluated in terms of what it adds to or detracts from the text.

In almost all instances where the punctuation has been altered, the new punctuation has been drawn from a variant copy of the same poem. It should be noted, though, that Brettell had a somewhat laissez-faire attitude to the use of commas. The following extract from a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn, dated 7 March 1967, is relevant.

Commas? I've always used as few commas as I can, as I've always thought them rather an impertinent intrusion between the writer and the intelligence of his reader. However, if you think any of these things need any commas adding, just sprinkle a few more around. I like to get syntax right, and the big punctuation periods, but the rest I think is rather like leaving a conductor to point his own score. There is so much more than just the usual periods; de Selincourt used to say what poetry really needed was some sort of musical notation—and he was a splendid reader. I'm not such a purist as old Cripps: he used to be indignantly meticulous about commas.

(NELM MS 96. 19. 71)

The above extract explains the large number of variants concerning commas in Brettell's poetry. In addition to corrections to Brettell's spelling and punctuation, all typographical errors have been corrected and the changes noted.

Brettell's typographical errors reveal principally his inaccuracies as a typist and may be divided into two categories: those that are, to all intents and purposes, meaningless to the import of the word, and those that affect the intended meaning of the word. Examples of both may be found in NELM MS 98.82.16's copy of "February".

In this version of the poem Brettell, in *l.* 3 types the word "sonnet's", but initially inserts an "i" instead of an "o". He then types an "o" over the "i", thus emending it: an example of a "meaningless" typographical error. Even if Brettell had not emended the "i" to an "o", the word "sinnetts" does not exist in English and given contextual meaning in the poem it would be obvious that Brettell intended the word to read "sonnets". Furthermore the fact that the "o" key on an English keyboard is adjacent to the "i" key explains how the "i" came to appear in the first place. In *l.* 14, however, Brettell types the word "winds", before crossing out the "s". Had Brettell not deleted the "s" this typographical error could not have been described as meaningless, despite its grammatical incorrectness.

In this edition all words containing typographical errors have been emended to reflect what I believe to have been Brettell's intended meaning and all changes have been noted. This has been done to enable the reader to negotiate the text without the hindrance of typographical errors.

I am conscious though that texts when "translated into new mediums lose old functions as they acquire new functions" (Shillingsburg, "Script Acts" 84) and that it is crucial to be aware both of what is lost and what is gained through emendation.

While it is tempting to treat Brettell's typographical errors as 'noise',<sup>99</sup> it is worth noting that noise of one sort or another is present in any text. To eliminate the old noise is to change the text and simply replace it with new noise. To preserve the old noise, new noise must be added. This is unavoidable. What is important, however, is to recognise the presence of noise.

While all emendations of typographical errors and changes to punctuation and spelling have been recorded, changes to poem layout, font size and type have not been noted. All poems have been set in a standard 12 point, Times New Roman font with titles in bold upper-case lettering. Where a period point appears at the end of the title, as in some of Brettell's undergraduate poetry (for example "Odysseus."), this has been removed. All dedications, epigraphs and subtitles have been placed in italics, any brackets around them removed, and the first letter of the first word capitalised. The presence of white-space between characters and the difference between "en" dashes and "em" dashes and single and double inverted commas are not recorded as it was felt that most readers would have little interest in their meaning-generating potential. Spacing between words has been standardised to the normal one-place space, all "n" dashes used as dashes have been replaced with "m" dashes and all single inverted commas have been replaced with double inverted commas. Where indentation occurs in Brettell's poetry this has been limited to either one tabulator space or three place spaces, depending on which corresponds most closely with the original form of the text being produced. Also, where a shadow character<sup>100</sup> occurs this has been ignored except where both characters are clearly visible and doubt exists as to the second character's status as a shadow character or a full character.

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<sup>99</sup> See pages 65-66 in Peter L. Shillingsburg's "Script Acts from Gutenberg to Google" for more on this.

<sup>100</sup> A shadow character is defined, for the purposes of this project, as two impressions of the same character from a single striking of the typewriter key.



The advantage of presenting the variant information on the page facing the poem in question is that this makes it easier for the reader to note and substitute the recorded variant(s) into the text. The other two more traditional ways of presenting variant information place such information at the bottom of the page below the text or at the back of the edition. Noting the variants below the text or at the back of the edition, however, makes it easier for such information to disappear in what, in many editions, may be described as a necropolis of variants.

### **Electronic Scholarly Editing**

Electronic scholarly editions promise a number of exciting possibilities for scholarly editors which traditional codex-based editions cannot. Chief amongst these is the ease with which different versions of a manuscript may be viewed and compared. As variant versions can be digitised in their entirety, users of electronic editions can read the full text of a variant version instead of having to reconstruct it from lists of variant information. This, combined with almost limitless space (which means that one can include every version of every poem in full) and attractive multimedia possibilities (such as the inclusion of sound-bites, graphics, animation, pictures, video clips), makes electronic editing seem a very exciting prospect for editors.

For instance, an imaginary electronic scholarly edition of Brettell's work might be conceived of as follows. The edition would contain scanned images and encoded transcriptions of every version of every Brettell poem. This would allow the reader to witness the different stages of the history of the poem with ease. The edition would also include all the water-colour illustrations<sup>101</sup> which Brettell painted to accompany his poems, as well as any relevant photographs. It would incorporate sound-recordings of the poet reading his poetry and an introductory videotape recording. Transcriptions of selected letters and digitised versions of all hand-written drafts of poems would provide additional immediacy and authenticity. All poems would be comprehensively annotated and an introduction to the life of the man himself would also be included.

To make this multimedia project interactive, the edition would be fully searchable by electronic means. A sophisticated search engine would allow one to

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<sup>101</sup> A CD-Rom containing Brettell's water-colour illustrations and an audio-recording of him reading his poetry accompanies this thesis.

search the corpus not only for specific words or phrases but also for poetic themes, metrics, dates and place of composition or publication. In an attempt to ensure its longevity the edition would be built in a markup language (XML: eXtensible Markup Language, presents the most likely option). Interested users would be able to access each poem via a variety of different entry points—index of poems, index of collections, index of first lines, subject, theme or word searches etc.—and they would be free to explore the edition in any way they saw fit.

After viewing the text of a poem a user of the edition could, for instance, select one of the multimedia options available for that poem, say an illustration by the author or an audio clip of the poet reading the poem in question. Alternatively, users could view and compare different versions of the poem and examine their individual manuscript histories; or else skip to a different poem (or the next one in that particular collection); or search for poems similar in subject matter to the one just examined. Users would also be able to consult detailed annotations providing further insight into the poet's work.

In this way the imaginary edition would create the exhibition experience described by Edward Vanhoutte in "Where is the Editor" (Vanhoutte 2). In such an electronic scholarly edition of Brettell's poetry the users—to adapt a metaphor by Vanhoutte—would be able to stroll at their own pace through the edition, visiting the pages which they were most interested in first, checking everything they had learned against the actual poem, and coming back to agree or not with the information provided, knowing that what they had read and seen was the result of profound scholarly research. (cf. Vanhoutte, "Where is the Editor?" 2).

Given such an edition, readers would, ideally, be able to enjoy a fuller understanding of the complexity of Brettell's poetry and appreciate the editorial process that had been followed. In short, the Brettell project would be a Shillingsburgian "knowledge site" with the potential for growth and development through "changes in intellectual focuses, insights, and fads" ("Script Acts" 34). It would thus be able to accommodate "new knowledge in configurations [that might] augment or correct rather than replace the work that went before" (*Ibid.*).

However, while editions like the one imagined above are exciting in their possibilities, they are not at present a viable reality for most would-be electronic scholarly editors. Before considering the future possibilities and the current realities

of electronic editing, it might be useful to examine briefly some of the problems associated with conventional scholarly editions.

Traditional codex-based scholarly editing has established two basic models: facsimile editing and critical editing. While the latter model was used in editing Brettell's work, both are to some extent unsatisfactory.

If one were to attempt the creation of a print-based facsimile edition of Brettell's oeuvre, one's objective would be to provide as exact an imitation or simulation of his work as possible. Documentary simulation can be achieved in a number of different ways, employing, for example, photographs or diplomatic transcription, but it would need to be borne in mind that what *is* reproduced can never be identical to what *was* produced. It is obviously illusionary to regard a copy of object "A" as being the same as object "A", yet this is the illusion that facsimile editions invite their users to participate in. This is further reinforced by the fact that, typically, facsimile print-based editions, confined as they necessarily are by time and space, have reproduced just one copy of a variant version of a writer's work. As Jerome McGann and Dino Buzzetti note:

At best ... the [facsimile] edition is an effort to simulate the document at that arbitrarily chosen moment. The document bears within itself the evidence of its own life and provenance, but that evidence, precisely because of the document's historical passage, will always be more or less obscure, ambiguous in meaning, or even unrecoverable.

(McGann & Buzzetti 2)

The critical-editing model also has disadvantages. In approaching Brettell's work from the position of codex-based critical editing I began by studying the history of the poems and analysing and distinguishing between those textual variants which had been occasioned by the author and those which had resulted from the work's transmission history. The aim was to recover and so establish the 'true' work in its original and authoritative state. This soon proved to be unfeasible for to do this I had to rely on a stemma and Brettell's work does not lend itself to stemmatic analysis. It is in fact virtually impossible to ascertain which version of a poem was copied from which. In Brettell's extant work there are no clear lines of textual transmission to help scholars make decisions regarding variant forms of the text. Through examining his use of carbon paper and his home-made mimeograph-like press, the occasional handwritten emendations and his dating of some of his privately produced editions of poetry, it is possible, to some extent, to order Brettell's poetry chronologically, but



there is insufficient evidence to allow for detailed stemmatic analysis. The text I have produced therefore attempts to arrive at a proximate sense of Brettell's intent.

Both the above procedural models of editing then are problematic and this has resulted in different scholarly editors responding to the situation with different approaches. Amongst the most common have been genetic editions and editions with multiple versions. Electronic editions, however, offer another possibility, for in such editions the "critical instrument for studying graphical and bibliographical works, including textual works, is no longer the codex" (McGann & Buzzetti 5). Digitisation "overcomes the codex-enforced spatial limitations on the amount of material that can be uniformly gathered and re-presented" and "digital tools permit one to conceive the possibility of an editorial environment that would incorporate materials of many different kinds that might be physically located anywhere" (McGann & Buzzetti 4).

The immediate future for scholarly editing would therefore seem to lie in the fast emerging field of electronic editing. However, as McGann notes in *Radiant Textuality* "Humanities computing is beginning again" (McGann, *Radiant* 1). Four years later this statement is still applicable to electronic scholarly editing for, as Peter Robinson makes clear in "Where We Are With Electronic Scholarly Editions, And Where We Want To Be": "The electronic scholarly editions we have been making so far do not represent any kind of endpoint. Indeed, I think they do not even amount to much of a beginning" (Robinson, "Where We Are" 2).

While at this point electronic editing seems to be the way forward for scholarly editing, it is also clear that creating an electronic edition with the inadequate tools and the crudely structured electronic environments currently available is still more time consuming, costly and complex than producing the traditional scholarly codex-based editions (the fundamentals of which are likely to continue to underlie much of what is envisaged for electronic editing in the future). However, emerging computer technology promises to reduce all these factors to more acceptable proportions. Already the size of a scholarly electronic edition is no longer constrained by printing requirements. An edition may be as large as its editor wishes. If web-based, it can be constantly updated and added to, not only by the editor but also, potentially, by the user. It could thus itself become a forum for academic discussion. By allowing the editor to place the work in context it can become a "knowledge site" as described by Shillingsburg in "Script Acts from Gutenberg to Google". It can be interactive and make use of multimedia tools such as soundbites, pictures, videos and

even games.<sup>102</sup> It can be made fully searchable, so that a user can carry out advanced and complicated searches quickly and easily. It can be used in university and school classrooms. It can, through data-analysis tools, help one to trace the DNA of a work by highlighting relationships between variant forms of the text. The range of usefulness of such an edition is limited only by the creative vision and inventiveness of the editor. There are, however, other constraints.

In addition to the time and financial cost inevitably incurred in the creation of an electronic edition, there is also the limitation imposed by the high degree of computer literacy required. To be able to create an electronic scholarly edition requires more than merely a working knowledge of computer operations. While being computer literate may be sufficient for the end user of the edition, the editor who wishes to create an electronic scholarly edition must acquire programming skills and be able to encode his project in a markup language such as SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language) or XML (Extensible Markup Language). Without such skills the editor would be dependent on another expert or a custom-built programme to do the encoding, with consequent limitations and dangers in respect of accuracy and cost. To date, no stand-alone non-proprietary software<sup>103</sup> editing suite exists for the simple creation of an electronic edition by editors who lack computer specialist knowledge. Peter Robinson's *Anastasia* and Paul Eggert, Phill Berrie, et al.'s *JustInTimeMarkup (JITM)*, offer partial solutions to would-be electronic scholarly editors but neither of the above is yet able to provide a viable solution to the problems of the electronic editing community. Until very recently *Anastasia* was proprietary software, and expensive. While it is now free, the source codes are not yet "open". *JITM* is still in its developmental stages, is not yet user-friendly and is currently limited to users of MacIntosh (Apple) computers (though this is set to change). Jerome McGann promises to provide editors with an all-in-one electronic editing package during the course of 2005, but the reality at this point is that this is still only a hope, not yet a solution to the growing needs of electronic scholarly

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<sup>102</sup> see Johanna Drucker's *Ivanhoe* or Neil Fraistat and Stephen Jones's *MOOzymandias*.

<sup>103</sup> According to Wikipedia: "non-proprietary software is, in its widest possible sense, software that has no proprietary restrictions attached to it, particularly the restriction about the access to the source code." Non-proprietary software then is "the opposite of proprietary software", which is "software where the source code has not been made available, or it is protected by restrictive licensing clauses" (*Wikipedia* "Non-proprietary software").

editing. My own forays into the field with computer programmer Grant Miller in building the XML based *JAM* (Jam it all together) editing suite,<sup>104</sup> which was specifically designed to insulate first-time encoders from the daunting task of learning XML, has led to the conviction that only through close and intensive collaboration and clear thinking will an all-in-one user friendly electronic editing suite be created that does not rely on proprietary software. Editors do not require an automaton, but a suite of software that is sophisticated and flexible, while still being easy to use.

The importance of regularly up-datable stand-alone non-proprietary software which is both backwards and forwards compatible<sup>105</sup> cannot be underestimated. Without it, any time and effort expended in creating a stimulating interactive electronic edition of the kind described earlier could all come to naught if the software company were to decide to discontinue the product or to create a new version. Such updating inevitably requires the data to be reformatted, a procedure which can seriously jeopardise its accuracy. As editing is no longer concerned only with the characters of the text but also with the font and whitespace surrounding these characters, any reformatting of carefully positioned data could be seriously destructive, especially if the writer whose work is being edited has tried, as for example e. e. cummings did, to convey additional meaning through the actual layout of his work.

A further limitation which needs to be overcome if electronic scholarly editions are to replace print-based ones is the limited longevity of electronic editions.

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<sup>104</sup> Briefly: the *JAM* editor was designed as a multimedia publication generator. In some respects *JAM* is similar to the Versioning Machine (see [http://mith2.umd.edu/products/ver\\_mach/](http://mith2.umd.edu/products/ver_mach/)). Fundamentally *JAM* combines text, multimedia and their semantic information in a single document. The root idea was to create a user-friendly interface capable of serious metadata integration. *JAM* was designed around the Microsoft .NET platform and written in C#. The MS technology used was the ADO+ (ActiveX Data Objects +) which is used for data manipulation on the .NET Platform and which seamlessly combines XML and database technology. From a graphical (display) perspective, the programme uses the GDI+ (Graphics Design Interface +).

*JAM* was designed specifically as a 'one-stop' solution to enable new users to create electronic editions easily. The user is insulated from the messy details of tagged text. On the surface, *JAM* provides a WYSIWYG interface, providing the first dimension of information. This includes text formatting, image, audio and video manipulation. At the same time *Jam* allows the user to capture semantic information. This is done through the graphic interface in much the same way as one inserts text or multimedia information.

<sup>105</sup> Software that is backwards and forwards compatible is an ideal in programming. Such software allows for a document to be read by earlier and later versions of a program, regardless of future updates to the program. Backwards and forwards compatibility software could be described as a protection mechanism against dud documents as the longevity of a document is ensured. Ideally, backwards and forwards compatible software allows for a document to be read in an earlier or later program with all its original formatting, text and graphics in an unaltered state.

Books have a far longer shelf life than computer software or projects. One has only to try recovering data written in the early 1990s and saved on a 5,25" diskette to realise this. By contrast, a published book, provided it is stored in a space conducive to preservation, can remain useable for hundreds of years. An electronic edition, be it web-based or published on a CD-Rom, however, requires constant maintenance to ensure that whatever was created remains accessible from year to year in its original form and format. In itself, the prospect of such continual dedicated maintenance or up-grading is likely to discourage most editors upon whom the burden of such maintenance falls, but the position is aggravated when one realises that while an editor may succeed in keeping abreast of the changes in technology and accordingly in maintaining his electronic edition during his lifetime, there is small likelihood that anybody else would seek to preserve his work of scholarship with the same dedication thereafter. The question of whether or not a work of scholarship should be preserved or whether it should be allowed to change and fade away as users and academic fashions dictate is a separate issue much debated by those concerned with archival studies. Suffice it to say here that editors are unlikely to dedicate years of toil to a project whose demise is heralded almost as soon as it is launched. At present, electronic editions are not a good investment of time and resources for scholars who yearn to leave lasting legacies. While university archives and libraries might store the work of scholars, there is no guarantee that the material deposited will be preserved in such a way that it will be accessible to future users. As Paul Eggert notes at the end of his paper "Brought to Book":

We are still a few years away from the day when e-publication will become the primary format of choice for scholarly editions, with print on demand, in a more sophisticated form than it exists at present, serving as the secondary format for those parts of the edition required by the reader. No general editor can ask scholars to spend several years of their life working on a critical edition if the stability of the reading texts they establish cannot be guaranteed beyond the lifetime of the software company or the inevitably limited-term public funding of an electronic repository. These are, or ought to be, generally recognised problems but so far there is no generally accepted solution.

(Eggert, "Brought" 15)

It should, however, be noted that the printed text in books is not fundamentally stable either. Nor can it be regarded as durable, static or sequential. Michael Kirschenbaum notes in "Materiality and Matter and Stuff: What Electronic Texts Are Made Of":

The opposition between fixed, reliable printed texts on the one hand, and fluid, dynamic electronic texts on the other—an opposition encouraged by the putative immateriality of digital data storage—is patently false, yet it has become a truism in the nascent field of electronic textual theory.

(Kirschenbaum, “Materiality” 3)

Kirschenbaum goes on to illustrate the unstable nature of printed texts by noting that the only extant manuscript of *Beowulf* is not “durable” and that Wordsworth’s three very different versions of *The Prelude* cannot be regarded as “static”. While printed texts then cannot be regarded as absolutely stable, it is true to say, however, that electronic texts generally are currently less stable, durable, static and sequential than printed texts.

Scholarly editors today have reached a crossover point. On one side are the familiar known virtues and weaknesses of print-based editions; on the other the only partly conceived and understood realm of electronic editions. While the future seems bright, to date the sun has yet to rise on the history of electronic scholarly editing. As Eggert notes in his paper: “Changing The Paradigm: Electronically Enabled Collaboration In Humanities Research”:

Electronic scholarly editions launched bravely in the early heyday of hypertext have mostly failed or lapsed through lack of thought about the consequences of dependence on proprietary software, the ease with which electronic text files may be corrupted in comparison with those in print, and the sheer amount of work that would be required to bring these textual archives to completion. Those that did survive are mainly displaying what the medium of print could have produced anyway (textual transcriptions and printed-document facsimiles); and the much-vaunted promise of hypertext linking was scarcely an innovation for printed critical editions that often have thousands of internal cross-references to their apparatus of variant readings and explanatory notes,

(Eggert, “Changing” 1-2)

Peter Robinson agrees, for as he notes in his paper “Where We Are With Electronic Scholarly Editions, And Where We Want To Be”:

Scholarly electronic editions up to 2003 have rarely extended beyond the model of print technology, either in terms of product (the materials included and the ways they are accessed) or process (the means by which they are made and by which they may be manipulated).

(Robinson, “Where We Are” 1)

Electronic scholarly editing to date has done little more than reinvent the wheel. No electronic scholarly edition has yet presented material that could not have been presented in a book, nor has the presentation been significantly different from a book

in its format. Computer editions may have more eye-catching features, but it might be cogently argued that the books produced in the scriptoria across Europe in the Middle Ages contained the equivalent of today's hypertext. Illustrations, facsimiles, indexes, annotations etc. have all been present in books for years. Books, and the information they contain, are also more portable, readable and durable than their electronic equivalents. Thus while editors and textual critics have had to rethink what constitutes a text and have had to revisit issues of authorship and meaning, with beneficial effects, as far as the practice of electronic scholarly editing itself goes the advances they have made have been disappointingly small. As Robinson notes:

Almost all we have done, in the first ten years of electronic scholarly editions, is find ways of mimicking on screen elements long present in print and manuscript. ... Certainly, we can include much more in electronic editions, and certainly we can make it much easier to move between related points. But this hardly amounts to a revolution. At their best, so far, most electronic editions do the same as book editions: they just do more of it, perhaps with marginally more convenience. In essence, their product is not significantly different qualitatively to that of print editions.

(Robinson, "Where We Are" 2)

Electronic scholarly editing, while full of promise and potential for the future, is not a viable option for the lone scholarly editor of today. The large amount of time, money and skill needed to create an electronic edition, and the lifelong dedication required to maintain it once created, makes electronic scholarly editing an unattractive option for most. The answer lies in easy-to-use stand-alone non-proprietary software which is both backwards and forwards compatible and which will update and convert data with perfect accuracy. It also lies in teamwork. Creating an electronic edition is too large a project for any one person. However, a dedicated team working on different aspects of an electronic scholarly edition, guided by the vision of a general editor, if required, could produce a project that will excite users and contribute meaningfully to scholarship. Robinson agrees, for as he notes, the future of electronic editing lies in the creation of "fluid, co-operative and distributed editions" which "will not be made or maintained by one person or by one group, but by a community of scholars and readers working together [whose work will be] the work of many and the property of all" (Robinson, "Where We Are" 1). While such an approach will, as Robinson notes, "strain currently deployed data and organizational models [and will] demand rethinking of some of the fundamental practices of the academy" (Robinson, "Where We Are" 1) there are more benefits than drawbacks to the creation of such

editions. There is also more chance of such editions being maintained and so ensuring their longevity than there is in a single editor producing his magnum opus and then spending the rest of his life ensuring that it is accessible to those who wish to consult it.

COMMENTARY



***BRONZE FRIEZE, POEMS MOSTLY RHODESIAN. 1950.***

(Vol. I: 1-105)

Brettell's first volume of poetry *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* was published by Oxford University Press in 1950. Originally entitled "Antelope and Mad Baboon: Poems Mostly Rhodesian" the collection reflects Brettell's first twenty years in Southern Rhodesia and shows an Englishman exploring African surroundings that both excite and confuse him.

While Brettell had had several poems published in *The University Gazette* (see Uncollected Poems) while an undergraduate student at Birmingham University (1928-1930) he was not to publish any more poetry until 1945 when poems such as "Books and Toys" and "Maronda Mashanu" started appearing in Church and Educational magazines, such as *The Link* and *School*, respectively.

Brettell wrote no poetry from 1932-1941, preferring to read what others had to say, while acclimatising himself to his African surroundings. When he became headmaster of Enkeldoorn School (1940-1942), however, this changed. It was during these years that Brettell befriended the blind eccentric and mystical poet-priest Arthur Shearly Cripps who, in Brettell's words, "stirred my own reluctant imagination" (SGS 129).

Cripps's Wreningham Mission station was seven miles from Enkeldoorn and Brettell would ride over on horseback to visit the old man every Thursday afternoon in order to read him poetry (see Douglas Steere's *God's Irregular—Arthur Shearly Cripps* 146). When one day he hesitatingly read some of his own poetry to Cripps, the older poet encouraged him to send it to Cripps's friend, the influential South African poet Francis Carey Slater. Slater in turn urged Brettell to compile a collection of his poems which Slater then, together with Edmund Blunden and Francis Brett Young, persuaded Oxford University Press to publish. The correspondence included below provides an insight into the publication process.

Manystairs,  
WYNBERG.  
South Africa.  
23<sup>rd</sup> January, 1947.

T. S. Eliot, Esq.,  
Messrs. Faber & Faber Ltd.,  
LONDON.

Dear Sir,

My name will probably be unknown to you, so perhaps I should explain that I have several books of verse to my credit – or debit, as the case may be. I am also editor of The Centenary Book of South African Verse (1925) and The New Centenary Book of South African Verse (1945), both of which have been used in South African Schools. About a year after the last-mentioned Anthology was published, I received a few poems from Mr. N. H. Brettell, a schoolmaster in the wilds of Southern Rhodesia. These poems so impressed me that I asked the author for more. The second and larger batch being equally impressive, I suggested that Brettell should sort, re-arrange and re-type his poems, and send them to me with a view, if possible, to eventual publication.

The poems, a number of which touch upon new themes, reveal a pleasant and sincere personality – often original and interesting in his outlook. They also show fresh and arresting imagery, felicitous phrasing and a remarkable linguistic facility. The poems about Africa indicate that Brettell has the seeing eye of the poet, and that he has absorbed the atmosphere of surroundings totally unlike those in which he spent his earlier days. A short biographical note to him is enclosed. [Ed. This has been lost].

I am sending these poems to you because I am told that your firm specializes in the publication of 'Modern Poetry', and it seems to me that Brettell – even when he adopts traditional forms, as he often does – is distinctly 'modern' in his attitude. Although I am old, both in time and in fashion, his poems have given me more than ordinary pleasure. In my opinion he is a young poet of much promise, and I sincerely hope you may feel disposed to 'give him a break'.

Kindly address any correspondence in this connection direct to me here. Should you reject the poems, please post the typescript of Antelope and Mad Baboon (now sent you under separate cover) to my friend, Mr. Edmund Blunden, 318, Stroud Road, Virginia Water, Surrey.

With Compliments and thanks,  
Yours very truly,  
F. C. S

(NELM MS 475/5)

Geoffrey Faber, Chairman Richard de la Mare Marley Kennerley (U.S.A.) T.S.Eliot W.J.Crawley

# FABER AND FABER LTD PUBLISHERS

FABER, WESTCERN, LONDON  
MUSEUM 9543 (Mines) 24 Russell Square London WC1

24th March 1947.

F. Carey Slater, Esq.,  
Manystairs,  
Wynberg,  
South Africa.



My dear Sir,

I received your letter of January 23rd together with Antelope and Mad Baboon by N.E. Brettell. I may say that I was struck by the author's talent, especially in his use of African imagery, and although the poems are of unequal quality I think that there is enough in the collection to justify a book. While they are not quite of the type of verse with which the name of this firm has been chiefly associated I should have been disposed to secure one or two other opinions of them had I felt that we were in a position to accept the work of any new poets; but as we are obliged to confine our list I have forwarded the poems to Mr. Edmund Blunden as you request together with an expression of my favourable opinion and interest.

With many thanks for letting me see these poems.

Yours very truly,

*T.S. Eliot*

(NELM MS 475/6)

Reproduced with the kind permission of the National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown.

10 March 1949

N. H. Brettell, Esq.  
Riverside School  
P.B. 127 D  
Salisbury  
Southern Rhodesia

Dear Mr Brettell,

I have been enjoying an evening reading your Antelope and Mad Baboon. It is an interesting and refreshing collection and I would like to publish the little book for you.

We will have a specimen page prepared and see how many pages the typescript will make. If we ought to leave out a piece or two would you mind? I want to read them again to make sure there are not any that should to the advantage of the book be omitted.

I wonder if the title is a good one for us? I like Donkey Cart very much and that would not be a bad title (I am not happy though about abhorrence and D. H. Lawrence!) But this we can think over.

I enclose two agreement forms and if you approve perhaps you will sign and return one to me.

Yours sincerely,  
G. Cumberlege

(NELM MS 475/7)

On the reverse side of the above letter is an incomplete draft of Brettell's reply:

Dear Mr Cumberlege

Thank you very much for your letter of March 10<sup>th</sup> I hasten to reply, as the wastes of time and space that separate us from England make correspondence a lengthy business. I am very grateful for your offer to publish my book and am returning one of the agreement forms.

My friend Dr Carey Slater of Cape Town has thoroughly 'vetted' the collection, but if you do think any should be omitted, I think I may leave that to you. I will think about the title and let you know—I only think that as the springs of the stuff are chiefly African, that flavour ought to be in the title ....

In the end the poems “Expecting Peace”, “End of Year Returns” and “The Lamplight” were omitted and the collection’s title was changed to *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*.

In later life Brettell was to dismiss much of the poetry in *Bronze Frieze* as lightweight. He noted in a letter to his poet friends Hugh and Betty Finn:

there it was a case, where Carey Slater insisted on getting a volume together, if putting in a lot of make-weights to collect enough together and much of it I would rather see safely buried.

(Letter dated 10 May 1971. NELM MS 96.19.107)

*Bronze Frieze*, however, is an important collection as it shows Brettell’s first serious attempt at writing poetry. His later poetry is undoubtedly more accomplished, but the fact that readers like Slater, Blunden, Brett Young and Eliot saw sufficient promise in the early Brettell to recommend the publication of his poetry and that a major publishing house such as Oxford University Press was prepared to put its muscle behind the work of “a schoolmaster in the wilds of Southern Rhodesia” is in itself a testament to Brettell’s talent. Amongst other themes, the poems in *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* examine the meeting of European and African culture, the Second World War, the implications of the dropping of the atomic bomb and Brettell’s love for his wife and England. The book also shows him experimenting with different formal verse structures. Throughout the collection Brettell’s sensitivity to his natural surroundings, both English and African, comes to the fore.

\* \* \*

## MARONDA MASHANU

p.5 ☒

**Note:** This was Brettell’s first poem, apart from “the handful of undergraduate experiments that have gone into a grateful limbo”(see letter to Hugh and Betty Finn dated: 1 November 1975. NELM MS 96.19.151). These “experiments” may be found, with other poems, in the section marked “Uncollected Poems”. The poem is both a tribute to Cripps and an exploration of Brettell’s own position as an outsider in an alien landscape. In it Brettell uses familiar Western classical imagery to orientate himself within the unfamiliar environment he is describing. In a draft letter to Ray Brown (NELM MS 98.4.75), he acknowledges: “I know when I wrote ‘Maronda Mashanu’, over 30 years ago, I was much more self-consciously the exile than I may be now.” The poet John Redwood Anderson (1883-1964) noted an “unadvertised contrast” in the poem between “the eyes that see so little and so confusedly and

the closed eyes of blindness that see so much and so timelessly” (Letter to N.H. Brettell dated 29 September 1951. NELM MS 475/16).

**Title:** *Maronda Mashanu*: Shona for “five wounds”. The title, referring to the wounds in the hands, feet and side of the crucified Christ, was the name Cripps gave to the church he built near Enkeldoorn in the central part of what is now Zimbabwe. (Brettell painted several watercolours of Maronda Mashanu—see *SGS* 113).

In commenting on the primitive building, Cripps’s biographer Douglas V Steere noted:

Cripps was convinced that (The Great) Zimbabwe (Ruins) was of African origin, and he seems to have been as much haunted by Zimbabwe as by Francis of Assisi and the stigmata when he fashioned the Maronda Mashanu church with its five pillars of stones, its rondavel thatched roofs, its rugged altar with a clay floor studded with pebbles, and an almost Hindu freedom for the birds to share in its worship as they wheeled in and out and were looked upon not as intruders but as our sisters the birds. Built in 1912 out of poles, stones, mud, and grass for thatch, it could hardly be of repair-proof durability. No African expected this of even his best hut. The Reverend Richard Holderness, who visited it in its later, renovated form, remembered that ‘It was full of holiness and mystery and reminded me of Zimbabwe ruins’  
(Steere 77)

**Dedication:** *Arthur Shearly Cripps*: (1869-1952) the blind Anglican priest, poet and visionary whom Brettell befriended while he was headmaster at the nearby Enkeldoorn School (1940-42), and whom he described as “the most remarkable man ever to cross my path” (*SGS* 114). Cripps was born in Tunbridge Wells in 1869 and educated at Oxford. He went to Mashonaland in 1907 as a missionary. According to Steere Cripps had been convinced through his reading of Olive Schreiner’s *Trooper Peter Halkett of Mashonaland* that flagrant injustices were being inflicted upon black people by the British colonists and Cecil John Rhodes’ imperialist schemes. As Cripps was to tell his godson William Tully, it was this book with its “horrible frontispiece” that “touched off in him a determination to place a few years of his own life in the scale-pan on the side of the African, and to try in some small way to lessen the accumulated weight of wrong which his own people had done to them” (Steere 15-16).

Completely different from the “conventional idea of a missionary and often impatient of ecclesiastical authority”, Cripps

identified himself completely with the African people. He lived and slept as they did and was their champion against exploitation by the white settlers. Time and again he

was successful in removing abuses and in obtaining modification of laws which would have favoured them at the expense of the Africans.

(Steere, inside dust jacket.)

Cripps was also the leading Rhodesian poet of his day, publishing five volumes of poetry as well as two novels and a number of short stories. His influence on Brettell was significant and though Brettell noted, in a letter to Betty Finn dated 16 June 1958 (NELM MS 96.19.1), that Cripps “was not a great poet”, Brettell was quick to add that “he was undoubtedly a great man—I think the greatest to have lived in Rhodesia.” Brettell was a pall-bearer at Cripps’s funeral in 1952.

**1** *grim euphorbia*: a massive tree-sized African succulent (*Euphorbia ingens*), nicknamed the “candelabra tree” because the shape of its branches are reminiscent of a menorah (see *l.19*) or a many-branched candelabra. In an article in *The Link* in May 1953, Brettell described the approach to Maronda Mashanu: “the long path coridored by the stony hills and guarded by the great saturnine euphorbias” (“Reading to Cripps” 22). A watercolour by Brettell shows a euphorbia dominating the ruined church.

**7** *elf-locked piccanin*: By describing the black boy’s matted hair as “elf-locked” Brettell endows the young goatherd with a timeless mythic quality. According to *A Dictionary of South African English* “Piccanin” is a small black child, but the term is now generally regarded as offensive in southern Africa (see *DSAE* “piccanin” n. 1a, b).

**8** *Bronze frieze*: The pastoral scene, whether real or imagined, is reminiscent of a classical frieze depicting everyday activities. In order, perhaps, to reflect the dark bodies of the African figures, this frieze is seen as cast in bronze rather than carved in marble. The revised title of Brettell’s first collection (originally “Antelope and Mad Baboon”) is drawn from this line.

**8** *Diana*: In Roman mythology Diana was the chaste goddess of the moon and the hunt. She presided over childbirth and is usually depicted as a young woman with a bow and arrows slung over her shoulder (*EE* “Diana”).

10 *roasted rats*: (possibly an abbreviation of: “cane rats”—*Thryonomys swinderianus*—), a delicacy, particularly for young herd boys whose day would have been enlivened by hunting them down. By reinterpreting the African scene in terms of Classical imagery Brettell shows both the familiar and the mystic strangeness of Africa. The ambivalence in the scene evokes both delight and horror: the line of hoeing girls, the image of the virgin goddess Diana “with a watergourd” are homely; the “assegais” of the green corn, the boys roasting rats, the “Brews in black pots” (reminiscent of *Macbeth*’s witches) are more ominous.

14 *No clean-etched line of flute or dancer*: The reference recalls the scene depicted in Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”. Brettell discovered Keats’s poetry while a student at Birmingham University. It is interesting to note, given the poem’s dedication and its allusions to Keats (see ll. 74, 84), that among the first poems that Brettell read to Cripps were Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, “Ode to a Nightingale”, “Ode on Melancholy” and “To Autumn” (SGS 114).

17 *kloof*: Afrikaans topographical term for a small ravine.

17 *kopje*: Afrikaans topographical term for a small hillock (see *DSAE* “koppie” n.)

26 *broken altars*: The Maronda Mashanu church seems already to have been in a state of disrepair when this poem was written.

32-34 *Gleaning undefeated ... peasants*: In a draft letter to Ray Brown Brettell noted:

There were gleaners, you know, in the wheatfields of the Charter in those days: but of course, you’re right when you say the picture isn’t really African—though in this case the reference is a sideglance at Manet’s painting where the figures of the peasants are anonymous, timeless, placeless.

(NELM MS 98.4.75)

Brettell is probably misremembering the name of the artist. The reference is almost certainly to “The Gleaners” by Jean-François Millet (1814-1875). Helen Gardner’s interpretation of the painting helps to elucidate what Brettell is trying to achieve in this poem, as also in several later ones. In *Art through the Ages* Gardner notes:

Of peasant stock, Millet undertook to glorify the humble country folk of France. In *The Gleaners*, done in 1857, he characteristically poses them as monumental figures against the flat, dull land and sky. The quiet design of Millet’s paintings ... contributes to the dignity he gives to even the simplest rural tasks. This solemn grandeur with



which Millet invests the poor ... is a late echo of the romantic intuition, held by men such as Wordsworth, which found a touch of nobility in the humblest lives.

(Gardner 660-61)

48 *arbutus*: a tree of the strawberry-tree genus, (species *Arbutus unedo*).

50 *Arcadian*: In Greek mythology, according to *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*, Arcady was the home of the nature god Pan. While in fact Arcady is in the harsh, mountainous region of the central Peloponnese, in Vergil's (70-19BC) *Eclogues*, and ever since, it has been portrayed as the idealised innocent landscape of pastoral poetry (*EE* "Arcadia, mythology").

51 *negro*: black. The word is emotionally neutral in this context.

54 *Theocritus* (310-250 BC): one of the earliest and most influential of the Greek pastoral poets. By invoking an icon of Western pastoral poetry to observe the blind poet in his African Arcadia, Brettell is paying homage to Cripps whilst merging Western and African imagery.

57-58 *The grey stems redden, ... crops the turf*: an echo, perhaps, of Walter de la Mare's (1873-1956) poem "The Listeners"— (see *l.* 23: "his horse moved, cropping the dark turf"). In both poems the speaker is intensely conscious of silent, unseen auditors.

65 *ancient truth*: Given the character and belief of the person being addressed, i.e. Cripps, the "ancient truth" is likely a reference to Christian law and doctrine.

69-70 *Absolve me*: The poet seeks absolution from the old blind priest for his own youthful follies, lusts and heresies, though the sins that require absolution remain unspecified.

69 *Harlequin antics under forbidden apples*: a disparaging reference to the fall of Adam and Eve in Judeo-Christian mythology (see Gen. 3:1-13). Harlequin is a buffoon in old pantomimes.

70 *Marigold wreaths*: possibly a reference to the Hindu practice of decorating sacred images, doorways and portraits of dead relatives with ochre-coloured floral garlands, often marigolds. The "phallic chimney stacks" may refer to Hindu worship of the lingam, hence: a fertility

rite, here linked to Western countries' "worship" of their industrial manufacturing potential. The reference may also be to the poet's futile attempts to beautify, and so justify, sins of the flesh.

**71** *God's rainbow*: a reference to the covenant God made with Noah (Gen. 9:8-17) never again to destroy the world by flood. To emphasise the fallen nature of man, the rainbow's pure colours are here associated with the oily iridescence of sinks and drains.

**74** *beauty and truth are one*: see l. 49 of John Keats's (1795-1821) "Ode on a Grecian Urn": "Beauty is truth, truth beauty."

**84** *with no pain*: see l. 56 of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale": "To cease upon the midnight with no pain."

\* \* \*

## WAR AND PEACE

p.11

**Subtitle:** *Wedza Hill, Mashonaland*: Wedza Mountain or Mount Wedza is famous for iron deposits worked there from time immemorial. It is situated in eastern Zimbabwe between Harare and Nyanga.

Hwedza (the correct spelling) means either (depending upon dialect) tomorrow or the day after tomorrow (*Standard Shona Dictionary* "hwedza"). Brettell seems to have been thinking of the latter translation as in *Side-Gate and Stile* he refers to Wedza hill as: "Wedza, the noble beckoning, the blue mountain, 'the day after tomorrow'" (*SGS* 65).

**Subtitle:** *1942*: 1942 saw some of the bloodiest fighting in World War II, especially in the North African campaign, in which many South African and Rhodesian troops were involved.

**3** *blue plantations*: tracts of timberland under Australian eucalyptus trees, commonly called blue-gums.

**15** *like the villain stoats on the gamekeeper's fence*: an echo perhaps of Edward Thomas's (1878-1917) poem "The Gallows", the first stanza of which reads:

There was a weasel lived in the sun  
With all his family,  
Till a keeper shot him with his gun  
And hung him up on a tree,  
Where he swings in the wind and rain,  
In the sun and in the snow,  
Without pleasure, without pain,  
On the dead oak tree bough.

(ll. 1-8)

Stoats (*Mustela erminea*) are small carnivorous mammals of the weasel family. Here Brettell compares the remains of soldiers caught in the barbed wire strung between the battlefield trenches of World War I with dead stoats strung up by a gamekeeper on fences. The comparison highlights both man's inhumanity to man and the enmity between man and the natural world.

**15 at home:** Brettell is remembering a scene from his boyhood in England, not his home in Rhodesia.

**25 barbel:** several species of African freshwater fish. Barbel (*Clarias gariepinus*) are commonly referred to as catfish.

**25 bream:** In southern Africa anglers refer to all the large cichlid fishes as "bream". The reference here is probably to the: Mozambique bream (*Oreochromis mossambicus*), the red-breasted bream (*Tilapia rendalli*) or the greenhead bream (*Oreochromis macrochir*).

**32 Rodin's crag of stone:** The speaker compares himself to "The Thinker" by Auguste Rodin (1814-1917). Brettell seems to be misremembering: Rodin's craggy sculpture is in bronze, not stone.

**34 pigmy:** here the Bushmen (San) of southern Africa who are characterized by their small stature and are remembered chiefly for their paintings on the walls of caves and rock shelters.

**34-40 paintings ... stone:** Bushman paintings on the rockface, which often depict hunting scenes, as described in the lines highlighted; "rust-red and bronze" refers to their favoured pigments.

50 *Night, the negro mother*: see l. 20 of “Rounding the Cape” by Roy Campbell (1901-1957): “And Night, the Negro, murmurs in his sleep”. “Negro” here is not used in any derogatory or disparaging manner.

53-54 *Already in fancy ... ripening fruit*: reminiscent of Keats’s (1795-1821) “Ode to Autumn”: “... mellow fruitfulness” (l. 1), and “fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;” (l. 6).

56 *spruit*: Afrikaans for “stream”, the bed of which is often dry, except after rains. Brettell uses the anglicised pronunciation “sproot” to rhyme with “fruit.” The speaker here is lying beside a stream in a small ravine similar in shape to that of a nurse’s elbow when cradling a child. The pastoral African scene is thus imbued with a maternal feel.

66 *bulbul*: an African songbird (Family Pycnonotidae).

\* \* \*

## ANTELOPE AND MAD BABOON

p.15

**Note:** Originally the title poem of the collection subsequently named *Bronze Frieze*, the poem deals humorously with the speaker’s sense of alienation within the African landscape. Sudden shifts from observation to personal reflection serve to emphasise this. The speaker is alone and attempting to interact meaningfully with his environment. The last four lines make clear that he feels success in understanding the alien world of his surroundings will ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of himself.

17 *piccanin*: see l. 7 “Maronda Mashanu”; here: juvenile apes.

18 *krantzes*: Afrikaans: cliffs, rock faces.

22 *flourished sterns*: possibly an allusion to the brightly coloured buttocks of male baboons (*Papio ursinus*).

24 *Toss their ancient blasphemies*: an echo of sentiments in Roy Campbell’s “The Theology of Bongwi the Baboon”:

'Tis God who made me in His shape  
He is a great Baboon. ....

And when I die, His loving care  
Will raise me from the sod  
To learn the perfect Mischief there,  
The Nimbleness of God.

(ll.13-16)

See also "Antelope and Mad Baboon" lines 62-71.

27 *steenbok*: small South African antelope (*Raphiceros campestris*).

46 *slot ... spoor*: animal trails.

59 *brack*: abbreviation for the fern bracken (*Pteris aquilina*).

63 *hop their scuts*: (*conjecture*) dart about rapidly, like rabbits at play.

68 *I'll find at last*: see "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" by W. B. Yeats (1865-1939). The longing for rural solitude away from the bustle of modern life is present in both poems.

\* \* \*

## VOX POPULI

p.19

**Note:** *Vox Populi*: "the voice of the people", a truncation of "Vox populi, vox dei" : the voice of the people is the voice of God, here a satirical reference to democracy or mob rule. The poem contrasts the voices of rationality ("Hilversum" + "news review" + "symposium") with shallow emotionalism: ("Budapest" + "song request" + "jigging mob").

3 *babel*: mutual incomprehension. In a blasphemous attempt to build a tower up to heaven at Babel, mankind was stricken with "confusion of tongues" (see Gen. 11: 1-9).

8 *Hilversum to Budapest*: The metre-bands of short-wave radio sets during the first half of twentieth century were marked with the geographical locations from which the main stations broadcast. Hilversum is the radio and television centre in the Netherlands from which Radio Nederland broadcasts while Budapest does the same for Hungary. Both stations resisted Nazi

occupation. The radio signals the speaker tunes into may come from short-wave stations, with the markings for Hilversum and Budapest merely signifying opposite ends of the radio dial.

10 *skerry*: a reef of rocks.

14 *spurt of morse*: a reference to morse code: a system of communication invented by Sam F. B. Morse (1791-1872) in which letters of the alphabet are represented by dots and dashes. It was used for all telegraphic transmissions, where rapid taps, alternated with slower ones, represented the dots and dashes. It is this tapping that Brettell is referring to here.

18 *metre band*: points of signal reference on the dial of a radio.

23 *uplifted palms*: universal attitude of supplication, prayer or begging.

27 *fatted times*: In Gen. 41:1-36 Joseph predicted seven years of plenty—symbolised by seven “fatted kine”—followed by seven years of famine.

30 *dikkop*: the African stone curlew. The Cape Dikkop (*Burhinus capensis*) has “a loud plaintive ‘tche-u’ the end of the note drawn out and gradually tailing off. Also an excited ‘pi-pi-pi-pi-pi.’” It is often heard on moonlight nights where its “melancholy whistling notes cause misgivings in the minds of the superstitious.” (*RBSA*, “Cape Dikkop”, 188).

34 *resurrected vlei*: the shallow depression (vlei) has come alive again after rain.

35 *The many-mouthed democracy of frogs*: possibly a reference to Aristophanes’s satirical comedy *The Frogs*; see also line 25 in T. S. Eliot’s “Coriolan: II—Difficulties of a Statesman”: “And the frogs (O Mantuan) croak in the marshes” (l. 25.)

\* \* \*

**DONKEY CART**

**p.21**

**Note:** The poem fuses a meditation on D. H. Lawrence’s poetry, which the speaker is reading, with a consideration of the donkeys pulling the cart. The result is an apocalyptic

vision of the end of the world before the speaker's mind eye returns to the aridity of rural Southern Rhodesia.

While headmaster of Enslinsdeel Primary School Brettell kept two donkeys, "two of the surliest and most unobtrusive public servants," which "twice a week hauled supplies and mail in their scotch cart from the halt seven miles away" (SGS 96). Brettell's experience of accompanying the donkey cart on the seven mile trudge seems to be, at least in part, what gave rise to this poem.

**2** *You would have smiled at me*: The identity of the "you" here is unclear. It might simply be a convention to involve the reader in the poem, but it may also be a reference to Brettell's wife Eva who, while supportive of her husband, did not share his enthusiasm for literature.

**4** *D. H. Lawrence*: David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930), according to the *Longman Companion to English Literature*, was one of the first major British writers to emerge from the working classes. The controversial sexual content of his novels such as *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) scandalised polite society. The latter was banned, except in an expurgated edition, until 1960. His controversial reputation might be the reason for the poet's "faint abhorrence" in line 1. Brettell particularly enjoyed Lawrence's *The White Peacock* and *Sons and Lovers*. Much of Lawrence's poetry is in free verse, which Brettell may have been attempting to imitate here (LCEL, "Lawrence, David Herbert", 614-5).

**6** *his glowering moods*: D. H. Lawrence was misunderstood and unhappy, especially during World War I, which he opposed (see LCEL, "Lawrence, David Herbert", 614-5).

**15** *Lava-like creeping in a snaky line*: In commenting here on Lawrence's metrics Brettell may also be referring obliquely to Lawrence's poem "Snake" which is set below the volcanic Mount Etna in Sicily.

**16** *With the first fires wet*: Brettell seems to be alluding to Lawrence's impact on the literary world.

**17** *His savage metres*: Lawrence was more concerned with content than form and though a modernist in principle, the refined style of the Bloomsbury group was not his principal

concern. His poetry, for the most part, disregarded the restrictions of formal verse structures. Brettell in a draft letter to an unidentified African poet (NELM MS 98.4.73) notes that “‘Snake’ by D. H. L. is, I think, the best example I know of what is called ‘free’ verse – that is without rhymes and with no patterns of stanza.”

**21** *Bottom and Quince*: Two of the group of comic Athenian artisans in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Bottom’s head is, at one point in the play, magically replaced with that of an ass. Here they are the names of Brettell’s donkeys.

**23** *He*: Lawrence.

**26** *mis-shaping necromancy*: One of several references here to “The Donkey” by G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936); see *l.* 26 “mis-shaping necromancy” and Chesterton’s: “the devil’s walking parody” (*l.* 7); “outlaws and rebels” (*l.* 31) and “my tattered dwarfs” (*l.* 45) and Chesterton’s line “The tattered outlaw of the earth” (*l.* 9).

**28** *prickly pear*: the common name for a species of central American cactus (*Opuntia tuna*) with edible fruit, found growing wild throughout southern Africa.

**41** *Groundsel*: a common, yellow-flowered weed (*Senecio vulgaris*).

**45** *Caucasian crag*: The Caucasus mountains in southern Russia are believed to be the region from which Western peoples originate.

\* \* \*

## LOCUST BIRDS

p.25 ☒

**Title**: *Locust Birds*: direct translation from Afrikaans “Sprinkaanvoël.” The white-bellied Stork (*Sphenorhynchus abdimii*) is an avid consumer of locusts (see *RBSA*, “White-bellied Stork”, 45-6).

**4** *crowding*: These storks fly in large flocks and descend on fields to feed voraciously on swarming locusts and other insects. (see *RBSA*, “White-bellied Stork”, 45-6).



18 *Predikant or advocate*: The “predikant” (Afrikaans for a clergyman) and advocate (a title equivalent to “barrister” in English law) both wear black gowns, one with a white necktie, the other with a white jabot.

\* \* \*

## HEARD AT INYANGA

p.27

**Note:** The incongruity of black African girls singing the tune of the British national anthem leads Brettell to speculate on the future of Rhodesia and the possibility of building a new country and society free of prejudice, where the best of what is African and English is merged.

**Title:** *Inyanga*: a scenic mountainous area in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, where Brettell retired in 1958 and lived until 1979. After 1980 Inyanga became Nyanga.

2 *negro*: the word here has no derogatory sense. It merely indicates that the young women are black.

3 *kraal*: enclosure of thorn branches surrounding rural African dwellings or livestock pens. (see *DSAE* “kraal” n. 3a).

3 *fountain*: Anglicisation of Afrikaans “fontein”: spring, water source.

5 *doek*: Afrikaans: head scarf, square of coloured cloth formerly widely worn by adult African women (see *DSAE* “doek” n. 2).

9 *blue below*: This suggests that the speaker is very high up, looking down into a blue haze.

15 *God Save the King*: The British national anthem. Southern Rhodesia, established in the 1890s, was a self-governing British colony from 1923-1965, most of whose white population were of British extraction. The Union Jack flew in front of official buildings and the national anthem was sung at official occasions in Rhodesia till, and even for a while after, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain established Rhodesia as a republic. In

fact Ian Smith, the first and last Prime Minister of Rhodesia to be born in southern Africa, proclaimed:

If Churchill were alive today ... I believe he'd probably emigrate to Rhodesia—because I believe that all those admirable qualities and characteristics of the British we believed in, loved and preached to our children, no longer exist in Britain.  
(Caute, 90)

While Harold Soref of the right-wing Tory ginger group, the Monday Club, said that:

Rhodesia represents Britain in its halcyon days: patriotic, self-reliant, self-supporting, with law and order and a healthy society. Rhodesia is as Britain was at its best.  
(Caute, 90)

**23-32:** These lines contrast the place, the occasion and the “tune” sung by the “shyly sauntering” African girls with the speaker’s memories of places and occasions where it was more usual to hear the British national anthem, such as in commemoration services for dead soldiers, and after cinema screenings. While the more sombre descriptions and sentiments expressed applied also to World War II, Brettell’s memories are specifically of World War I.

**24 *cobweb ensigns*:** old regimental flags, gathering dust and cobwebs in churches where they were hung as memorials of the regiments that had borne them.

**26 *Fed on gross perfume and the fluttering dark*:** Brettell here is referring to films at the cinema. At the time of writing this poem the British national anthem was always played in theatres at the end of a film, at which point the audience would stand to attention (see / 28). It was at the cinema that ordinary people most frequently heard “God Save the King”.

**28 *tri-coloured chords*:** kinaesthetic description of the anthem in terms of the red, white and blue of the Union Jack.

**29 *Snatch back the blind that shutters out to-morrow*:** Brettell is referring to the cinema screen as a blind that shuts out reality. Hearing the British National Anthem at the end of the movie, however, snaps one back into reality.

**31 *picture news*:** a precursor to television. Newsreels were screened to audiences in cinemas.

33 *Peel off our threadbare lendings*: Brettell is echoing *King Lear* III. iv. 108: “Off, off, you lendings” in an attempt to expose the truth.

40 *second-hand estate*: the development of the self-governing British colony of Southern Rhodesia, “second-hand” in that it is being built on an older model.

41 *translate*: in the sense of “transfer” or “transform”.

45 *Little Street of Delft*: the painting “Street in Delft” by Jan Vermeer (1632-1675). Brettell sees the graceful “swan lines” of the characteristic gables of the architectural style known as Cape Dutch as deriving from the simpler, angular gables of buildings, such as those in the Vermeer painting.

46 *Groot Constantia*: The reference is to the magnificent manor house on the estate first granted to the Dutch Governor of the Cape, Simon Van der Stel, in about 1682, and specifically to the lines of the gables, built in the 1790s, which make the house one of South Africa’s architectural treasures. The “swan lines” refer to the graceful curves of its white gables. The implication perhaps is that the transposition of Europeans (including Brettell) from the constricted life of Europe (“the Little Street of Delft”) to the spaciousness and freedom of Africa reflects a liberation and a cultural cross-pollination that may be to the benefit of both. The question: “Could we not here translate our prejudice ...” (could we not) “... build on our patient land (Rhodesia) ... something precious in itself ...” is perhaps an attempt to justify the presence in Africa of Europeans. It also expresses a hope for the future and a new beginning after the ravages of war in Europe. The large influx of Europeans, especially immigrants from the United Kingdom, to Rhodesia after World War II was largely motivated by a common desire to leave the horrors of war and its aftermath behind and the hope of a fresh start.

47-50 In this last stanza Brettell recognises nature’s indifference to the plans of man.

\* \* \*

**Note:** A wartime dialogue in which the first speaker (in the odd-numbered stanzas) attempts to express (her?) hope for the future while the second speaker pessimistically discounts it in (his?) grief for what is being lost.

11 *pointer*: hunting dog, retriever.

15-16 warfaring man is described as subhuman.

23 *polished walnut*: perhaps a reference to the wooden cabinet enclosing the wireless set. Radio broadcasts were one of the main sources of wartime news and propaganda.

24 *tin and tack*: inferior materials or workmanship in the interior of the wireless cabinet.

\* \* \*

**Title:** *Umsasa*: an indigenous Zimbabwean hardwood tree (*Brachystegia spiciformis*). The seed pods of the umsasa are explosively dehiscent—see “Arson”.

1 *Capricorn*: tropical Africa south of the Equator.

2 *May in the air and underfoot September*: May and September mark the beginning of spring in the northern and southern hemispheres respectively. As a born northerner Brettell senses the southern spring as “May” while the unusual “autumn” colours of the spring foliage of the umsasa trees remind him of sycamore trees and September in England. This is elaborated on as he contrasts the redness of new growth in Africa with that of the fire and bloodshed in a Europe at war. Brettell later used the phrase “and underfoot September” as the title for a collection of poetry completed in 1977 and published as part of his autobiography *Side-Gate and Stile* in 1981.

11 *cardinal red martyrdom*: Red is the colour of a cardinal's hat and cassock in the Roman Catholic Church. It is also the ecclesiastical colour used on the feast days of martyrs. Here Brettell has conflated the two ideas.

16 *varlet*: servant.

21 *The baleful red in that grey latitude*: a reference to autumn in the northern hemisphere.

22 *funeral fires forlorn ... a rosy attitude*: the destruction and death of war-ridden Europe contrasted with the new life of spring in Africa.

\* \* \*

“L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE”

p.35

**Title:** *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*: “a faun's afternoon”. An eclogue with this title by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-98) presents the wandering thoughts of a faun on a summer afternoon in Sicily. In 1892 the composer Claude Debussy (1862-1918) undertook to write an impressionistic three-movement tone poem on the subject but completed only the prelude. His “Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune” was first performed in 1894. Brettell draws on both Mallarmé's poem and Debussy's music in order to comment on the character and nature of Kingsley Fairbridge.

**Subtitle:** *Kingsley Fairbridge*: Surveyor's assistant, bank clerk, market gardener and journalist, Kingsley Fairbridge (1885-1924) was driven by a vision for the development of Rhodesia (and later Australia) through settling underprivileged young people from Britain on unoccupied land in the colonies. *The Autobiography of Kingsley Fairbridge* was published posthumously in 1927 by Oxford University Press. A 1974 Books of Rhodesia facsimile reprint of the autobiography and Fairbridge's *Veld Verses* has a Foreword by Brettell.

In his 1927 Preface to the book the conservative British parliamentarian and imperial theorist Leo Amery describes it as:

the story of a vision seen by a famished, fainting boy of twelve in the noon-day glare of the veld—the vision (see *l.* 12) of a waste land (see *l.* 14) filled with homesteads—converted by the sights of London streets into a definite purpose, that of regenerating the childhood of our slums in the more spacious life of the new lands.

(Fairbridge viii-ix)

Amery describes Fairbridge as “a man whose unquestioning, selfless devotion to an idea lifted him entirely above the common run” and as “one of those ‘warriors of the sighting brain’ whose lives are a song and star to lead their generation” (Fairbridge viii-ix). Brettell would almost certainly have read these words and the idea of giving youngsters from the slums a chance to live and work in a healthy new environment is one with which he would have sympathised.

*6 lory*: Probably the Grey Loerie (*Corythaixoides concolor*) which is found throughout Zimbabwe. The bird’s “most characteristic call is a loud drawn-out ‘go-away’ or ‘kweh’, hence the popular name, ‘Goaway Bird’” which it is “fond of uttering when intruded upon” (RBSA, “Grey Loerie”, 232).

\* \* \*

## NO PRAYER FOR RAIN

p.37

**Note:** The poem comments in a tone of resignation, tinged with some cynicism, on the ignorance and stubbornness of peasants and specifically their superstitions about rain.

*2-5 who am I to commandeer the clouds*: see Ps. 147:8: “Who covereth the heavens with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.”

*10 thoral*: “of or pertaining to the nuptial bed” (OED “thoral” a.).

*12 trimming lamps for nuptials not begun*: see the parable of the Ten Virgins (Mt. 25:1-13, specifically verses 6-7: “And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.”

*13 eucalyptus leaves*: long glossy hard leaves of the Australian gum trees found all over southern Africa. The genus eucalyptus is part of the Myrtaceae family. To conserve its sap in times of drought, the tree turns its flat blade-like leaves away from the sun (see *l.* 14).

*20-21 the ... moon lies ... upon her back //And will not spill the rain*: Some rural people believe that rain cannot be expected while the lower quarter of the moon is illuminated.

\* \* \*

5 *Lory*: see note to l. 6 of “L’Après-Midi d’un Faune.”

5 *hoopoe*: The hoopoe (*Upupa africana*) is found throughout southern Africa and is characterised by its red-brown plumage and large black-and-white banded crest. It owes its name to its call, “an oft-repeated hoop, hoop” (RBSA, “Hoopoe”, 283).

11 *umsasa*: see note to “Umsasa”.

15-16 *with dance ... the flails*: a reference to the communal threshing of harvested maize cobs using hand-held flails, accompanied by the singing of traditional work-songs.

18 *Ungarnished as your daily food*: Traditional African food in southern Africa is often simply presented without elaborate garnishing.

\* \* \*

**Subtitle:** 1942: see note to subtitle of “War and Peace”.

3 *Christmas star*: Mt. 2:1-12 tells how Magi from the East followed a star to Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus.

4 *men with lanterns*: people, possibly carol singers, on their way to church services on Christmas eve.

5 *wake the iron tongues*: sound the church bells to ring Christmas in.

9 *double bob, treble bob*: “Bob” is a term in bell ringing referring to certain changes.

13 *That are the warning of the German radio*: It is unclear what melody Brettell has in mind, possibly that of the German national anthem, “Deutschlandlied” which is set to music written by Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809).

14 *Eight sprinkled notes*: an apparent reference to the signature tune of the German radio service; again possibly the German national anthem.

16 *our enemies*: Germans.

21 *Bell celeste*: The celesta is a keyboard version of a glockenspiel. Both the celesta and glockenspiel are classified as metallophones because of their metal bars which produce a bell-like sound when struck.

29 *I see them carving ancient toys*: German woodcarvers are renowned for their craftsmanship.

34 *pantaloons*: carved wooden toy figures of Pantalone, a Venetian character in the Italian Commedia dell'arte, always depicted as a lean, foolish old man, dressed in spectacles, carpet slippers and wide breeches—hence the name.

37-40 factory-made American toys.

47 *the merry tale*: the message of Christmas—see note to line 58.

49 *glee*: an old English musical composition for three or more unaccompanied voices, where each voice takes a different part (see *OED* “glee” n. 2c).

52 *chimney pots*: Children in northern European countries are traditionally told that Father Christmas comes down the chimney to leave gifts for good children.

53 *Good Nicholas*: Santa Claus, the bringer of gifts at Christmas. St. Nicholas Eve falls on 5 December.

57 *Good will to men*: the message brought by the angels at Christ's birth; see Lk. 2:13-14: “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on the earth peace, good will toward men.”



58 *Unto us a Child is born*: see Isaiah's prophecy foretelling the birth of Christ: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6).

61 *madrigal*: an unaccompanied contrapuntal part-song, usually for five or six voices. A glee differs from a madrigal in lacking contrapuntal imitation (see *OED* "madrigal" n. 1a).

62 *To the old unwinking star*: the star that led the Magi from the East to the birthplace of Jesus; see Mt. 2:1-12.

\* \* \*

## BOOKS AND TOYS

p.47

**Note:** a consideration of mechanical toys and books with ugly covers received at Christmas during war time leads to an expression of yearning for the authentic gifts of peace.

7-10 *patterned dust-covers ... managed steel*: The dust-jackets of books printed until the early twentieth century were often decorated with Jacobean or Pre-Raphaelite designs and floral motifs which, to the speaker, resemble bed-curtains for lovers when compared with the harsh geometric patterns that adorn the book in his hand and others like it, products of the industrial twentieth century.

14 *But at our back*: a reference to "To His Coy Mistress" by Andrew Marvell (1621-1678): "But at my back I always hear // Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near" (ll.21-22)

16 *rails*: on which the toy train runs "round the bedroom floor", an image of purposeless motion.

20-22 This invocation of T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) and Walter de la Mare (1873-1956) introduces the theme of the poetic imagination as a countervailing influence against the mechanical toys (see also "Christmas Carol" above, ll. 37-39). According to the *Longman Companion to English Literature*

Baudelaire, Arnold and Eliot all recognise and regret the melancholy dissociation of industrial society from the natural world, while de la Mare continues to evoke the simplicity of rural or pre-industrial society. The poetry of Baudelaire and Eliot marked a turning point in French nineteenth- and English twentieth-century letters respectively. Eliot admired Baudelaire for his use of “imagery of the sordid life of the great metropolis”, and his “elevation of such imagery to the first intensity” (*LCEL*, “Baudelaire, Charles”, 404).

30 *brume*: “fog, mist, vapour” (*OED* “brume” n.).

35 *the spent waves stumble up the beach*: see Matthew Arnold’s “Dover Beach”:

Listen! You hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves suck back, and fling,  
At their return, up on the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

(ll. 9-12.)

Brettell shares Arnold’s grief for the loss of religious faith.

37 *eighteenth-century ease*: According to the *Longman Companion to English Literature* eighteenth-century poetry is characterised by rationality and the strict observance of Classical proportions. During the eighteenth-century reason and an interest in “all the values that contribute to a refined, elegant, intelligent social life” (*LCEL*, “Eighteenth-century Literature”, 497) were the criteria for poetic good taste. The speaker here wishes he could communicate his thoughts with the apparent ease and elegance of eighteenth-century writers.

42-43 *eruptive whelks ... carbuncles*: images of disease, in mockery of the rose’s natural beauty.

44 *gust*: enthusiasm, excitement.

50 *Herrick for ever young*: Robert Herrick (1591-1674). This line refers to his poem: “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” with its *carpe diem* theme.

52-53 *Davies in rags... whippet tongue*: William Henry Davies (1871-1940), the British poet who spent a number of years as a tramp in Britain and the USA.

55 *yet untempted Eves*: According to Gen. 3 Eve succumbed to temptation by Satan in the guise of a serpent, which resulted in the fall of man from grace and his expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

56 *glad coronal*: see “Ode” (“Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood”) by William Wordsworth:

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call  
Ye to each other make; I see  
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;  
My heart is at your festival,  
My head hath its coronal,  
The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.

(*Wordsworth's Poetical Works. ll. 36-41*)

60-63 *shepherd boy... innocent adoration*: A Christmas legend tells of the shepherd boy who offered the new-born Christ his only possession, a lamb.

62 *starlit byre*: According to Lk. 2:7 Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem and placed in a manger. Mt. 2 relates how Magi from the East followed a star to Bethlehem where it stopped over the house in which the infant Jesus lay. A merging of these two stories creates the typical nativity scene of the birth of Jesus.

64 *Craftsman of Galilee*: Jesus worked as a carpenter in Galilee until the start of his ministry (Lk. 3:23).

64 *one-foot rule*: a reference both to a measuring rule used by craftsmen and to Christ's “golden rule” (Mt. 7:12), the yardstick of the Christian life: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

66 *Homespun and olive staff*: Both images assert the primacy of simple, home-made objects. Compare D. H. Lawrence's poem “Things Men Have Made”:

Things men have made with wakened hands, and put soft life into  
are awake through years with transferred touch, and go on glowing

for long years.  
And for this reason, some old things are lovely  
warm still with the life of forgotten men who made them.  
(ll.1-5)

*67 Sower and sheepfold and the leaven pot:* references to Christ's "commonplace" parables of the sower (Lk. 8:4-8), the sheepfold (Jn. 10:1-6), and the leaven (Mt. 13:33; Lk. 13:21).

*68 grain from chaff:* a reference to the Last Judgement when the faithful are to be separated from non-believers like grain from chaff; see Is. 27:12, Hosea 13:3, Lk. 3:17 and 22:31. The chaff is consigned to destruction.

*72 Child of the close swaddling bands:* Lk.2:7 describes the new-born Jesus as being wrapped in swaddling bands.

*73 Man of the firm footprints in the sands:* possibly a reference to a devotional tract entitled "Footprints" which describes a dream in which a believer and Christ walk together along a beach. When the believer looks back over his life, he notices that during times of trouble and hardship there is only one set of footprints. On asking why Christ had abandoned him during such times he is told that those were the times when Jesus had picked him up and carried him.

*74 spreadeagled on the tree:* a reference to Christ's crucifixion; see Mt. 27, Mk. 15, Lk. 23, Jn. 19.

*75 Suckling and harvest sheaf:* images contrasting the beginning and the conclusion of Jesus's engagement with humankind: "suckling" recalls the incarnation, "sheaf" the apocalypse (see Mt. 9:37-38, 13:18-43, Mk. 4:26-29, Jn. 4:35, Rev. 14:14-16).

*76 Thorn crown and olive leaf:* The crown of thorns placed on Jesus's head in mockery before he was crucified (Mt. 27:29, Mk. 15:17, Jn. 19:2) is a symbol of suffering, while the olive leaf is a universal symbol of peace. Both are appropriate here considering the dating of the poem (1944) which saw fierce battles in the Second World War.

*77 Wedding and funeral:* Christ attended both weddings (e.g. at Cana; see Jn. 2:1-12) and funerals (e.g. at Nain; see Lk. 7:11-17). The implication is that Christ's concern is for human life in its totality.

*78 your grief:* Christ's grief was both for human sinfulness and for human pain; see Lk. 19:41-44 where he wept over Jerusalem and Jn. 11:37 where he wept at the tomb of Lazarus.

*79 help our unbelief:* see the entreaty of the father of a boy possessed by an evil spirit in Mk 9: 24: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

\* \* \*

## CHRISTMAS TREE

p.51 ☒

**Note:** The poem is built on a complex series of contrasts between the Christian-inspired hope that natural life and human endeavour will survive and the prospect of utter destruction through nuclear war.

**Epigraph:** *No enemy // But winter and rough weather: As You Like It* II. v. 7-8, William Shakespeare (1564-1616).

*6 Good will to men:* the message of the angels at Christ's birth; see Lk. 2:14: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

*7 pregnant earth:* the first of several images of fertility in the poem, linking the regeneration of faith with the fecundity of the earth. See lines 10, 13, 20, 22.

*8 desperate drought:* Christmastime is usually part of Zimbabwe's rainy season, but the country suffers periodically from severe droughts. The need for rain is a recurring theme in Brettell's poetry; see "No Prayer for Rain", "Rain for Zimbabwe Christmas".

*18 atom's final fission:* The splitting of uranium atoms in 1939 created the possibility of nuclear war. After the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the total annihilation of life on earth seemed not only possible but likely. Consequently, an attitude of

existentialist despair was prevalent in much of the west during the “cold war”. In “Spiderwebs” (q.v.) Brettell contemplates a world in the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust.

**22** *clouds big-bellied*: a reference both to rain clouds and to the mushroom-shaped cloud that forms after a nuclear explosion. Brettell may also be reusing a phrase from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* II. i. 128-129:

When we have laugh’d to see the sails conceive,  
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;

**24** *aromatic leaves*: the leaves of the cypresses.

**25** *the gift of myrrh*: Myrrh was one of the gifts offered by the Magi to the infant Jesus (Mt. 2:11). It was also one of the spices used to anoint Christ’s dead body (Jn. 19:39). Brettell shows the irony in this gift, whose bitter perfume is emblematic of death.

**28** *News*: radio bulletins.

**29** *cypresses*: The trees the speaker has been planting are probably Lawson Cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*), which are traditionally associated with graveyards.

**31** *entail*: a legal restriction on the rights of inheritance.

**33** *balance*: scales.

**36** *His*: the same “he” of the future that is referred to as “someone” in *l.* 1 of the first section of the poem and as “he”, “him”, etc. thereafter.

**37** *The rise and fall of quicksilver*: a reference to mercury thermometers. Brettell contemplates a future in which temperature fluctuations will be the only uncertainty and the only impediment to harmonious progress.

**45** *equerry and commissar*: exemplars of “western” and “soviet” power. Brettell envisages a time when the demonic enmity between the two systems will have been “exorcized” (*l.* 43).

46 *calf and whelp and cub together*: This phrase recalls Isaiah's vision of permanent peace with the establishment of the kingdom of God; see Is. 11:6: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."

49 *Wit in a cask*: perhaps a reference to Ps. 104:15, "wine that maketh glad the heart of man", the light-hearted bonhomie associated with beer or wine.

49 *and Innocence in a stall*: a reference to Christ's birth in a stable (Lk. 2:7). Brettell suggests that, given a fair chance, wit (good fellowship) and innocence (simplicity, guilelessness) will enable humanity to continue its work on earth.

51 *Ariel*: the airy spirit in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In the future Brettell envisages, Ariel will be charged with nothing more mischievous than ensuring that thunderclouds bring rain.

53 *fenceless*: unrestricted, unconfined.

56 *frankincense*: another gift brought by the Magi to Jesus (Mt. 2:11). It symbolises worship. Brettell envisages a world free of boundaries and enmity where apparently irreconcilable opposites—white and black, east and west, etc.—will worship Christ together.

\* \* \*

## BOUGAINVILIA

p.55

**Title:** *Bougainvillea* [*sic*]: The woody climbing shrub was named after Louis Antoine de Bougainville (1729-1811), the first Frenchman to circumnavigate the world, as was one of the Solomon Islands (see *ll.* 8-11). An extremely vigorous thorny climbing shrub with large bracts of brightly coloured flowers (see *l.* 6), bougainvillea is often found in hedges and on garden walls and trellises (see *l.* 18) in southern Africa. The island of Bougainville, the largest of the Solomon Islands, was occupied by Japanese troops during the Second World War from March 1942 to February 1943 and was the scene of heavy fighting between US, Allied and Japanese troops (*EE* "Bougainville").

**Subtitle:** *A Misprision*: a reference to the poet's mistaken assumption that the shrub was native to Provence.

**1** *fifteen years ago*: Brettell arrived in Rhodesia in 1930. The time of writing this poem would thus be 1945 or later.

**2** *sharpened by regret*: Brettell noted: "I have chiefly attempted to resolve in my verse the contradictions and dilemmas of a man born and bred in England, but whose life has been spent in Africa, and to whom nostalgia for one country has sharpened awareness of the significance of another" (Style, "Noel Brettell" 43).

**3** *close-kempt hamlet and cathedral town*: familiar features in Brettell's native Worcestershire.

**8-43** an imaginary setting in southern France, conjectured by the poet as the place of origin of the plant.

**12** *burghers*: here, the French townsfolk imagined by the poet.

**16-17** *mad painters...along the corn*: a reference to several paintings of sunflowers, done in Arles in Provence by Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), and to his expressionist masterpiece "Wheat Field with Cypresses", painted at Saint-Rémy. Van Gogh suffered from mental illness.

**23** *catch*: a musical round or canon (see *OED* "catch" n.<sup>1</sup> 14)

**47** *Solomon group*: Melanesian islands in the Pacific Ocean NNE of Australia. The battle of Guadalcanal, fought in the Solomon Islands between Japanese and US troops, was among the bloodiest of World War II.

**48** *saw*: While all copies of this line read "And through the splinters was the proper picture", the vivid visual images conjured and the concord of subject and full verb as opposed to subject and auxiliary verb seem to suggest that the line should read "And through the



splinters saw the proper picture.” It seems probable that the “s” and “w” of “saw” were transposed due to typographical error, but this is editorial conjecture.

49-62 a description of how the poet imagines the real Bougainville to be in wartime.

50 *shells*: bombs.

51 *fans*: the fronds of banana palms (Family Musaceae).

59 *goggled visages that once were men*: dead airmen still wearing their flying gear.

63 *only to*: if only we could

65 *so cozened by misprisions*: Brettell regrets the delusory promises acquiesced to in modern Europe with the rise of totalitarian ideologies between the Great Depression and World War II and longs to “borrow back those fifteen years” (see *l.* 63).

66 *Amaryllis and Delilah*: Amaryllis is the idealised female figure, the shepherdess in the work of lyrical Classical poets such as Theocritus, Vergil and Ovid, and their English pastoral imitators (see Milton’s “Lycidas”, Spenser’s “Colin Clout’s Come Home Again”). Delilah is the type of the temptress, the Philistine who betrayed the heroic Samson (see Judg. 16). Brettell uses these unreal types, the idealised and the wicked, as exemplars of the illusions and deceptions to which the western world has succumbed since 1930.

68-70 *Mistaking palliative ... good Christian men*: a probable reference to the policy of appeasement of the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940) towards Nazi Germany prior to World War II.

71 *Palladian*: neo-classical architectural style popular in eighteenth-century England. Brettell is associating this architectural style with the exterior of exclusionist gentlemen’s clubs with their aura of self-satisfied unreality.

73-84 *It'll all come right ... Encouraged with a subsidy*: The jazzy rhythm mocks the naive faith of those who believe that the post-war socialist state will guarantee peace but who disguise the real issues by trivialising them.

83 *The world's great age is being loosed*: an echo of a line in Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1792-1822) lyrical drama "Hellas":

The world's great age begins anew,  
The golden years return,  
The earth doth like a snake renew  
Her winter weeds outworn;  
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam  
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

(ll. 1060-5)

92-93 *Lucky for us ... dreams of twenty-one*: a wry admission that war has brought the benefit of maturity.

\* \* \*

## FLOWER OF THE CLOVE

p.63 ◀

**Note:** In "Eva 1984", a collection of memoirs written to his wife shortly after her death, Brettell says about her and this poem:

You stole into my love, dearest. I thought I was a poet then, until I knew how shallow an artifice it was, and let it lie for more than another decade. But I did write one poem that still seems to ring true through all its mannerisms. It came when you and I, sure of each other at last, had parted for a time, and I was on my way back to England to try and find a job on which we could marry. I was stretching my legs, on that long six-weeks voyage, at night-time in Port Sudan, a stifling night with the air hanging hot and dense as a curtain over the shuttered houses and the walls blank in the moon and street-lights, thick with the smell of cloves and copra that seemed to cloy every quay and alleyway of that East African coast. Then, at the throat of a narrow street where a clump of acacias hung limp gold in the lamplight, my companions and I stood still, as the sudden smell of the sea gently flooded the night, the smell only, not the sight or sound. It seeped softly over the foetid air like an irrigation over the drought. You were like that, I suddenly thought, a perfume slowly and pervasively flooding my life. It was to be later, when I was at last at home in England, in that bland atmosphere after the brazen cymbals of a sun-land, that other elusive and persistent scents stole in to make the pattern—the damp smell of the soil of a mole-hill, the dry scent of mayflower, the shy fragrance of a field of flowering beans, I remember I stuck the final draft of the poem by the mirror to contemplate as I shaved one morning, and my father found it there. 'Sounds all right,' he said, 'can't say I really understand it,

but'—with a cock of his bushy eyebrow, 'you seem to have got it badly, my boy. We shall love to meet her.'

It was the last poem I was to write for over ten years. In his remarks about my first book (BF), John Redwood Anderson said it was in a class by itself. Perhaps that is so" ("Eva 1984", RB Col 13, 1).

**Subtitle:** *Eva*: Brettell met Eva Scovell in 1931 while both were teaching at Ruzawi School in Southern Rhodesia. Though she was five years older, the two fell in love and were married in 1934. After fifty years of marriage, Eva died as the result of a car accident in 1984. Brettell regarded her as his muse and principal critic. She is present in many of his poems.

11 *Eglantine*: sweet-brier (*Rosa rubiginosa*).

12 *sentinel yew*: yew trees (*Taxus baccata*) were often planted in graveyards.

\* \* \*

## DEPARTURE PLATFORM

p.65

**Note:** A description of leaving from a noisy African tropical coastal city on a train journey to a quiet destination inland.

2 *Your faithful heart*: a reference to his wife.

13 *river hogs*: African wild pigs, bush pigs (*Potamochoerus porcus*).

37 *sun-white gables*: the lime-washed gables of Cape Dutch manor houses, a characteristic feature of South African architecture.

\* \* \*

## IN THE TRAIN

p.67

**Subtitle:** *Arley*: a tiny village on the river Severn in Shropshire.

1 *We*: Brettell and his wife.

15 *raught*: “reached” (archaic). The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* cites an example from 1625: “The top of this Tower had raught unto the clouds” (*OED* “raught” v.).

\* \* \*

## COPHETUA

p.69

**Title:** *Cophetua*: “a legendary king of North Africa who was indifferent to women” until he fell in love with and “wedded a beggarmaid” (*LCEL*, “Cophetua, King”, 460). Shakespeare refers to this tale in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (IV.i) and in *Romeo and Juliet* (II.i).

14 *accolade*: ritual gesture used in conferring an honour such as a knighthood.

\* \* \*

## TO AN OLD MAN, DYING

p.71

**Title:** *Old man, dying*: It has not been possible to determine the identity of the subject.

18 *going away ... coming in singing*: an echo perhaps of Ps.126:6: “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

\* \* \*

## WIND AT THE FUNERAL

p.73

**Note:** As in the previous poem, the identity of the deceased is unknown. The juxtaposition of the two poems would seem to indicate that they refer to the same person.

10 *dust and ashes*: Brettell here is responding to the words from the First Anthem in the Burial of the Dead section of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*: “We therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life” (*The Book of Common Prayer* 203). These words of committal are traditionally uttered by the priest at the time of burial.

13 *green thrusting lances*: fresh green shoots of new grass after a veld fire.

14 *dust-devil*: small dry whirlwind.

15 *offices*: religious rites.

17-18 *blown dust ... breathed through with wind*: a reference to Gen. 2:7: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

20 *surging grass and trees*: see the last two lines of “A Slumber did my Spirit Seal” by William Wordsworth (1770-1850).

Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course  
With rocks and stones and trees!

(*Wordsworth’s Poetical Works*. ll. 7-8.)

\* \* \*

FROST

p.75

**Note:** Apart from writing poetry (see l. 2), Brettell was also a skilled carpenter (l. 7), watercolourist (l. 12), a keen music lover (l. 17) and gardener (l. 22).

3 *chasing like girl and goatherd*: standard characters in pastoral poetry.

23 *phalanx*: military formation.

24 *bugles*: the trumpet-shaped calyces of the flowers mentioned. The Rhodesian gladiolus (*Gladiolus dalenii*) has scarlet and yellow flowers which do not open wide like other gladioli.

\* \* \*

FANCY’S KNELL

p.77

**Title:** *Fancy’s Knell*: the death of imagination foreseen as old age advances.

7-8 *that little English town ... under ancient arches*: probably Stratford on Avon; see “Cataclysm”.

12 *Perdita*: the lost-and-found daughter of King Leontes in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*.

14 *wind-tossed daffodil*: Cf. Perdita's speech in *The Winter's Tale* IV. iv. 112-129 (see also l. 20 of "Cuckoo" in "One Year").

16 *windy plain*: the Zimbabwean savannahs.

20 *granite boulders*: a feature of Zimbabwean hills. Brettell painted several watercolours of such hills.

21 *satyrs*: lustful half-human, half-goat woodland creatures in Greek and Roman mythology.

21 *steenbok*: see note to line 27 in "Antelope and Mad Baboon".

23 *leviathan*: an enormous mythological biblical sea monster.

\* \* \*

## THE HILL

p.79

**Title**: an allusion, perhaps, to the description of the elderly as being "over the hill".

9 *Twenty years' joy behind us*: *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* was sent to the publishers in 1949 and Brettell and Eva first met in 1931, so "twenty years" is not to be read literally.

10 *Narcissus pools*: Narcissus was "a beautiful youth who saw his reflection in a fountain, and thought it the presiding nymph of the place. He jumped in the fountain to reach it, where he died" (*Brewers Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* 745). The poet invokes the myth to comment on his and his wife's relationship: unlike Narcissus each falls in love with the image of the other. The image of seeing their own reflection in their lover's eye is reminiscent of lines 15-16 in John Donne's "The Good Morrow".

12 *shadowy valleys*: see Ps. 23:4: "the valley of the shadow of death."

16 *Processional of boys in white festal bands*: lines of choir boys in their surplices processing into church singing.

23 *his first prelude*: the rising scale at the start of the nightingale's song: "the climbing spires of his first prelude" do not enchant the listener as much as "those three descending notes" (l. 22).

30-31 *chalice of all delight ... porringer of stars*: While conceding the deep delights of youth, Brettell here asserts the validity of the wider and lasting joys of age.

\* \* \*

## BIRTHDAY OF A SLOTH

p.83

**Note:** This is a poem about the creation of poetry (or rather not writing poetry). Despite the allure of the fairy-tale world of the imagination Brettell is feeling lazy and so declines to follow the muse into "another garden" in his self-deprecatory "hobnails".

**Epigraph:** *Rapunzel, Rapunzel, // Let down your golden hair*: a reference to the story of Rapunzel in *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. In the story Rapunzel, who is imprisoned in a high tower, lets down the tresses of her long hair when her secret lover visits so that he may climb up to her. The above epigraph is his signal to Rapunzel that he is outside. In the poem Rapunzel can be seen to represent Brettell's muse, but although she is letting down her "golden hair" Brettell is too indolent to climb.

3 *Turrets in the embers masonry of rhyme*: The embers of the fire in front of which Brettell is sitting are stirring his poetic imagination.

11 *Should I*: If I were to....

12 *seven miles*: a reference to the seven league boots in European folklore. The boots allowed the wearer to walk seven leagues with each step.

13 *three thoughts*: a reference to secrets only revealed by magic, as in fairy tales.

16 *shrive*: grant forgiveness (see "pardon" in l. 14 above).

20 *lethean tides*: In Greek mythology Lethe is the river of forgetfulness in the underworld from which the spirits of the dead must drink before being allowed to cross over to Elysium.

\* \* \*

EASE

p.85

9 *question begged*: self-evident conclusions arrived at.

10 *Schubert*: Franz Schubert (1797-1828), Austrian composer.

\* \* \*

SPRING SONG

p.87

**Subtitle:** *convalescent*: While headmaster at Enslindeel School (1935-1940) Brettell suffered an attack of lumbago. The poem probably refers to that—see letter to Bill Berry, dated 3 June 19[37] (NELM MS 2002.17.15).

14 *bowl and ewer*: vessels provided for personal ablutions in bedrooms before fitted basins and taps with running water were common fixtures.

\* \* \*

SONG

p.89

14 *stand a good mile off*: Cf. "Fancy's Knell" ll. 1, 3, 26.

\* \* \*

SANCTUARY IN AFRICA

p.91

**Note:** The title indicates that Brettell's personal response to what he regards as the senseless violence of World War II in Europe is to remain isolated from it in the "sanctuary" of his home in Rhodesia.

**Epigraph:** an instance of propagandist double-speak, what now might be termed "spin-doctoring".

4 *fence my acres*: see *Candide*'s resolution to "cultivate our garden", i.e. mind our own business. Voltaire (1694-1778); *Candide*.



8 *blaspheming scarlet fool*: In Soviet Russia the practice of religion was proscribed, hence the reference to blasphemy; “scarlet” may be read as “Communist”; “fool” and “mountebank” (l. 9) appear to be Brettell’s terms for warmongering politicians or their followers. At the time of composition Joseph Stalin (1879-1953) was the Russian leader. Until 22 June 1941 Germany and Russia were allies, in terms of the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact.

9 *black-shirted*: Followers of the Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) were known as “black-shirts” because of the colour of their uniforms.

13 *mild-eyed melancholy*: see Alfred Lord Tennyson’s “mild-minded melancholy” in “The Lotus Eaters” (l. 64).

15 *My meekly pacing thoroughbred*: probably a reference to Brettell’s pure-bred mare “Bangle”, the “undisputed darling of myself and all the district.” (SGS 94).

21 *casement*: casement cloth, a cotton or mock-linen fabric.

25 *suavely polished cabinet*: the wooden case of an old-fashioned wireless set.

29 *fulmination*: thundering.

30 *symphony*: as broadcast on the radio.

33-34 *chromium plate ... upholstery*: “all modern conveniences”, an ironic comment on the difference between the minimal comforts of traditional sanctuary and those available to Brettell.

36 *precious poverty*: a wry reference to the cost of seeking “sanctuary” with all modern conveniences.

\* \* \*

**Title:** *Rosemary*: Brettell's daughter, born in 1938.

**3 liveried rats:** In Perrault's fairy tale of Cinderella a pumpkin and some rats are magically transformed into a carriage and horses by Cinderella's fairy godmother, thus allowing Cinderella to attend the Prince's ball.

**8 peccaries:** species of small, largely nocturnal, wild pigs in central America. Brettell is probably thinking of the collared peccary (*Tayassu tajacu*).

\* \* \*

**7 July:** Brettell is recalling his boyhood in England where July is full summer.

**20 steaming loads:** fresh manure for spreading as fertiliser on tilled fields.

**22 snathe:** scythe handle.

**25 orange boxes:** cheap crates made of thin wooden planks.

\* \* \*

**Note:** Brettell probably wrote this poem for the children at Riversdale School (where he was headmaster, 1942-1958) to recite in the puppet show of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* staged at the school. In his autobiography he noted:

One of our most engaging and absorbing enterprises was our set of marionettes—another of my happiest pieces of serendipity. We were thinking of *Snow White*, but this time had a dearth of little boys to make up the troupe of dwarfs. An article in an Arts and Crafts journal suggested puppets, and our seven first eighteen-inch mannikins, crude and clumsy, were an immediate success. The curtained verandah from then on became our marionette stage. The extraordinary economy of puppets, as well as their fascination, became apparent at once. ... The shyest of actors had no qualms about pulling their strings and saying their words from behind a curtain. Apart from the dwarfs, the rest of the cast were, of course, children, and the interacting of child actors and puppets on the same stage was extraordinarily effective. *Snow White*

discovered unconscious on the kitchen floor, or lying in her coma in a woodland glade guarded by the sorrowful little creatures, were scenes most memorable and touching.  
(SGS 104-5)

16 *silver for the baby's spoon*: a reference to the coveted prosperity of "being born with a silver spoon in one's mouth".

25 *hundred*: hundredweight. A long hundredweight is approximately 50.8 kg.

26 *Knaves are bought and saints are sold*: The dwarf miners deal with the venal as well as the superstitious.

26 *saints*: Silver or gold medals or talismans bearing the devices of saints.

29 *Rich man, ... silversmith*: see the children's rhyme for prophesying prosperity from the fruit stones left on their plates: "Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief."

\* \* \*

## ESCAPE BY WATER

p.101

**Title**: American slaves fleeing northwards upriver or across the Great Lakes to Canada in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made their "escape by water." Brettell may be thinking of this leave-taking as a comparable liberation to the freeing of one's imagination from reality.

14-15 *the way of a thought ... solitary tune*: see "For a boy's will is the wind's will // And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts" (ll. 8-9) in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's (1807-1882) poem "My Lost Youth".

\* \* \*

## EPILOGUE: NO ROAD

p.103

7 *pigweed*: "a name given to many plants used as animal fodder or potherbs, esp. goosefoots belonging to the genus *Chenopodium* and amaranths (esp. *Amaranthus retroflexus*) (OED "pigweed" n.).

7 *devil-thorn*: species of African creeping plant (*Tribulus terrestris*) which has hard seed pods with three thorns on it. No matter how the seed capsule lies one of the thorns is always pointing upwards (see *DSAE*, “devil’s thorn” n.).

8 *sandy*: the soil in the Charter district, where Brettell was living, is very sandy.

12 *honey-guide*: (*Indicator indicator*), species of small tropical birds believed to guide hunters to wild bees’ nests (see *RBSA*, “Indicatoridae”, 299-300).

10 *Umsasa*: see note to “Umsasa”.

24 *francolin*: a pheasant-like ground bird found throughout southern Africa and belonging to the family Phasianidae (see *RBSA*, “Phasianidae”, 115-6).

30-34 *Spitted on barb ... larder*: The butcher bird (*Lanius collaris*) impales its prey on thorns and the spikes of barbed-wire fences, leaving it to dry for later consumption.

37-38 *fool in Arden: // Better get home*: see *As You Like It* II. iv.16-18

Ay, now am I in Arden, the more fool I.  
When I was at home, I was in a better place, but  
travellers must be content.

48 *babbler*: a loud-voiced tropical songbird such as a warbler or thrush, here probably the arrow-marked babbler (*Turdoides jardineii*) found throughout Zimbabwe (see *RBSA*, “Arrow-marked Babbler”, 364).

48 *oriole*: Bright yellow-coloured, migrant sparrow-like birds with loud clear calls, belonging to the Oriolidae family (see *RBSA*, “Oriolidae”, 354).

53-56 *unexorcised past ... uneasy present ... the News none too pleasant*: This poem was written during or shortly after World War II.

55 *put off*: postponed.

## A RHODESIAN LEAVE, 1956.



(Vol. I: 107-269)

“A Rhodesian Leave” (1968) picks up where *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* (1950) leaves off. In this collection Brettell is more certain of his poetic voice. Some of his finest and most anthologised poems such as “Elephant” and “Wind and an Eagle Owl” are found here. Brettell examines further the differences and similarities between England and the African environment that surrounds him. The influence of his revisiting England in 1948 and 1953 as part of overseas leave is clear in poems such as “Cataclysm” and “Winter’s Tale”. Throughout this collection Western literary culture is assimilated seamlessly into what is now essentially African poetry in English. Apart from a number of poems dealing ostensibly with animals and birds, Brettell here also shows an acute awareness of the world around him. “The Eavesdropper”, “The Cabbage Seller” and “African Student” show a new awareness of Africa and her indigenous people. A sense of history as well as of what the future might hold is carefully worked into poems such as “Harvest at Horsebridge”. Brettell’s position throughout is that of an outsider looking in. He does not speculate idly. His poetry is an honest attempt to make sense of the world that surrounds him and how it affects him.

\* \* \*

### THRENODY IN SPRING I—III

p.109

**Note:** In a draft letter to “GRB” (Ray Brown) (NELM MS 98.4.75), Brettell noted: “I think myself that my second poem to Cripps, the elegy written after his funeral, is not only better than M(aronda) M(ashanu) but manages the reconciliation more happily.”

**Title:** The deliberate paradox links lamentation for the dead with the new life after winter.

**Subtitle:** *in memoriam: A.S.Cripps*: Cripps died in August 1952, the beginning of spring in Rhodesia but of autumn in Cripps’s native England (see commentary on “Maronda Mashanu”).

**Epigraph:** This Shakespeare sonnet about aging ends with the injunction “To love that well, which thou must leave ere long” (l.14).

6-7 *kaffirboom ... fingers tipped with gems*: The “kaffirboom” (*Erythrina caffra*) is “a tall, spreading, deciduous tree with bright scarlet flowers and seeds”. Its sharp-pointed scarlet flowers are seen here as “fingers tipped with gems”. “Kaffirboom” is now regarded as offensive; the names “coral tree” or “lucky-bean tree” are preferred (*DSAE* “kaffirboom” n.).

9 *msasa*: see note to “Umsasa”. Brettell in his early poetry spells the word “umsasa” but changes this to “msasa”, the accepted spelling, in later poems (see “Arson”).

14 *sand-apple*: Kalahari sand-apple (*Lonchocarpus nelsii*).

15-16 *cassia's golden cup ... monstrance*: a parallel reference to Cripps’s priestly office and the revelation of the Divine in nature. Cassias are shrub-like trees of the family Caesalpinia. They have yellow flowers.

II This whole section is redolent of Keats’s “Ode to Autumn”.

17 *Kentish boyhood*: Cripps was born and grew up in Tunbridge Wells in Kent.

30 *tedder*: agricultural machine for spreading and drying hay.

35 *pented*: penned in, caged (*conjecture*)

46 *muhachas*: Muhachas (*Parinari curatellifolia*), also known as “the mobola plum” is “an evergreen, medium sized and mushroom shaped tree that grows up to 20m in height. It grows in sandy soils, in open deciduous woodlands” throughout Zimbabwe and Zambia. “Muhachas” is the more acceptable spelling of m’hashas (“Mobola Plum” par. 1).

49 *Saint Francis*: Cripps lived a life of celibacy, poverty and devotion to the poor, hence the invocation of St Francis, whose feast day October 4 is in the European spring. According to *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), the son of a wealthy merchant in Assisi, took a vow of lifelong poverty and service to the poor, for which he was nicknamed “Il Poverello”. He founded the monastic order of the Friars Minor (Franciscans), was canonised in 1228, and became the patron saint of animals (*EE* “Francis of Assisi, St”).

52 *mast*: leaf mould.

55 *germens*: rudimentary shoots or sprouts; here: inspiration

59 *The white, the black*: Most unusually for the time and place, Cripps's coffin was borne by both black and white pallbearers together, one of whom was Brettell.

61 *broken doorway*: The church Cripps had built and in which he was buried was already in disrepair at the time of his death.

66 *Arcadian autumn*: Brettell imagines Cripps in a poetic heaven.

68 *quicken*: In NELM MS 98.82.14, the draft of Brettell's second published collection *Season and Pretext*, Hugh Finn mistakenly changed "quicken" to "quicken." "Quicken" is syntactically correct.

\* \* \*

[SOUTHERN CROSS AND CHARLES' WAIN] p.117 [Title supplied by Editor]

1 *Southern Cross*: The Southern Cross is the smallest constellation in the sky. Visible only in the southern hemisphere, it consists of four bright stars and a fifth known as the "pointer" located between Centaurus and Musca in the Milky Way. "Charles' Wain", also known as the "The Plough" or the "Big Dipper", consists of seven bright stars in the constellation of Ursa Major in the northern hemisphere. Brettell uses the two here as emblems of his dual allegiance as a European in Africa (*EE* "Southern Cross", "Charles' Wain").

7 *reedbuck*: a small southern African antelope (*Redunca arundinum*), which frequents reedy banks and dry river beds. When startled it gives a loud whistle which acts as a warning alarm.

8 *lourie's petulant dismissal*: see note to l. 6 of "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune".

**14** *pitch and toss*: a gambling game in which participants toss coins at a given mark. The one whose coin lands closest then has the opportunity to toss all the coins in the air and keep those that land heads up. Kipling refers to it in "If":

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,

(ll. 17-18)

\* \* \*

**COLUMBUS**

p.119

**Title:** *Columbus*: Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) the Italian-Spanish admiral who, in attempting to find a westward passage to Asia, discovered the New World.

**10-12** *the glum unease ... the sludge*: a characterisation of England in the Great Depression of the 1930s where job cuts, ration cards and long queues of work seekers outside labour bureaux were common.

**17-18** *building Manchester // In Africa's far and vaguely promised land*: an ironic reference to the poem in the preface of William Blake's (1757-1827) "Milton" which subsequently became a popular hymn entitled "Jerusalem", sometimes referred to as England's other national anthem:

I will not cease from Mental Fight,  
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant Land.

(ll. 13-16)

**28** *The rigging full of yellow singing birds*: As Columbus approached the Americas, but before land was sighted, his caravels were greeted by flocks of birds which perched in the rigging. This encouraged the crews of the boats to believe that they were approaching land, though it was not the coast of Asia as Columbus had anticipated.

**30** *pinning his life to the just possible miracle*: In his own quest for a new life, Brettell identifies with the fifteenth-century explorer.

\* \* \*



**Title:** Clent Hill is just outside Lye, Worcestershire, where Brettell was born. In *Side-Gate and Stile* Brettell remembers how “a stroll through the fields and dingles, a climb over the greater flanks of Clent Hill for the young and strenuous, was everybody’s idea of a Sunday afternoon” (SGS 3).

4-5 *Love-in-idleness, lad’s love ... SweetWilliam:* scented plants of the English countryside. “Love-in-idleness” (*Viola tricolor*) is a pansy with a purple, blue and yellow / white face also known as “Heartsease”. “Lad’s love” is the aromatic southern-wood (*Artemisia abrotanum*) while “Sweet William” (*Dianthus barbatus*) has red and white flowers.

6 *bents:* tough grass.

15 *foundry:* Lye is in the Black Country, so called because of the heavy industrialisation of the area in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a result of the many “foundries, lime kilns, collieries, backyard chainmaking and nailmaking” enterprises formerly in the area, the Black Country was characterised as “Red by Night, Black by Day” (Ogden, par. 1). Brettell came from a family of nail-makers and metal workers (see “Ironworkers”).

Uncle George was a chainmaker, a man with an enormous body which he kept constantly filled with enormous quantities of beer. In the towering foundries at Cradley Heath he was supposed to have helped to forge the anchor chains of the Titanic. My boyhood is so full, on one side, of memories of men, gnome-like or giant-like, furiously active in the lurid glower of firelight and shadow, that I cannot honestly say whether I ever really saw him, stripped to the waist, one of a team of six swinging their great sledges in time as perfect as a fugue.

(SGS: 14-15)

19 *unpledged:* freely redeemable, unencumbered by debt.

20 *after so many days:* an echo of the promise in Ecc. 11:1: “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.”

\* \* \*

**Note:** The experience of seeing *Othello* live at Stratford led to the writing of this poem, first printed in Brettell's privately produced collection "A Rhodesian Leave" in 1956. In a letter to Betty and Hugh Finn dated 23 March [1985] Brettell noted that he had seen a production of *Othello* at Stratford with Michael Redgrave in the title role (NELM MS 96.19.317). Brettell, however, was in England in 1953, not 1952 and no record can be found of Redgrave performing *Othello* at Stratford in 1953. Anthony Quayle played Othello in 1953, so it seems likely that Brettell, when writing to the Finns thirty-two years later, confused the two actors.

**1 arches:** of the bridge across the Avon at Stratford.

**2 gillyflowers:** clove-scented flowers, particularly pinks (*Dianthus caryophyllus*). While the word is sometimes written gilliflower or gilloflower, Brettell's spelling of "gillieflower" is unknown and has thus been corrected. (see *OED* "gillyflower" n.).

**27-35** Brettell here re-interprets *Othello* in the light of current events. In 1956 western Europe was still rebuilding after World War II. The cold war and the threat of nuclear destruction was real. The war in Korea had recently ended and the United States was soon to become embroiled in Vietnam. Pan-Arab nationalism precipitated the Suez crisis and Russia's violent suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 loomed large in international politics. Read with this in mind, the despair and uncertainty expressed in the poem becomes more apt. By giving the western reader something familiar amidst the "swirling years" Brettell's references to Shakespeare help to place the poem within an historical continuum, even if they provide scant comfort. By drawing on the memory of a more stable past and on its literature Brettell attempts to make sense of a world of disintegrating certainties.

**21-22** a reference to Desdemona's song in *Othello* IV. iii. 40-56.

**29 voussoir:** wedge-shaped stone in an arch.

**35 testy senators:** political leaders, possibly also the Venetian nobles in *Othello*.

\* \* \*



**Title:** *The Winter's Tale*: The “tale” is of the winter deathliness caused by King Leontes’s groundless jealousy, from which he is redeemed by his ultimate remorse, and the potential for new spring life in the marriage of his lost-and-found daughter Perdita, the restoration of his wife Hermione and the resumption of his friendship with Polixenes.

**Subtitle:** *Francis Carey Slater*: South African poet (1876-1958) to whom A. S. Cripps (see “Maronda Mashanu”) advised Brettell to send his early poetry. Slater encouraged Brettell to compile *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*, (first entitled “Antelope and Mad Baboon”) and assisted him in finding a publisher.

1 *One*: William Shakespeare.

12 *Hermione a marmoreal tombstone angel*: At the end of *The Winter's Tale* King Leontes is led to believe that he is looking at a marble statue of his wronged “dead” wife Hermione, until she comes alive.

While no comma follows the word “angel” in manuscript versions of this poem, Brettell’s attitude towards commas was somewhat lax (see extract from letter to Betty and Hugh Finn dated 7 March 1967, NELM MS 96.19.71, in Textual Introduction). Syntactically the insertion of this comma makes sense and as there is no record of Brettell objecting to its insertion in the two published versions of this poem, a comma has been inserted after “angel”.

13 *Leontes hump and pollard*: the remorseful king, shorn of his pride (like a pollard sheep or tree) bending over the gate at the entrance to the graveyard where he believes Hermione lies.

14 *Exchanging crowns*: a reference (the play being set in Greece) to the custom in the Orthodox church of holding and passing crowns over the heads of the bridal couple during the wedding ceremony.

26 *in a night is green*: a comment on the astonishing speed with which grass will sprout after rain in Africa.

28 *white eyes*: an observation of how striking the whites of the eyes are in dark-skinned people.

29 *Hili*: In a footnote in the privately produced volume “A Rhodesian Leave” (NELM: MS/196, 475.3, 98.4.2, RB Col), Brettell notes: “Hili: an African water-sprite—see “Dark Folk” by F. C. Slater.” In *Dark Folk* Slater glosses “Hili” as:

Hili or Tekoloshe. —Though spoken of in the singular, Hili are regarded as plural, and, according to old Bantu traditions and superstitions, are a race of faun-like, dwarfish male creatures, who dwell in deep pools and among the reeds and rushes along the banks of flowing rivers. These debased sons of Pan are said to be extremely mischievous and lascivious. They are greatly feared by women, many of whom—to this day—refuse to cross rivers at night lest Hili should catch them  
(Slater, 85)

34 *beeves*: cattle. The use of the archaic term emphasises the unsophisticated simplicity of the pastoral setting of the poem.

35 *crickets*: Crickets are awake and alert at night and therefore may be able to tell secrets.

36 *Mamilius*: The son of King Leontes and Queen Hermione who died of grief as a result of his father’s treatment of his mother.

36 *Manzi*: a carefree young Xhosa herdboyc in a poem of the same name by F. C. Slater (see *Dark Folk*, 33-34).

\* \* \*

## HARVEST AT HORSEBRIDGE

p.129 ◀

**Note:** In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn, dated June 11, 1973 (NELM MS 96.19.134), written after the suicide of a friend, Brettell noted the following about the situation in what was then war-torn Rhodesia:

It is very gloomy—and none the better for being the future we’ve earned and which I’ve seen for the last twenty years. It was, I think, just about twenty years ago that I put it into words, more or less, in my poem ‘Harvest at Horsebridge’ (not bad, though I think it could be better). I’ve been haunted ever since, and especially now, by the thought of how like we are to Roman Britain—that close and elegant sophistication with the barbarians just beyond the wall and the sea. What perplexes me more than

anything is the way the whole culture vanished—absolutely nothing left except scraps of mosaic and broken masonry. Don't you think it's extraordinary that no literature is left out of it—those four centuries of solid and elegant country villas and all the ease and grace that must have gone with it. With the Augustan tradition behind it, there must have been an immense amount of poetry written and yet just nothing has survived. Very much like us, isn't it—and all our vain scribblings (sic) will probably go the same way into sheer oblivion. And what is our interlude of seventy years beside their four centuries! Metropolitan Rome was also a bit like metropolitan England—the gloomy and frivolous aftermath of a great literature: what had it, those first four centuries—a major satirist in Juvenal (I keep coming back to satire) the bland stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, a few dim figures like Lucan, and everything else again just swallowed up by time. Of course, it flowered again in the works of Christendom and there was always Gaul to become France. But Roman Britain no: nothing beyond the Channel. Perhaps with us it may be beyond the Zambezi or the Limpopo.

So what? do we follow the legions back home. For us, of course not. Apart from the fact that Eva is probably right in saying it would be a craven retreat, we just couldn't exist in England either money-wise or poetry-wise.

**21 Hampshire:** In earlier drafts of this poem Brettell used the words “Saxon” and “Wiltshire” before deciding on “Hampshire”. The change from “Wiltshire” to “Hampshire” was probably occasioned by Brettell realising that he had placed Horsebridge in the wrong county. The small village of Horsebridge is in Hampshire and not in neighbouring Wiltshire.

**23 ealdorman ... yeoman:** descendants of the Angles and Saxons who settled in England after the withdrawal of the Romans and before the Viking and Norman invasions.

**27 close-cropped:** Roman men wore their hair short (see “clipped” in *l.* 32).

**35 latifundia:** large Roman estates.

**42 bees or beeves:** Book Four of Vergil's “Georgics” deals with beekeeping; Book Three is about animal husbandry.

**43 Mantuan:** Vergil. Publius Vergilius Maro (70-19BC) was born on a farm near Mantua in northern Italy. Brettell majored in Latin and English at Birmingham University (1928-1930) and his love of Latin poetry played an important part in shaping his verse. He wrote several poems in tribute to Roman poets and there are clear traces of a Latinate style in his poetry (see “Ausonius” or “Arson”). In its precision and meticulousness in the use of words and its

mastery of metre and form, Brettell's poetry reflects his admiration of the literature of Classical antiquity.

**45 hexameters:** the preferred metre of Classical Latin and Greek poets.

**54 Silchester:** The Roman town of Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum), originally the tribal capital of the Atrebates, lies

buried under pasture in the Hampshire countryside, a short distance from modern Basingstoke. Unlike many other Roman towns that continued to evolve after the Roman occupation of Britain, Silchester was completely abandoned and the site never subsequently developed. As a result, lying just beneath the surface of the ground, the complete layout of the town has survived intact. ...

(Jonas par. 1)

**55 Basingstoke:** "The Roman occupation of Basingstoke is demonstrated by the site of a villa on the north bank of the River Loddon, and several other places where pottery and coins have been found. Many of the archaeological finds have been deposited at the Willis Museum" (Hantsweb Team par. 1).

**58 crimson:** probably a reference to the red colour of the Massey-Ferguson tractor.

\* \* \*

## CHALTON MILL

p.135

**Note:** This poem about the passage of time and youth dates from Brettell's visit to England on leave in 1953 but seems to recall an earlier visit to Chalton Mill with Eva.

**Title:** Chalton Mill stands on Windmill Hill between Clanfield and Chalton in Hampshire.

\* \* \*

## LEAVING IN SEPTEMBER

p.137

**Note:** An early variant version of this poem is entitled "Leaving England in September." Brettell first left England in September 1930 to take up a teaching position at Ruzawi School in the then Southern Rhodesia.

12 *chestnut cleft*: The nuts of the chestnut tree (*Castanea sativa*) are not yet ripe enough to split their shells.

17 *filbert*: the nut of the hazel tree (*Corylus avellana*).

21 *wain*: farm wagon.

22 *guinea ... copper*: A guinea was a gold coin worth 21 shillings (£1.10 UK), a copper was only a penny (see “The Owl and the Ivy”). Here the reference is to falling leaves, some golden, some brown.

24 *eavesdropper*: Brettell’s sense of being an eavesdropper in his native country recurs in “Eavesdropper” where similar ideas to those expressed here are articulated.

32 *gilded vane*: a weather vane in the early morning sun.

\* \* \*

TO WALTER DE LA MARE

p.139

**Title:** *Walter de la Mare*: (1873-1956) Poet, essayist and short story writer. De la Mare’s poems are “conservative in technique, with the melody and delicacy of diction characteristic of the best poetry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but are unusual in the quiet intensity with which they express evanescent, elusive, and mysterious experience” (*LCEL*, “De la Mare, Walter”, 479).

That Brettell identified with de la Mare and the Georgian poets is clear from two letters written nearly twenty-eight years apart:

... But the gay possession of fireworks passes while the honest and confident poets continue up their own byways—Blunden, de la Mare, Sassoon, Edwin Muir and me—of such is the genuine tradition, isn’t it?

(Letter to Hugh & Betty Finn, 8 July 1961.  
NELM MS 96.19.18)

... And perhaps that’s the response to your own despair of our present literary scene. Haven’t we—and I mean we—got to be content with being the ‘Georgians’ of it, and I’d ask nothing more. After all such a small company, in such an absurd week-end of a quarter century, we did produce a quite extraordinarily accomplished body of verse. ...Don’t be affronted at the suggestion that we are the Georgians of Rhodesia. The Georgians did include Blunden, de la Mare, Housman, Edward Thomas, Bridges, and

(by proxy) Frost—as well as Noyes and William Watson; and that’s not a bad half-dozen for a couple of decades.

(Letter to Betty Finn, 26 February 1989. NELM MS 96.19.355)

**Subtitle:** *O Lovely England: De la Mare’s O Lovely England and other poems* (1953) was his last published collection before his death in 1956. In 1953 Brettell had overseas leave from teaching which he spent in England. The combination of De la Mare’s poetry and his return to Rhodesia after leave resulted in this poem.

**5** *Whose sun breeds paradise of plume but numbs the singer:* a reference to southern African birds that have bright feathers but relatively little song.

**7** *twire:* peep or wink

**10** *Whose winds shrivel the sap even when green sprays linger:* a reference to the hot winds of drought-stricken southern Africa.

**12** *silversmith:* a reference perhaps to De La Mare’s poem “Silver”.

**19** *Arden and Camelot:* The forest of Arden features in Shakespeare’s play *As You Like It*, while Camelot, according to Arthurian legend, was the site of King Arthur’s court. Both are images of an idealised English past.

**21** *sunflower lackeys:* slaves to the warm sun of Africa (compare “Sunflower” by William Blake).

\* \* \*

TO EVA

p.141

**Title:** *Eva:* Brettell’s wife, present in many of his poems.

**14** *floating island:* a possible reference to “Floating Island at Hawksworth” by Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1855), which opens: “Harmonious powers with nature work ...” (*Wordsworth’s Poetical Works*. I. 1).



## A CHINESE SCREEN

p.143

**Note:** This poem deals with separation imposed by distance. In February 1953 Eva Brettell accompanied their son John, a pre-medical student, to England by boat, leaving Brettell alone at home. In April 1953 Brettell took a term's leave and flew to England to join them, returning to Africa by boat with Eva in September. This poem dates from this temporary separation, with Brettell in Africa and Eva in England. Contemplating a Chinese screen, viewed as a symbol of remoteness and inscrutability ("the riddle" l. 11), Brettell feels an estrangement caused by the distancing of both space and season, with his wife in the northern winter while he remains in the southern summer.

1 *You*: Brettell's wife Eva.

3 *red buses*: In London the buses used for public transport are red.

4 *jalousie*: a "blind or shutter made with slats which slope upwards from without, so as to exclude sun and rain, and admit air and some light" (*OED* "jalousie" n.).

## AIR MAIL

p.145 ◀

**Note:** The poem invokes famous female figures from each region and, by implication, also their lovers, to trace the trajectory of the aeroplane in which the poet is travelling from Rhodesia across Ethiopia, Egypt, Palestine, Greece and France to England. As it does so the course of history and the development of western civilization from African antiquity to contemporary Europe unfolds beneath him. Brettell flew to England in April 1953 to join his wife and son (see "A Chinese Screen").

2 *brush the jungles*: In the 1950s aeroplanes flew far lower than modern jet aircraft. Their range was also much shorter, which necessitated frequent refuelling stops.

5 *you*: Brettell's wife, Eva.

**8** *hidalgos*: here, probably, the earliest Portuguese explorers in Africa.

**10** *Sheba*: The queen of Sheba, associated in legend with Great Zimbabwe, here represents Africa's contribution to civilization. She travelled to Jerusalem to visit King Solomon whom she plied with difficult questions to test his wisdom (see 1 Kn. 10). She is credited with founding the Ethiopian royal line.

**13** *asp-hate*: Cleopatra is believed to have committed suicide by letting an asp (*Naja haje*) bite her.

**13** *hadeda*: The Hadeda ibis (*Bostrychia hagedash*) is a large short-legged bird with a very loud harsh call: "ha-ha-ha-ha-da-hah" (see *RBSA*, "Hadeda", 52). Brettell here is identifying the hadeda with the sacred ibis of ancient Egypt.

**14** *lotus*: Brettell is thinking of the blue water lily (*Nymphaea caerulea*) which was an ancient symbol of creation, resurrection and healing in Egypt. It is depicted in ancient Egyptian paintings and stylised in Egyptian temple architecture (see Seawright: pars. 1, 5, 7).

**16** *Cleopatra*: Cleopatra VII (69-30 BC) queen of Egypt, was the last of the Ptolemaic dynasty, remembered for her legendary love affairs with Julius Caesar (see Bernard Shaw's play *Caesar and Cleopatra*) and with Mark Antony (see Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*). When she and Antony were defeated, she killed herself. Here she represents Egyptian civilisation.

**19** *dill and feverfew*: Old-world herbs used in cooking and healing.

**20** *Jezebel*: Jezebel, here representing Palestine, was the pagan wife of Ahab, king of Israel. According to *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* Jezebel "introduced the worship of Baal into Israel, thereby inciting a mutual enmity with the prophets of Jehovah". She was "the most bitter opponent of the prophet Elijah" and plotted the murder of Naboth to gain possession of his vineyard (see 1 Kn. 21)." She also "introduced tyrannical government and the worship of foreign gods. In the New Testament (see Rev. 2:20), the name Jezebel is given to a wicked

woman who exerts a corrupting influence. In English it has come to signify a brazen or forward woman” (*EE* “Jezebel”).

**22** *sea wine-dark*: a rephrasing of “the wine-dark sea”, a recurring phrase in Homer’s *The Odyssey*.

**24** *lidless eyes*: possibly a reference to Cretan/Minoan paintings where the heavily outlined eyes of the goddesses seem not to have lids.

**25** *Sappho*: Sappho, here representing Greek civilization, was a “lyric poet, whose poems are marked by exquisite beauty of diction, perfect simplicity of form, and intensity of emotion” (*EE* “Sappho”). Plato referred to her as the tenth muse while Anacreon claimed that Sappho “felt sexual love for women”, hence the modern terms “lesbianism” and “sapphism” to characterise female homosexuality (*EE* “Sappho”).

**27** *papillons*: French for “butterflies”.

**29** *beeves*: a favourite Brettell archaism for cattle (see also “Winter’s Tale” *l.* 34 and “Harvest at Horsebridge” *l.* 42).

**30** *Madame Bovary*: The main character in the eponymous novel by Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), Emma Bovary, here representing France. Bovary, her “imagination filled with Romantic illusions of love and passion”, finds “the reality of her dull marriage stifling and searches for the excitement she has read about, in a series of affairs she wishes to see as grand passions but which are in fact as unfulfilling as her relationship with her husband. In a fit of despair she takes her own life.” The novel depicts and indicts “the drabness and delusions of bourgeois life” and is a “profound analysis of humanity” (*EE* Flaubert, Gustave).

\* \* \*

**ON AN INYANGA ROAD:**

**p.151**

**Title:** *Inyanga*: a particularly beautiful area in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe to which Brettell and his wife retired in 1958 and where they lived till 1979 when their house was destroyed in a rocket attack during the “Bush War.” After 1980 Inyanga became Nyanga.

Brettell sees his travelling up into the mountains as somehow parallel to Thomas's pathway into poetry: "the dark avenue, leading to no end" (l.1).

**Subtitle:** *Edward Thomas*: Edward Philip Thomas (1878-1917). English First World War poet, nature poet and essayist. In a draft letter to an unidentified recipient (NELM MS 98.4.71) Brettell wrote:

...The more I read of Thomas, his contemporaries & successors, the more I see him (perhaps with Hopkins and Hardy) as the most honest poet of the lot: certainly the one to whom I in my own unimportant way, owe most.

Evidence for this acknowledgement can be seen in the similarities between Brettell and Thomas's poetry. The *Longman Companion to English Literature*'s description of "nature poetry" and Thomas is applicable to Brettell in its articulation of concerns which both Thomas and Brettell consciously reflected in their poetry and within the Wordsworthian tradition.

English 'nature poetry' at its best has never been merely descriptive, but has concerned the power of the natural environment to elicit the purest of human responses, not only to the environment but to elemental human relationships, including the relationship of the poet with himself. Thomas's poems show great integrity of responsiveness and sensitivity to the language of his day; they are without the weakening nostalgia and sensibility which showed the decadence of the nature poetry tradition of his contemporaries.

(*LCEL*, "Thomas, Edward Philip", 826.)

**12 Merlin's Isle:** a type of poets' Island of the Blest in Arthurian romance.

**24 Sheba's Breasts:** In Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* "Sheba's Breasts" refers to two conically shaped twin mountains in Zimbabwe (see Haggard 27).

**25 Mother Dunch's Buttocks:** a phrase from Thomas's poem "Lob". According to Camden's *Britannia* it is "a vulgar name for Sinodun Hill, Berkshire" and "gave offence to one editor to whom (Thomas) offered 'Lob' soon after it was written" (Thomas 393). Following Thomas's example, Brettell gave the nickname to the hills that he looked out on from his home in Nyanga.

\* \* \*

**Note:** In “No Road to Xanadu” Brettell describes his own Coleridge-like experience of being interrupted by a stranger while writing a poem. The poem contrasts real and heraldic beasts and by extension the worlds of reality and the imagination. In agreeing to help eradicate the predators the poet finds himself destroying the symbolic animals of legend in the heat of the summer season (see l.40).

**Title:** *Xanadu*: a city mentioned in the opening line of “Kubla Khan” (1797) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). Gillie describes the events that led to the poem’s composition:

In a preface to the poem Coleridge describes how he fell asleep while reading a 17<sup>th</sup> century travel book, *Purchas his Pilgrims*. He had reached the point where Purchas mentioned the city of Xanadu, built by Kublai: ‘Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground was inclosed with a wall.’ Coleridge declares that the poem then arose in his mind while he slept, and when he awoke he immediately started writing. The poem begins:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
    Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round.

Unfortunately, when he had written 54 lines, Coleridge was interrupted by ‘a person from Porlock’, and the rest of the poem was lost  
(*LCEL*, “Xanadu”, 881).

**1** *Porlock*: see note to “Xanadu”.

**11** *ratel, serval*: African honey-badger (*Mellivora capensis*) and African wildcat (*Felis serval*) respectively.

**14** *beeves*: see note to “Air Mail” (l. 29).

**17** *bent*: see note to l. 6 of “On Clent Hill”.

**20** *husks of corn*: Dry maize leaves are used as animal fodder.

21 *browse*: “young shoots and twigs of shrubs, trees” (*OED* “browse” n.<sup>1</sup> 1).

22 *idle sheep of sleep's*: a reference to the insomniac's supposed practice of counting sheep to induce drowsiness.

24 *oxalis or devil-thorn*: food eaten by sheep in drought. Oxalis is also known as sorrel (Family Oxalidaceae) while the devil-thorn (*Tribulus terrestris*) is a weed with a seed capsule that has three thorns. No matter how the seed lies one of the thorns always points upwards (see *DSAE*, “devil's thorn” n.).

25-26 *striped ... lean*: nocturnal predators (see line 11 above).

30 *cordite or strychnine*: Farmers used both explosives and poison to rid their fields of jackals and other predators which endangered their livestock.

31 *armigers*: An armiger is one with his own coat of arms.

32 *khan*: an oriental potentate.

34 *don*: Spanish nobleman.

35 *gules*: red.

37-38 Coleridge in his description of Xanadu in “Kubla Khan” refers to “a mighty fountain”, “a damsel with a dulcimer” (l. 37) and “many an incense-bearing tree” (l. 9).

40 *rams of capricorn*: The Zodiac sign for Capricorn, the period 21 December-20 January, is a goat ram with a fish tail. Here the summer heat is seen as a partial destroyer of the poet's imaginative faculty.

41 *lion, falcon, unicorn*: heraldic beasts.

\* \* \*

**Note:** “The Eavesdropper” reflects Brettell’s position as the “Inkoos” within the matrix of colonial Southern Rhodesia where he must remain essentially a non-participant, an eavesdropper on the conversation of others. While Brettell’s position as a white man and an employer is reflected in the poem, the main focus is not on race, class or economic divides, but on death and what it means to be alive (see Critical Introduction for an analysis of this poem).

**1** *Inkoos*: polite form of address to a senior man in Nguni languages; “sir”.

**29** *mazer dish*: large wooden bowl.

**30** *calabash*: a dried hollow gourd used as an eating utensil or drinking vessel.

**31-32** favourite decorative patterns or devices engraved on clay pots or burned into wooden vessels by African craftsmen.

**38** *Glyph*: carved groove.

**46** *wallet*: here, a traveller’s bag.

**49** *simples*: mediaeval medicinal herbs.

**51** *blurts*: bubbles loudly.

**71-74** In traditional Shona culture when someone dies drums are beaten and the mourners dance to accompany the dead person on his / her journey to join the tribal ancestors.

**75** *castanetted*: Small shakers, like seed pods, are strung together into ankle bracelets and shaken as the dancer’s feet are rhythmically stamped, producing an effect similar to the sound of castanets.

76 *Do you remember an inn Miranda*: see “Tarantella” by Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953). What the dead person will no longer be able to experience may be imagined and described, but the speaker needs allusions from poetry to help him realise the full import of the event (see Critical Introduction, pp. XXXVI–VII for a fuller note).

\* \* \*

## AFRICAN STUDENT

p.163

**Note:** After his retirement in 1958 Brettell spent part of his time teaching unpaid at the local mission school in Bonda (St David’s Girls High School). He also did private tutoring and wrote course-notes for the Central African Correspondence College. In this poem Brettell describes the experience of tutoring a black male A-level student on Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*.

5-6 *you have no place // in time or language*: Brettell’s pessimistic view of his black student’s position in Southern Rhodesia is informed at least in part by the repressive laws that the Smith government was enacting at the time. This pessimism is evident from a letter Brettell wrote while invigilating a Cambridge French examination at St Faith’s mission school in December 1969: “I suppose a bare one or two stands a chance of a Sixth form or university: with the rest their earnestly acquired knowledge will just filter away with boredom or bitterness” (Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn 1 December 1969. NELM MS 96.19.94). Yet in the poem Brettell asserts that scholarship and literary study can also confer a freedom from the limitations of particular place and language communities in an inclusive Shakespearean “Golden franchise” (l. 45).

11 *Twelfth Night*: The end of Christmas festivities; here also a reference to Shakespeare’s play *Twelfth Night*.

12 *Illyria or Arcady*: Illyria is the setting for *Twelfth Night*. For “Arcady” see line 50 in “Maronda Mashanu”. Both are here seen as idyllic regions.

13 *but could be now*: an expression of hope that the ideal society might yet be achievable in Zimbabwe once it has shaken off its colonial status.



16 *The lonely envoi of the clown's last song*: A reference to Feste's last song at the end of *Twelfth Night* (see V. i. 389-408) which starts

When that I was and a little tiny boy,  
With hey ho, the wind and the rain,  
A foolish thing was but a toy,  
For the rain it raineth every day.  
(ll.389-92)

“Lonely envoi” refers to the last line of the song: “And we’ll strive to please you every day” (l.408). Echoes of the song can be found throughout this poem (see l.26) and its ironic outlook informs the poem as a whole.

21 *To every Hodge his acre, every Jack his mistress*: different names for English peasants, here symbolic of the realistic aspirations of ordinary people everywhere.

22 *O mistress mine, where are you roaming*: Brettell is quoting from another song that Feste sings in *Twelfth Night*:

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?  
O, stay and hear; your true-love's coming,  
That can sing both high and low.  
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;  
Journeys end in lovers meeting,  
Every wise man's son doth know.  
(II. iii. 39-44)

25 *Still pick your ditties out of the wind's teeth*: Brettell could be thinking of the white-crowned plover which is said to “peck at gaping crocodiles’ mouths—cleaning the food between the teeth” (*RBSA*, “White-crowned Plover”, 170).

26 *Wind and the rain*: an echo of Feste's song at the end of the *Twelfth Night*; see above.

31 *keep innocency*: Brettell here is quoting from the version of Ps. 37:38 in the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. The verse was customarily given to confirmands in the form: “Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right: for that shall bring a man peace at the last” (*The Book of Common Prayer* 241).

33 *When that you were and a little tiny boy*: a reworking of the opening line of Feste's last song in *Twelfth Night*; see above.

34 *eye for eye*: as equals.

39 *knot-garden*: elaborately laid out garden, common amongst the aristocracy in Elizabethan times.

41-43 Brettell wonders whether either the student or he himself would be capable of accepting decolonisation and the responsibility consequent upon the granting of political independence.

45 *That golden franchise that embraced them all*: a reference to Shakespeare's all encompassing human sympathy.

46 *The knave*: among others, Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*.

46 *the gull*: Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*.

46 *the Jew*: Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*.

46 *the blackamoor*: the hero in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

\* \* \*

## THE CABBAGE SELLER

p.167

**Note:** In "The Cabbage Seller" Brettell contemplates both the possible future of a young African child who is trying to sell cabbages and his own prospects in a future Rhodesia / Zimbabwe. The young hawker's wares bring back childhood memories (stanza 2) as well as thoughts of European culture (stanza 3) before leading the poet to consider what the future may hold in store for the black child who, in turn, becomes representative of all young black Rhodesians. The future seems to be bleak at best, both for the child and Brettell. Brettell fears that a nameless "They" (l.21), possibly politicians, will corrupt the smiling child with hatred which might in turn lead to politically motivated violence.

Brettell's objective in the poem, however, is not to raise the spectre of "swart gevaar" (black peril), but to appraise the inevitability of black people coming to power, and to speculate on whether what he has tried to share of his own gentle inclusive humanity will somehow survive the transition. For, while the poet identifies with the "piccanin", describing him as a highly cultivated species of cabbage (stanza 5), he ends the poem by referring to himself by an absolutely synonymous term: "old brassica". At the deepest level, therefore, the identification of the two is complete: cabbage equals brassica. It is their common humanity, not the difference in race, age or position within society that Brettell sees as important. Ultimately, for him, the differences are insignificant.

**2 Standard Two:** the fourth grade in the primary school. Learners in Standard Two are normally about nine years old.

**3 piccanin:** see note to "Maronda Mashanu", line 7.

**9 Pearls in sow's ears:** unappreciated splendour, reminiscent of the Biblical injunction not to "cast ye your pearls before swine" (Mt. 7: 6).

**12 Lautrec:** According to *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*, the French post-impressionist painter, lithographer and illustrator Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) is best remembered for his depictions of the colourful nightlife of late nineteenth-century Paris. Toulouse-Lautrec, as an adolescent, broke both his legs and as a result of congenital calcium deficiency was left stunted (see l. 17). Despite his deformity, he enjoyed the Paris nightlife, frequenting particularly the theatre, circus, brothels and, most famously, the cabarets such as the Moulin Rouge in the Montmartre district. His colourful impressions of these places were captured in his powerfully original artwork (*EE*, "Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de").

**16 scannel:** meagre.

**16 seakale:** Brettell seems to be asserting that the modern cabbage has been bred from a primitive herb such as a sea-kale (*Crambe maritima*).

**17 dwarf as any painter:** another reference to Toulouse-Lautrec.

21 *They*: As mentioned above it is unclear who the nameless “They” are whom Brettell fears. “They” might refer to society or life in general, but it seems more likely that a political context is being evoked. The reference may be to white supremacists or black political activists, or both.

24 *pits*: possibly “propagating pits” in which seedlings and young plants are protected from harsh weather conditions.

28 *animalcule*: a microscopic organism, in this case a destructive bacterium.

33 *Black silk, white bands*: a reference to the court attire of an advocate.

39 *brassica*: The botanical name for the cabbage family.

\* \* \*

## OUTSIDE KIMBERLEY

p.171

**Note:** Brettell contemplates the dehumanising effects of begging, likening the young beggars to sparrows and minnows, while expressing his own grief and helplessness in the face of the vast poverty and slums round the mining town.

1 *piccanins*: see note to “Maronda Mashanu”, line 7.

35 *centuries*: hundreds.

\* \* \*

## FROM A HOTEL WINDOW

p.173

**Subtitle:** *East London*: The harbour city of East London is situated between Port Elizabeth and Durban on the eastern seaboard of South Africa.

20-34 These lines depict the arrival of the early Portuguese navigators as witnessed by one of the original peoples of South Africa.

28 *carapace*: here the steel breastplate worn by fifteenth-century soldiers.

30 *race*: ocean current.

33 *Da Gama*: The Portugese explorer and navigator Vasco da Gama (1469-1524) was the first European to reach India by a sea route around Africa (*EE*, "Gama, Vasco da").

\* \* \*

## WALKING IN WOODS

p.177

5 *trudgen*: "a kind of hand-over-hand or double over-arm breast-stroke in swimming" (*OED* "trudgen" n.).

11 *cassia*: see note to "Threnody In Spring I", l. 15.

\* \* \*

## AFRICAN AFTERNOON

p.181

**Note:** Brettell contrasts the prospect of remotely controlled western-style weaponry with the hand weapons, now suppressed, of African conflicts.

**Subtitle:** Bikini atoll, one of the Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean was the site of atomic weapons tests by the United States in July 1946 and again in 1954 (see *EE* "Bikini").

10 *mdala*: Nguni: an elderly black man.

11 *calabash*: see "The Eavesdropper", line 30.

22 *impis*: Nguni: regiments of African warriors.

23 *helmet winged and horned*: a reference perhaps to the helmets worn by the Vikings who pillaged Europe during the early middle ages.

32 *lifted fists of cumulus*: mushroom-shaped cloud formed after an atomic bomb is detonated.

\* \* \*

**Note:** Brettell in this poem might be referring to the house he built with his own hands after retiring from teaching. If this is the case there is an unintentional irony in lines 22, 53 etc. as Brettell outlasted the house which was attacked and all but destroyed by guerilla fighters in 1979.

In the poem the builder of the house fantasises about different architectural styles—Plantagenet, Tudor—and reflects on the process of construction. This leads to contemplation of the transience and inevitable decline of human achievements, in contrast to the permanence and self-renewal of natural processes.

On an editorial point, it was tempting to intrude into the text and insert a comma after the recurring phrase “what matter” in *ll.* 9, 19, 31, 32 and 56. The word “if” in *ll.* 9 and 19 seems to mean “provided that”, a sense that would be clearer if commas were inserted. Brettell, however, only used a comma after the final “what matter” in *l.* 57, so while he was aware of the possibility of inserting commas after the phrase, he deliberately chose not to till the last line of the poem. Brettell’s punctuation has therefore been respected.

**2 affectations:** The self-deprecation implied here reinforces the mocking double rhyme in the title: “pseudo-tudor”.

**6 Plantagenet or Tudor:** A reference to the architectural styles prevalent in England during Plantagenet and Tudor rule. The Plantagenet kings reigned from 1154 to 1485, the Tudor monarchs from 1485-1603. While Plantagenet architecture was typically mediaeval and inspired by Gothic ideals, during the Tudor period “medieval forms began to give way to Renaissance ideals” (*EE* “Tudor Style”).

**7 oriel:** a high bay window, protruding from a wall.

**13 treeferns and cycads:** primitive African forest plants.

**17 Meranti:** a hardwood (Family Dipterocarpaceae) indigenous to Malaysia and Indonesia.

17 *sneezewood*: a South African wood (*Ptaeroxylon utile*) so called because of the scent causes sneezing when the wood is cut.

17 *eucalypt*: Australian gum trees of the family Myrtaceae.

21 *jerry-built*: made from cheap materials.

25 *Georgian cornices*: a reference to a feature of the architectural style popular during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. George I succeeded in 1714, George IV died in 1830. Architecture during the Georgian period was neo-classical in style and developed out of the Roman Palladian style (*EE* "Georgian Style"). The cornices in Georgian houses were often decorated with plaster clusters of grapes.

25 *pargeted*: "Covered or decorated with plaster or parget" (*OED* "pargeted" a.).

26 *Bleared with the smells of cabbage and carouse*: Cf. T. S. Eliot's "Preludes I": "The winter evening settles down // With smell of steaks in passageways" (ll.1-2).

28 *clouts*: clothes, wet laundry.

30 *groundsel*: weeds.

45 *sounder*: a herd of wild pigs.

47 *ant-mumbled*: gnawed by termites.

52 *folly*: an ironic reference to his house as though it were an eighteenth-century folly rather than a family home.

52 *cloud-cuckoo land*: an ideal state, too good to be true.

55 *vair*: variegated (in heraldry often silver and blue).

\* \* \*

**Note:** Brettell regrets the encroachment of Salisbury's skyscrapers, symbols of worldly success, on the Cathedral, the representative of Christian faith. He is repulsed by the inhumanity of the city but takes comfort in the "brave cypress" on the cloister lawn which yearly "thrusts its perpendicular spear // Up past the storeyed sills" (ll.30-31). Phoenix-like it rises above the death it normally symbolises and in its undaunted vertical growth he sees enduring hope. The forces of Nature and Christianity may seem dwarfed and thwarted by man's progress but their quiet power will outlive the fashions of time.

**Epigraph:** *Salisbury*: capital of Southern Rhodesia, now Harare.

11 *view-halloo*: call of a fox-hunter when sighting a fox.

14 *Poor Peter's cock*: The weathercock on the church tower recalls St Peter's denial of Christ (see Mk 14:27-31 and 66-72) as it changes direction according to the prevailing wind.

19 *poor Peters all*: a reference to human frailty, like St Peter's cowardice in denying Christ.

32 *Phoenix*: the mythical bird supposed to combust every five hundred years and resurrect itself from its ashes. The early church saw it as symbolic of immortality and resurrection.

34 *The faith*: Christianity.

35 *Megalith, pinnacle, cupola, cube*: the successive stages of church architecture.

36 *oolite*: a type of rock with small round stones embedded in it, often used in church buildings in England.

39 *fleering*: mocking or sneering.

41 *salts*: symbol of purity and incorruptibility.

\* \* \*



**Title:** *Maronda Mashanu*: see notes for poem “Maronda Mashanu”. Though Cripps’s church is in ruins, nature remains unaffected by the passing of time and reasserts its dominance.

**12** *euphorbia*: see notes to “Maronda Mashanu” l. 1.

**14** *The legend fades the lies inflate and breed*: The life of A.S. Cripps (see notes for poem “Maronda Mashanu”) was one devoted to Christian charity and the upliftment of humanity. He was unpopular among many white Rhodesians for his championing of African rights (see *SGS* 117). After his death in 1952 there were few outspoken white critics prepared to promote the proposition that black and white Rhodesians shared a common humanity and should be afforded equal opportunities.

**27** *Arcady’s further off*: Brettell fears that the ideal that Cripps strove to realize is now even less likely.

\* \* \*

## THE OWL AND THE IVY

p.195

**Note:** It is unclear what motivated the sardonic scepticism displayed in this poem but the allusions to the national flowers of Southern Rhodesia and England (see line 5 and 6 respectively) seem to suggest a political context. In Southern Rhodesia the years 1961-1965 were, according to David Caute, “years of instability, of national unrest, urban violence and political strife culminating in the Rhodesian Front’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence” in 1965 (Caute 29). It therefore seems likely that the sentiments here expressed have their roots in the unrest of this period.

**1** *toss for a totem*: Flip a coin to determine to which emblem or symbol of national or group identity one should swear allegiance. The implication is that all the choices are equally unpleasant and ultimately futile.

**5** *lily of flame*: the flame lily (*Gloriosa superba*) was the national flower of Southern Rhodesia.

6 *rose imperial*: the national flower of England (Family Rosaceae).

7 *flight of falcon*: possibly a reference to the eagle standards carried by Roman troops; alternatively: perhaps the “Zimbabwe bird” adopted as a symbol by black Zimbabweans.

9 *The soldier's pole is fallen*: See *Antony and Cleopatra* IV.xv. After Antony dies in her arms, Cleopatra laments:

O, wither'd is the garland of the war,  
The soldier's pole is fall'n: young boys and girls  
Are level now with men: the odds is gone,  
And there is nothing left remarkable  
Beneath the visiting moon.

(ll.65-68)

Within the context of the poem it is perhaps a reference to the perceived abandoning of standards of civilised political behaviour in Rhodesia and Britain in the prelude to Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI).

10 *tabard*: a herald's coat, frequently associated with the crusaders.

15 *the owl and the ivy*: The owl as impersonal harbinger of death and the ivy as impersonal emblem of evergreen life are seen as equally valid possible personal totems.

23 *hint of the worm*: an allusion to death and corruption. There are constant references to the worm in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. See also William Blake (1757-1827): “The Sick Rose.”

24 *lark*: Through its association with the brightness of morning, pure melody and freedom, and thus as a symbol of hope, the lark is an inappropriate totem.

25 *guinea*: an old gold coin worth 21 shillings, thus worth 252 times as much as a copper penny.

\* \* \*

**Note:** “Elephant” is probably Brettell’s most frequently anthologised poem. Poems like this earned Brettell the reputation of being a nature poet, but it was a title he was quick to dismiss.

He wrote to Hugh and Betty Finn:

Surely it’s inescapable that all poetry ...(with a few exceptions) is about people—or one person—either directly or by implication. I suppose some think of me as a nature poet: but it’s still there, even in Duiker and Elephant, Antbear or Crowned Cranes. Poems like “Elephant” should be read in this light.

(Letter dated 27 September 1973. NELM MS 96.19.138)

**Title:** *Elephant*: Brettell is referring to the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*).

6-7 Brettell refers to the ancient Indian myth that the world was saucer-shaped and supported by four elephants standing on the back of a giant turtle swimming in a sea of milk.

15 *engine*: a locomotive engine.

19 *behemoth*: a gigantic mythological monster. In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn dated 17 June 1967 Brettell noted: “I know it’s [Behemoth] usually taken to be a hippo, but Job indicates nothing except a huge beast—why not leave it at that?” (NELM MS 96.19.75).

\* \* \*

**Note:** “Giraffes” was written shortly after “Elephant” (see Draft letter to Dr Robin Graham, NELM MS 98.4.61). In the poem images of life in urban eighteenth-century England are contrasted with images from the African bush.

**Title:** *Giraffes*: (*Giraffa camelopardalis*).

1 *sedan*: here, as in line 15, the reference seems to be to a modern motor car. In *l.* 16 (and possibly in *l.* 23) the reference is to sedan chairs.

16 *sedan*: a covered chair or litter on which one is borne. Sedan chairs were a common means of transport for the rich during the eighteenth century.

16-23 an invocation of eighteenth century frivolous behaviour.

17 *link-light*: The link-light (a torch) was carried by an attendant (a link-man) in dark streets to show the way.

19 *patch*: During the eighteenth century women would stick a small “patch” of black silk or taffeta onto their cheeks to accentuate their complexion.

20 *pavane*: a slow stately dance.

24 *harlequin*: Brettell likens the patchwork patterning of giraffes with the diamond patterned costume worn by harlequins in the commedia dell’arte.

28 *arcadian*: see l. 50 in “Maronda Mashanu”.

29 *centaur and unicorn*: mythical, magical creatures. Centaurs had the torso and head of a man and the body of a horse, while unicorns were beautiful horselike creatures with a single horn protruding from their heads.

\* \* \*

**DUIKER DOE**

**p.203** ◀

**Note:** The scene depicted in the poem is drawn from Brettell’s personal experience. As he noted in “Eva 1984”, while living in Nyanga there was a “duiker that would often come below our bedroom window and impudently prune our roses” (“Eva 1984”, RB Col 13, 37).

**Title:** *Duiker*: small southern African antelope (*Sylvicapra grimmia*). It is so called because of the peculiar way in which it ducks and dives (see l.20: “sidelong swerve”) through bushes. “Duiker” (Afrikaans) translates literally as “diver”.

**3 unicorn:** mythical pure white horse-like creature with a single horn in the forehead, symbolic of holiness and chastity (see line 26).

**26 Unicorn, beast of the virgin girl, guard of the innocent:** According to myth only a virgin could tame a unicorn, which would then protect her from harm.

\* \* \*

**HOOPOE** -

**p.207**

**Note:** a poem on the vanity of earthly desires and the hope of resurrection.

**Title:** *Hoopoe*: see l. 5 of "Autumn Song".

**9 Peeping Tom:** According to legend Peeping Tom was the only person to look at Lady Godiva as she rode naked through the streets of Coventry to soften the heart of her husband towards the poor.

**15-21** a reference to Christ's parable of the man with too many possessions (see Mt. 19:16-24).

**25 bootless:** fruitless, unsuccessful.

**27 Sloth waits the trumpet:** see Rev. 8-9.

**27 paraclete:** the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

**31 cold shoulder:** indifference.

**33, 34, 37 love, faith, hope:** see 1 Corinthians 13:13: "Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love" (*Good News Bible*).

**37 hope:** a play also on the sound of the name of the bird.

\* \* \*

## WAGTAIL

p.209 ☒

**Title:** *Wagtail*: an illustration Brettell drew to accompany a copy of this poem clearly indicates that Brettell has in mind the African Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla aguimp*) a bird usually found near water (see *RBSA*, “African Pied Wagtail”, 475) [illustration in the possession of Ropsemary Brettell].

**Subtitle:** *Pungwe Falls*: a spectacular waterfall in Nyanga, Zimbabwe.

4 *quicks*: quickens, comes alive.

11 *flume*: river.

12-13 *gold fantail flute*: fantail pattern of carved gilded grooves, possibly on the front of a piece of furniture like a wardrobe door.

13 *linenfold*: pattern (on the front of pieces of furniture) resembling folded linen / cloth.

14 *tailrace*: swift current flowing away from the quieter water in a pool.

\* \* \*

## DIKKOP

p.211 ☒

**Title:** *Dikkop*: see “Vox Populi”, line 30.

5 *stop*: here as in organ stop.

8 *clews*: threads.

\* \* \*

## CROWNED CRANES

p.213 ☒

**Title:** *cranes*: In Chinese art cranes symbolise immortality and (specifically male) longevity. Other common motifs in Chinese art referred to here are the “springing rice and drooping conifers” (l.16) and the “twig and crag” (l.19). An African species, Crowned Cranes

(*Balearica regulorum*) are usually found in pairs on the edge of swamps (see *RBSA*, “Crowned Crane”, 143). Brettell painted a watercolour illustration of two Crowned Cranes on swamp land to accompany a copy of this poem which he sent to his daughter Rosemary.

6 *primary*: wing feather.

23 *dancing floor*: an echo of a line from W. B. Yeats’ poem “Byzantium” “Marbles of the dancing floor”(l.36), invoked here as an image of pure and serene beauty.

25 *brushes*: paint brushes, used also in Chinese calligraphy.

27 *lazy-tongs*: jointed adjustable / extendable tongs.

28 *pousette*: a swinging movement in a country dance.

28 *pavane*: a slow, stately dance.

30 *sarabande*: a stately court dance.

31 *firecrest*: the colourful “Crown” from which the bird derives its name.

32 *Biron to Rosaline*: witty secondary characters in Shakespeare’s comedy *Love’s Labours Lost*.

36 *Ape-tail bunched beneath the satin breeches*: a comic representation of man found in satirical nineteenth-century journals such as *Punch*.

37 *dithyrambic*: wild, passionate poem.

\* \* \*

**THE NAMELESS BIRD**

p.217

8 *bunched fist and pointing forefinger*: the shape of the head and outstretched neck of a duck in flight.

10 *hammerkop*: “hammerkop” is the anglicised form of the Afrikaans *hamerkop*. The hammerkop (*Scopus umbretta*) is found throughout southern and central Africa. This brown heron- or stork-like bird has “a large crest on head which, coupled with its large bill, gives the illusion of a hammer shape, hence the name” (*RBSA*, “Hamerkop”, 41).

\* \* \*

#### THE WHITE HARRIER

p.219 ☒

**Note:** Brettell noted: “The White Harrier (is) the only poem I can ever remember to have written right off practically as it stands—and just after seeing the bird hunting our valley” (Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn dated 5 May 1965. NELM MS 96.19.48). The bracketed final lines of each stanza seem to suggest an internal application of the harrier’s symbolism, like truth (l.16) the white harrier “[shears] through grey and blue” of “sloth and terror” (l. 4), “cowering indecisions” (l. 8), and “evasions” (l.12). The bird Brettell saw hunting might have been the Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*).

\* \* \*

#### NEW YEAR

p.223

**Note:** Brettell in a draft letter to Dr Robin Graham (NELM MS 98.4.61) noted that he wrote “New Year” in 1970, followed shortly afterwards by “Quartet”. In this poem Brettell compares the untameable mountain river to the passage of time, noting man’s inability to contain either for very long. For Brettell only the past is a “measurable flow” (l.25). The future is the “savage catclaws of the rapids” (l.24).

23 *Janus*: “the ancient Roman deity who kept the gate of heaven; hence the guardian of gates and doors. He was represented with two faces, one in front and one behind, and the doors of his temple in Rome were thrown open in times of war and closed in times of peace. The name is used allusively both with reference to double-facedness and war”(Brewers 583). Here he is symbolic of the new year in his ability to look both backwards and forwards simultaneously.

\* \* \*



**Note:** Brettell in this poem deals with the apprehension of his own mortality, wondering whether he will experience next year's spring.

**Subtitle:** Brettell suffered from hypertension (see letter to Betty and Hugh Finn 1 December 1969. NELM MS 96.19.94).

**15 *fifes*:** small flutes.

**15 *barcarolle*:** the song of a gondolier, or a similar musical composition.

**19 *mast*:** the fruit of forest trees (nuts, acorns) on which pigs feed.

**50 *In the cup the tealeaf stranger*:** a reference to the custom of "scrying", i.e. divining or reading the future from the pattern of tea leaves at the bottom of an empty teacup. The appearance of a "stranger" is often predicted. The allusion here seems to be to death.

\* \* \*

#### QUARTET: EX LIBRIS:

**Note:** In these four poems Brettell, while reading, meditates on the natural world that surrounds him and the cycles of history. The poems are linked by the cycle of the seasons, with each poem adopting the ambience of its time while pessimistically contemplating the past.

**Title:** *Ex libris*: from my library. In each of the four poems the season being contemplated is linked to a book the poet is reading.

#### I. SUMMER



**Note:** In "Summer" natural history and human history are contrasted while the summer day "goes effortlessly on and on" (l.39). The poet, while reading a history book, notices a lizard. This leads him to reflect on its Jurassic predecessors, now fossilised in stone, and on

fossilised trees, which have become coal. He then returns to more recent human history, which, in this poem, seems to consist almost exclusively of war. The implication seems to be that the season, and by extension history, pass irrespective of the activities of any living creature. Human politics and warfare are therefore a minor event in the history of the world, and no more important than fossilised dinosaurs or petrified trees.

7 *catstail*: reed-mace, bulrush (*Typha latifolia*).

7 *mariscus*: a reed (Family Mariscus) found alongside bulrushes, reeds and sedge in wetlands throughout southern Africa.

18 *jurassic spectre in the shale*: fossilised dinosaur.

25 *Bannockburn to Blenheim*: The battle of Bannockburn in Scotland, fought on 24 June 1314 between armies led by Robert the Bruce and King Edward II respectively, was a decisive victory for the Scots in their war of independence against England (see *EE* “Bannockburn, Battle of”).

The Battle of Blenheim, fought on 13 August 1704, in Bavaria by Anglo-Austrian forces against French and Bavarian troops, was a major battle in the War of the Spanish Succession and one that saw the Anglo-Austrian forces emerge victorious (see *EE* “Blenheim, battle of”).

27 *Hidalgo, mandarin, or commissar*: Spanish, Chinese and Communist leaders.

32 *Hall of Mirrors*: a magnificent room in the Palace of Versailles where the Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1919 after World War I.

33 *shot-split decks*: a reference to a naval battle, possibly Trafalgar where Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758-1805) was fatally wounded.

35 *Richmond up to Holyrood*: Elizabeth I (1533-1603) died at Richmond Palace in the early hours of Thursday, 24 March 1603. Her cousin Sir Robert Carey immediately set off for Scotland to inform James VI (1566-1625) of Scotland that he was now also James I of

England. Carey arrived at Holyrood palace in Edinburgh late on Saturday 27 March. His journey was so swift that its speed was not matched until 1832 (see Marilee par. 32).

**36 Runnymede:** a “meadow on the River Thames, in Surrey, west of London” where on 15 June 1215 King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta (*EE* “Runnymede”).

**37 Lexington:** The Battle of Lexington (19 April 1775) was the first military encounter between English troops and American militia in the American War of Independence (1775-1783) (see *EE* “Lexington, Battle of”).

**38 Panmunjom:** In July 1953, the truce agreement for the Korean War (1950-1953) was signed at Panmunjom (*EE* “Korean War”).

\* \* \*

## II. AUTUMN, AFTER DROUGHT

p.231 ☒

**Note:** In “Autumn” the season appears to have come too late for those who have been waiting on its arrival, but the season is oblivious of this. As in “Summer” the poet pessimistically notes the insignificance of existence. The theme of “wry mischance” (l.2) predominates.

**12 Like a bird from Jove:** Brettell may perhaps be thinking of Mt. 3:16 “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.” “Jove”, however, is explicitly pagan and normally refers to Jupiter, king of the gods in Roman mythology (Zeus in Greek mythology) so Brettell might be thinking of an eagle.

**27 awn:** “The delicate spinous process, or ‘beard,’ that terminates the grain-sheath of barley, oats, and other grasses; extended in Bot. to any similar bristly growth (*OED* “awn” n.).

\* \* \*

## III. WINTER

p.233 ◀ ☒

**Note:** In “Winter” the poet, sitting indoors by the fire, protected from the wind, attempts, not always successfully, to contemplate with indifference the progress of humankind from the time of the caveman. The poem concludes with an awareness of the poet’s own mortality.

2 *big-top*: a circus tent.

7 *tumbleweed*: In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn dated 17 June 1967 Brettell noted: “our tumbleweed is the pom-pom head of the buphone [*sic*] lily [*Boophane disticha*] which snaps off and rolls off with the wind: “hedgehogs” the Riverside children called them” (NELM MS 96.19.75).

11 *wires*: telephone lines.

21 *king of cats*: In Act III. i. 77 of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio challenges Tybalt to fight him by calling him “King of Cats”.

24-29 Brettell here is thinking of the paintings done by the Bushmen (San) of southern Africa on cave walls, where the often elongated human figures seem to tiptoe (l.25) and are shown with large buttocks (l.26). The human figures are sometimes painted over pre-existing depictions of animals such as eland (l.28), the largest southern African antelope.

29 *venators*: hunters.

32 *style*: stylus.

33 *slavers*: Brettell seems to be comparing the draught with tongues licking up the dust on the cave floor.

34 *rancid pelt*: the San wore greasy animal skin cloaks and used them as blankets at night.

39 *accidie*: torpor, sloth.

45-46 Brettell’s use of the subjunctive indicates possible future action.

\* \* \*

**Note:** In “Spring” the poet, while reading Sir Thomas Browne outdoors, is aware of having grown old in contrast with the burgeoning life of springtime. Once again the insignificance of human history is emphasised.

**5** *Sir Thomas Browne*: Browne (1605-1682) was “one of the first English prose writers to reveal self-consciously his own personality in his writing, and to try to ‘make a friend’ of the reader” (*LCEL*, “Browne, Sir Thomas”, 419). A medical doctor by profession he was knighted by Charles II for his antiquarian scholarship. Brettell was an enthusiastic reader of Browne. In an undated letter written while still living at home in Lye, Worcestershire, Brettell noted to a university friend:

Apart from his poetry then, a dead poet IS as dead as Dickens’ door nail and apart from his poetry a poet does not therefore matter. And even in his poetry, the personal note, through being universal, becomes im-personal. To take an outstanding example—Sir Thomas Browne. That noble and loveable old fellow, passing through the limbec of his art into immortality, has ceased entirely to be the justice who condemned old women as witches. He has become an impersonal figure as impersonal as Mr Pickwick or Michael who can come and linger by our elbow at the fireside whenever we reach down *Religio Medici*—with me, it will not be an infrequent occasion, bless him. And from this I hope you see that although an artist does paint and write with his blood, the blood that does not form part of his art, is as cold as the frosty Caucasus. All we want therefore, is that which lives because it is immortal—art, poetry. And the rest doesn’t matter.

(Letter to Bill Berry. Undated. NELM MS  
2002.17.3.)

**6** *hold amused monologue on a funerary urn*: In 1658 Browne published a treatise: *Hydriotaphia: Urn Burial*. The book starts with the discovery of “ancient burial urns in Norfolk” before examining different ways of “disposing of the dead”. It ends with “meditations on death itself”. According to the *Longman Companion to English Literature* “the book is characteristic of Browne’s practice of uniting factual curiosity with spiritual reflections” and is famous as an example of Browne’s “characteristically sonorous and poetic style” (*LCEL*, “Urn Burial, or Hydriotaphia” 849).

**11** *lynchets*: strips of unploughed land between fields.

12 *Vibrissa*: nostril hair.

16 *Pricks*: Brettell seems to be thinking of “nerve-ends” (*l.* 15) as singular, in agreement with the other nouns in the stanza (“*Vibrissa*”, “cat’s whisker”, “hair”, “nostril”, “shadow”, “stone”) hence “*Pricks*” rather than “*Prick*”. The version of the poem that appears in *Side-Gate and Stile* is the only one in which “*Pricks*” is replaced with “*Prick*” and it is unclear if this emendation was authorised by Brettell. “*Pricks*” has therefore been retained.

19 *With quoin and spalling neatly pented in*: A “quoin” is a dressed stone corner joining two brick walls. “Spalling” means flaking away, hence indicating soft stone or brickwork. “Pented” means confined.

20 *seventh hole*: perhaps a reference to the ancient practice of making a hole in the skull to allow the escape of evil spirits; possibly the result of a spear wound.

31 *rowelled*: ripped open, rent.

46 “*Some long roots of quitch wreathed round the bone*”: Brettell in an annotation to the poem acknowledged that he was quoting from Browne’s *Hydriotaphia*, ch. 3.

48 *Truepenny*: trustworthy.

\* \* \*

**EPIPHANY 1965**

**p.241**

**Note:** For the older poet Brettell, Livingstone’s poetry is a revelation of how the reality of the African natural world can be treated and leads him to aspire to do likewise. The “difficult poetry” Brettell is reading is probably from Livingstone’s collection *Sjambok and Other Poems from Africa* published in 1964.

**Title:** *Epiphany*: The Feast of the Epiphany commemorates the arrival of the Magi from the East to worship the new-born Christ. Hence: magus (*l.* 3), myrrh (*l.* 16), frankincense (*l.* 22), gold (*l.* 30). In this instance it may also be an oblique reference to the revelation of the gifts of the younger poet.

**Dedication:** *Livingstone*: The South African poet Douglas Livingstone (1932-1996) was a close friend of Brettell's. Although Livingstone and Brettell only met once, in 1978 (see NELM MS 2002.17.22), they exchanged poetry from at least as early as 1963. In a letter dated 20 January 1963 Brettell noted:

Livingstone told me some time ago that he was writing in a different style: I think it's a pity it has to be the fashionable new brutality of Thom Gunn and Ted Hughes. ... Still he's got the guts of (a) poet—needs now to grow the skin.  
(NELM MS 96.19.24)

Livingstone later described Brettell to another South African poet, Patrick Cullinan, as "the greatest poet writing in Southern Africa" (Letter from David Philip to Brettell dated 14 June 1991 NELM MS 98.4.39).

**14** *styptics*: astringent substances used to stop bleeding.

**17** *dust*: see Gen. 3:14:

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

**19** *Sting the heel*: see Gen. 3:15:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

\* \* \*

## A BOY IS BORN

p.243 ☒

**Note:** Using the southern hemisphere's inversion of the seasons, Brettell strips the conventional image of Christ's nativity of its stylised representations. The birth being celebrated is an ordinary human event.

**Title:** *A Boy is Born*: a reference to the birth of Jesus Christ (see Lk. 2).

**Epigraph:** A paean is a joyful hymn such as those sung at Christmas time. In the Southern Hemisphere the 25 December falls in Midsummer.

**1** *seed is split*: The immaculate conception (parthenogenesis) of Jesus.

**2** *The cradle tosses on the bough*: an echo, though not in sentiment of a traditional American nursery rhyme:

Rock a bye baby, on the tree top,  
When the wind blows the cradle will rock;  
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,  
Down will come baby, cradle and all.

(“Lullaby Lyrics” par. 1)

The “cradle” here is the source of the blessings of summer: grain, fruit, new growth, clear skies.

**3** *virgin's colour*: Artists have traditionally painted the mantle of the Virgin Mary (Jesus's mother, see Mt. 1:18-24) in shades of blue and silver.

**6** *Pentecost*: After Jesus's crucifixion (see Mt. 27, Mk. 15, Lk. 23, Jn. 19) and resurrection (see Mt. 28, Lk. 24, Mk. 16, Jn. 20) His disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Jewish feast of Pentecost (see Acts 2:3) “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.” In the southern hemisphere Pentecost falls in early winter.

**7** *kaffircorn*: sorghum, a cereal widely cultivated in southern Africa for use in the making of traditional home-brewed beer. “Kaffircorn” is now regarded as offensive (see *DSAE* “kaffircorn” n.).

**9** *No bed of chaff, no manger cot*: According to Luke 2: 7 Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem: “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes (see *l.* 11), and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

**13-14** the luxurious fabrics depicted in mediaeval renaissance paintings of the Christmas scene.

**17-18** *No blast to scourge*: before Jesus was crucified he was scourged (see Mt. 27, Mk. 15, Lk. 23, Jn. 19). Other saints were flayed alive, or beaten with rods.



19-20 see Is. 11:8: “And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp.”

22 *Autumnal bitterness of myrrh*: a possible reference to the death of Christ at Easter time which occurs in autumn in the southern Hemisphere. Myrrh is symbolic of death and mourning and was presented to the Christ child by the third wise man (see Mt. 2:11).

28 *capricorn*: The Zodiac sign for the period 21 December to 20 January: full summer in the southern hemisphere.

31 *king of leopard*: (see Is. 11:6) “and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.”

32 *The boy, the boy, is born*: an echo of Isaiah’s vision of the birth of the Messiah in Is. 9:6:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

\* \* \*

## SONG FOR SEVERN

p.247 ◀

**Note:** The countryside depicted in the poem is Brettell’s native Worcestershire through which the river Severn winds. In the first stanza the “girl” referred to could be Brettell’s first love, whom he referred to only as “Cynthia” in his autobiography *Side-Gate and Stile* (1981) and whom he courted while an undergraduate student at Birmingham University (see notes to “June 14<sup>th</sup>” in “Uncollected Poems”). Alternatively the girl could be a reference to his wife-to-be Eva Scovell who is referred to in the third stanza.

Although Brettell first met Eva in Southern Rhodesia in 1931, and while there is no record of the two of them visiting Worcestershire together, it is possible that such a visit might have taken place before they were married. After two years teaching in Southern Rhodesia at Ruzawi School Brettell returned to England to study for his teaching diploma at Birmingham University. Eva followed him and taught at a school in Hampshire, thus making a meeting of the sort described in the poem both feasible and likely.

The poem seems to recall three separate walks along the Severn: the first as a young man with either “Cynthia” or Eva; the second as a slightly older man, walking alone; the third as a married man. This conjecture is supported by the fact that the verbs in the first two

stanzas: “came”, “slid”, “strode”, “quartered”, “tore” are in the past tense while in stanza three, the single verb “come” is in the present tense.

2 *the fall of may*: Brettell is probably referring to the flower of the hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), commonly called May blossom. It has delicate white petals.

10 *Sullen with the blood of Wales*: The river Severn rises in Wales, and so carries Welsh soil down with it into Worcestershire.

\* \* \*

## SONG FOR APPLES

p.249 ◀

**Note:** A young tree bearing only a single apple inspires the poet to celebrate man’s paradoxical continuing innocence and his repeated fall from grace.

7 *clang of guarded gate*: See Gen. 3:24: “So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

12 *bulging bushels*: produce of harvest. Adam was condemned to till the soil for food. See Gen. 3:19: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

13-16 The paradox of innocent guilt is emphasised and repeated here in “glad ... dearth”, “innocence ... trick”, and “arithmetic ... uncalculable”.

17 *Eve*: According to Gen. 3:1-13 Eve, tempted by the serpent, disobeyed God and tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil which she then gave to Adam to eat. The result was the fall of man as God banished them from the Garden of Eden. Brettell is also alluding to his wife Eva.

\* \* \*

**Note:** The occasion that prompted this poem may have been Noel and Eva Brettell's silver wedding anniversary in 1959.

**3** *damascene*: an engraved wavy pattern.

**10** *graver*: an engraving tool, a burin.

**10** *enchases*: engraves.

**23** *engrail*: to indent with tiny concave patterns around the edge of a vessel.

**25** *Nor custom ever stale*: an echo of Enobarbus's words in *Antony and Cleopatra* II. ii. 235-238:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety: other women cloy  
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry,  
Where most she satisfies.

\* \* \*

**Note:** Brettell in a letter to Betty and Hugh Finn dated 7 March 1967 (NELM MS 96.19.71) noted: "Here, as you see, all punctuation and capitals (except for two periods) have been left out because of the occasion—one of my concessions to an affectation I can't usually accept."

**7** *Hokusai*: Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849). "Japanese painter and wood engraver, born in Edo (now Tokyo) with the name Tokitaro. He is considered the greatest artist of the Ukiyo-e, or "pictures of the floating world", school of printmaking.

Hokusai's most characteristic wood-block prints, book illustrations, and landscape paintings were done between 1830 and 1840.

The free curved lines characteristic of his style gradually developed into a series of spirals that imparted the utmost freedom and grace to his work, as in *Raiden* (the Spirit of Thunder). He was famous for the vigour and spontaneity of his talent, which grew with age

(*EE* "Hokusai").

Brettell in this poem is probably thinking of Hokusai's picture "The Breaking Wave Off Kanagawa" which depicts a gigantic wave about to break over the boats below it.

9 *martin*: a swallow-like bird

16 *ruts*: thin parallel tracks of an unsurfaced country road.

13 *ecstasy*: an out-of-body experience.

\* \* \*

## THE CHILDREN

p.257

**Note:** At the time of writing Brettell was Headmaster at Riversdale Primary School (1942-1958) (see draft letter Dr Robin Graham, NELM MS 98.4.61).

1 *gillimienkies*: little fishes, tiddlers. Brettell's consistent misspelling of this word as "gillivinkies" might be due to the way he pronounced it.

14 *Tester and guinea and groat*: names for various old-fashioned English coins. A "tester" was a reward of a sixpence, a golden "guinea" was worth 21 shillings and a "groat" was a silver four-penny piece.

15 *widdershins*: anti-clockwise, or "the wrong way round."

18 *English and French ... cowboys cops and thugs*: children's battle games.

21 *Kalulu the Hare*: In African mythology the hare is a trickster, like his direct American descendant Brer Rabbit.

23 *Alexander*: Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), one of the world's greatest military leaders. By the time of his death at the age of thirty-three, he had established an empire from Greece to India. To the children, however, his existence is insignificant and he might as well have been a horse dealer.

24 *Antoinette*: Marie Antoinette (1755-1793) the unpopular wife of King Louis XVI at the time of the French Revolution. She and her husband were guillotined.

32 *The monstrous mushroom, cauliflower-topped*: During World War II, on 6 August 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima by American forces:

the Supreme Allied Headquarters reported that 129,558 people were killed, injured, or missing and a further 176,987 made homeless by the bombing. (In 1940 the population of Hiroshima had been 343,698.) The blast flattened more than 10 sq km (4 sq mi), about 60 per cent of the city.

(*EE* "Hiroshima")

\* \* \*

## SCHOOLMASTER

p.259

**Note:** At the time of writing "Schoolmaster" Brettell was Headmaster at Riversdale Primary School (1942-1958). This poem was written after "The Children" (see draft letter to Dr Robin Graham, NELM MS 98.4.61).

38 *spindrift*: driving spray (see *OED* "spindrift" n. a).

\* \* \*

## END OF YEAR RETURNS

p.263

**Note:** It is the end of the school year and Brettell, the schoolmaster, is working on end-of-year school reports. Bored, he sets himself a poetic exercise in composition but through the open door he can see the effects of the wind and sunshine of a December day. The world outside leads him into the imaginary world of mythology.

8 *Cerberus*: the three headed, dragon-tailed dog that guarded the entrance to Hades. The suggestion is that the children are in Paradise, the schoolmaster in hell.

10 *priapian*: Brettell here is thinking of the Greek god of fertility and gardens Priapus who was normally portrayed as a grotesque satyr with a large phallus. The Romans erected crude statues of him in their gardens to act as scarecrows (*EE* "Priapus").

12 *hanger*: wooded hillside

15 *Three feet wide and six feet long*: The patch of sunlight on the floor admitted by the classroom windows is, for the enclosed schoolmaster, the virtual equivalent of a coffin.

\* \* \*

## WIND AND AN EAGLE OWL

p.265 ◀

**Note:** In Eva 1984, an unpublished memoir of his relationship with Eva, addressed to her after her death, Brettell describes the occasion that led to the writing of this poem:

We had our differences, of course, our tiffs and disagreements, your impatience with my stupidity, your cool scorn for my more foolish ambitions; but never once, my memory tells me, did we ever go to sleep without a loving, sometimes passionate, reconciliation. Though there must have been one time: because there remains as witness what some critics have said is the best of my poems, 'Wind and an Eagle Owl'. I have forgotten whatever silly quarrel it was that turned our backs upon each other that night; but I remember well enough its thrilling sequel. At first light you came and sat on my bed, and looked at me unsmiling. I pulled you down and whispered into you hair, 'I'm sorry, darling.' The wind, which had snarled and whimpered around the house all night, had risen with the dawn and was blowing the curtains into a frantic curve. 'Come on,' you said, 'let's go for a ride before breakfast.'

The horses were on their toes, their nostrils flared and manes streamed. We cantered down the two long miles of grassland towards the Umniati valley. Before the hoofs, the kiewetjies rose and wheeled screaming in a flurry of black and white. As we pulled up, your face was alight with joy. 'That was glorious,' you said. And then we saw, its great wings tangled and broken in the barbed-wire fence, that giant eagle owl. Its eyes blinked and narrowed in hatred, the great beak opened in a feeble snarl.

'The poor thing,' you cried. 'You must kill it, darling. We can't let it hang there all day.' And I gave Bangle's reins to you as I did so, a pitiful mercy. Even now, forty years later; it seems like an act of expiation.

("Eva 1984", RB Col 13, 33-34)

20 *woods in trouble*: Cf. A. E. Housman's (1895-1936) poem XXXI from *A Shropshire Lad*:

On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble  
His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;  
The gale, it plies the saplings double,  
And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

(ll. 1-4)

26 *scapulars*: while in ornithology "scapular" refers to feathers on a bird's shoulders, Brettell here is referring to the shoulders of the bird.

36 *frith*: channel, as at the mouth of a river.

\* \* \*

4 *hood*: Cobras can flatten and widen their necks below the head to form what is known as a hood.

6 *fallow*: unsown ploughland.

17 *This year, next year, sometime, never*: a children's "counting down" rhyme.

### ONE YEAR, 1970. ☒

(Vol. I: 270-331)

The collection "One Year" shows greater maturity than is evident in Brettell's previous four volumes. Produced and circulated in 1969/1970, forty years after Brettell first came to Southern Rhodesia, "One Year" is Brettell's most carefully contrived and structured volume. It is also the one he seems to have circulated most widely amongst friends and family, if the number of extant copies is a reliable indication.

The twenty-four poems are divided into twelve sections of two poems each, consisting firstly of a sonnet or sonnet-like poem whose title is one of the months of the year, followed by another poem. Brettell did not write many sonnets. These twelve, arranged in chronological order, were written as love poems for his wife Eva and not initially intended for publication. The remaining twelve poems, each inserted after the "month" poems, deal with topics ranging from insects to Christ's nativity (see "Mantis and Moth" and "Mother and Child" respectively). The total number of poems in the collection deliberately reflects the number of hours in a day.

African fauna and flora also feature in this collection ("Antbear" and "Cosmos") as does a comparison of the landscapes and cultures of England and Africa ("Cuckoo"). Throughout the cycle there is an attempt to resolve the dichotomies and paradoxes of the expectations of the contrasted northern and southern hemispheres. In these carefully crafted and structured poems Brettell makes extensive use of half-rhyme. To an extent "One Year" is a culmination of all that has gone before. It also signals a new beginning, for many of the poems Brettell writes after "One Year" are darker (see "And Underfoot September",

“Recessional” and “Country into Town”) and more experimental (see “Lakeside” and “Eclogue in the Hills”).

\* \* \*

JANUARY

p.273

6-7: The only contrast in this quasi-sonnet is found in these lines, where the panic of the hare highlights the prevailing calm of the rest of the poem.

8 *haruspex*: ancient Roman diviner, soothsayer.

14 *flume*: see “Wagtail” (l.11).

\* \* \*

MANTIS AND MOTH

p.275

**Subtitle:** *Kathleen Ferrier in “Das Lied von der Erde”*: Kathleen Ferrier (1912-1953) was an English contralto who died of cancer after a short, brilliant career. Brettell must have heard a radio broadcast of her singing Gustav Mahler’s (1860-1911) *Das Lied von der Erde* (Song of the Earth), a symphony orchestrated for orchestra and voices. In the poem the flight of the moth is symbolic of her voice.

1-11 The popular name “praying mantis” covers many different species of mantids, all of which are “relatively large predatory insects, easily recognised by heavily spined prehensile fore legs, mobile and triangular heads, and characteristic ‘praying’ posture” (*FGISA* “Mantids” 60).

The praying mantis is an object of superstition amongst many indigenous African people in southern Africa. It was regarded as sacred by the Khoi people—hence its Afrikaans name “Hotnotsgod” (Hottentot’s god) and Brettell’s term: “monster god” (l. 2).

3 *hexapod*: insect.

28 *tingling valves*: Valves were used in early wireless sets.

\* \* \*



**2** *our year-long self sufficiency*: In the sonnet sequence in this collection each of the months of the year has its own sonnet.

\* \* \*

**Note**: The poem contrasts exotic weeds with foreign technology and concludes that the cosmos flower will outlast electric pylons, the sense being that natural forces are more durable than manmade inventions.

**Title**: *Cosmos*: tall Central American tropical annual plant (Family Asteraceae) with showy brightly coloured pink or white flowers, also known as the Mexican poppy. It has spread throughout southern Africa and is regarded as an invasive weed.

**7** *The pylons in their Roman way*: Roman here indicates regular. Brettell is possibly recalling the poem "Pylons" by Stanley Snaith (b.1903):

Over the tree'd upland evenly striding,  
One after one they lift their serious shapes  
That ring with light. The statements of their steel  
Contradicts Nature's softer architecture.

(ll. 1-4)

**16** *half a hundred years*: Brettell may be referring to the belief that cosmos seed was accidentally introduced into southern Africa in horse fodder during the Anglo-Boer war.

**20** *modern phases*: electrification of the countryside.

**28** *stolen march*: advantage gained by stealth.

\* \* \*

**Note**: The Petrarchan sonnet form has been adapted by the addition of a two-foot line after both the octave and the sestet and the addition of, on average, two syllables to each line. The rhyme scheme is also irregular.

4 *thirds*: a reference to the musical interval of a third.

10 "*Joy of man's desiring*": famous choral composition by the German composer J.S. Bach (1685-1750). Towards the end of his life Bach went blind (*ll.* 10, 14). Brettell uses the anglicised pronunciation of Bach to rhyme with "dark" in *l.* 14.

11 *burden*: "the bass, 'undersong', or accompaniment" (as in "bourdon") or "the refrain or chorus of a song; a set of words recurring at the end of each verse" (*OED*, "burden" n. 9, 10).

\* \* \*

CUCKOO

p.285 ☒

**Note:** In "Eva 1984" Brettell recalls the occasion that led to this poem:

And once, for a couple of days, she and I watched a cuckoo, the real spirit of our forsaken English woods, perched on our telephone wires, having a rest, maybe on his long journey home. 'Cuckoo, cuckoo,' she called to him. 'Don't do that,' I said. 'You don't know what our bawdy mediaeval forebears said about him—and me!'

("Eva 1984", RB Col 13, 37)

After Eva's death Brettell wrote another poem entitled "Cuckoo" in which he reflects on the above occasion and his loss (see "Country into Town").

In this poem Brettell, after seeing the bird and consulting a bird book on it (see *l.* 25), seems to merge different characteristics of the European and African cuckoos. For instance, the African cuckoo, according to *Roberts Birds of South Africa*, "has complete bars across the tail-feathers" (see *l.* 9); however, the European cuckoo is "silent in Africa" (see *l.* 17) and the "very base of the bill (is) greenish." European cuckoos also migrate to Africa, whereas African cuckoos "migrate south within Africa". In Zimbabwe the African cuckoo is recorded as "arriving in September and departing in January". If Brettell is looking at a European cuckoo, then it is likely that it would have been during this period, and not in March as the ordering of poems in "One Year" suggests. The cuckoo's ambivalent domicile, however, is perhaps a reminder of Brettell's own (*RBSA*, "Cuckoo", 233).

4 *singing wires*: telephone lines.

9 *Belly like butcher's apron*: traditionally butcher's aprons are striped.

16 *cuculus*: latin for cuckoo.

20 *Perdita in the wind-tousled daffodils*: Perdita is the lost-and-found daughter of Leontes in Shakespeare's play *The Winter's Tale*. In IV. iv. 118-120, she says:

... daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty;

In "Fancy's Knell", published in *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*, Brettell describes Perdita as:

In a green gown Perdita wanders still:  
When the breeze blows the shadow-work over her face,  
And leaves you only a wind-tossed daffodil.  
(ll.12-14)

21 *Poltroon*: coward.

23 *Benedick*: jocund character in Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing*.

25 *book*: a reference book on birds, possibly *Roberts Birds of South Africa*.

26 *cere*: fleshy covering at the base of the bird's beak.

31 *Blank maps embellished with absurd chimera*: old-fashioned maps with pictures of fantastic animals in the open spaces.

33 *the loved dingles*: remembered scenes from Brettell's youth in the English countryside.

41 *down-top*: on top of the downs.

41 *fieldfaring*: cross-country rambles.

43 *the lost day*: the fondly remembered past.

\* \* \*

4 *spiv*: flashily dressed crook.

6 *stinkweeds*: Probably the toxic weed known in Afrikaans as “stinkblaar” (stinking leaf), “any of several annual herb-like weeds of the genus *Datura* of the Solanaceae ... of rank growth and foetid smell, bearing trumpet-shaped mauve flowers and thorny fruit containing highly poisonous seeds” (*DSAE* “stinkblaar” n.).

8 *colonnade*: the row of pine trees planted by Brettell on his property in Nyanga.

\* \* \*

## TRAVELLER'S JOY

p.291

**Note:** Under the heading “April”, in an unpublished manuscript entitled “Stumbling on Melons, 1964” Brettell wrote:

Daily the sunset comes earlier and creeps stealthily to the north. It is already behind the shoulder of the big western hill. The ripe grass moves in purple-brown tides over the ridges, chased by the south-easter. The evening air gets an edge on it, and already a fire is a comfortable affectation after sundown. In the morning the lawn is grey with dew: any morning now it may be white with frost. The slow season saddens and falters, and, miraculously, the Traveller's Joy bursts into its fragrant cream cascades, tumbling over rocks and bushes in wave on wave of sweetness.

It has always been one of my best-loved Rhodesian flowers, for its own carefree and careless exuberance, for this strange waiting as the ultimate gesture of summer, for the nostalgic memories it disturbs so deeply. So many of our wild flowers are waiting for a name, and can never be truly loved until they get one. For that, I suppose, we shall have to wait a long time. It takes centuries of rustic affectionate fancy to invent them—lad's love, heartsease, snowdrop, love-in-idleness, naked nannies. So far we have only been able to pin a few old favours on to new coats—Rhodesian pimpernel, Rhodesian gentian, Rhodesian forget-me-not: and all, of course, self-consciously and behind the botanist's back.

A schoolmaster friend of mine once told me how an inspector, newly arrived from England, produced a wild flower and asked a class its name. He afterwards took the teacher to task, because the children just stared. ‘Well,’ replied my friend, ‘I don't know, either; we all know it by sight, but not by name.’ But Traveller's Joy, and, when the fragrant trusses have turned to the fluffy blond seed tufts, Old Man's Beard—there is no need for invention about this, because so far as I know, this, the wild clematis, is the only flower that is exactly the same in England as in Africa, in a Sussex lane or on a Rhodesian anthill. What is more, and gives the story its full circle, it knows its season, the autumn. Now, when the spring is ‘tossing its bounty’ over the hedgerows of England in a foam of may and blackthorn, we have the Traveller's Joy. As Walter de la Mare says—

'Shall the rusting harvest hedgerow  
Still the Traveller's Joy entwine,  
And as happy children gather  
Posies once mine?'

And A.E.Housman—

'And Traveller's Joy beguiles in autumn  
Hearts that have lost their own.'

There is an undertone of sadness in their lines, but I don't find it myself. The very perfume, so powerful, is not overpowering. It has a sharpness in it, like a hint of frost. I remember in the days when we travelled by horse-buggy, not closed in by windscreen and plate glass, but open to all the slow coolness of evening, as we jogged home along the sandy tracks of the Charter flats, the fragrance would lie in ambush for us behind every mantled ant-hill along the road. Traveller's Joy: there never was a flower so exquisitely named:—thanks to Gerard, that old sixteenth century herbalist, who coined the name out of his own honest fancy.

("Stumbling on Melons, 1964")

10 *widdershins*: see l. 15 in "The Children".

\* \* \*

MAY

p.293

**Note:** The earliest extant copy of this poem, entitled "Sonnet V", was included in a letter to Betty and Hugh Finn dated 1 December 1969 (NELM MS 96.19.94). The setting for the poem is almost certainly a week-long (*l. 2*) holiday near Beira (see below).

Under the heading "June", in an unpublished manuscript entitled "Stumbling on Melons, 1964" Brettell wrote:

The Beira coast is not sensational, but that is just the thing a coast does not have to be. Whether you have at your back a chalk cliff, a sand-dune or a mangrove swamp, in front is the same inscrutable sea, uncurling to infinite left and right its changeful monotony of line and sound. It is extraordinary how the most anxious or preoccupied or overbusy of us are content to sit for hours and do nothing but listen fascinated to this advancing and retreating fugue—

'The moving waters at their priest-like task

Of pure ablution round earth's human shores'—

though I'm not sure whether Keats' compelling image is just right. The suggestion of purpose, and moral purpose at that, is alien to this huge, uncommitted, haphazard, contemptuous impersonality of the sea.

The great charm of this unpretentious Macuti beach is its loneliness. Walk a mile or two beyond the lighthouse, and you have the African seaboard as much to yourself as Vasco da Gama; not entirely to yourself, though. The booming fringe supplies hundreds of birds with what seems an easy living. Where the breakers scrawl

their great semi-circles up the beach, the companies of sanderlings scurry up and down on their urgent affairs, seeming as anxious as any landlubber to keep their feet dry. The curlew sandpipers course the sands or post over the waves with fierce eagerness, their remote and troubled screams the very voice of all wild emptinesses. As the tide lays bare the auburn whalebacks of the sandbars, flocks of pelicans arrive to assess the possibilities of the shallow verge, grotesque and competent buffoons, waddling sailor-fashion into the edge of the water, or becoming suddenly and surprisingly airborne on their great grey vans, constantly preening themselves over and over with their legendary long beaks. Where a small river creeps out of the mangroves, into a quiet little estuary, land-bird and sea-bird meet, the elegance of the egret and the heron, the haughty flamboyance of a flock of flamingoes. They were all feeding on the far bank, their club-like heads busy on the bottom, so we had to imagine the flight of black and white and scarlet. That was easy in this sunny solitude: we wouldn't have been all that surprised, warned by the shadow of even more fabulous wings, to see a roc land on the dunes, and Sindbad himself shaken from his parachute.

(“Stumbling on Melons, 1964”)

\* \* \*

## IRONWORKERS

p.295

**2** *sea-born goddess strumpeted*: Aphrodite / Venus: goddess of beauty and sexual love.

“Because she originally sprang from the sea she was also called Anadyomene (‘sprung from the foam’)” (*LCEL*, “Aphrodite”, 388). Aphrodite was caught in bed with Mars by her husband Hephaestus.

**5** *tuyere*: furnace nozzle.

**10** *Hephaestus*: In Greek mythology Hephaestus, the artisan of the gods, was god of fire and metalwork. He was Aphrodite's husband and was ugly and lame. In all manuscript copies of this poem Brettell mistakenly calls Hephaestus, “Hephaestion” who was one of Alexander the Great's generals, and his purported lover. The most likely explanation for this error is Brettell's misremembering the names. There seems to be little doubt in the first stanza that the reference is to Hephaestus. Correcting Brettell's error of memory, however, raises an interesting editorial problem about whether or not to intrude into the text. Editors in the past have chosen not to correct Keats's mistake in “On First Looking into Chapman's Homer” where Keats refers to Cortez rather than Balboa as the first European to see the Pacific, choosing rather to note this error in their annotations to the poem. Given the clear indication in the first stanza, however, that Brettell is referring to Hephaestus and also the fact that

metrically Hephaestus and Hephaestion are interchangeable, which is not the case with Cortez and Balboa, editorial intrusion in this case has seemed justifiable.

11 *mbira*: hand-held African musical instrument popular in Zimbabwe. It has “metal tongues of varying lengths which are plucked with thumbs and forefingers, sometimes over or inside a hollow gourd” (*DSAE* “mbira” n.).

15 *fiery-headed godling*: possibly Eros, son of Aphrodite.

17-29 In his autobiography *Side-Gate and Stile* Brettell wrote :

...my great-uncle David was a nail maker, and I remember him well. The nail-making of Lye and nearby Halesowen was a curious trade, one of the very last survivals of a cottage industry, a harsh, cramping trade bringing, no doubt, the vanished comfort to a man living with his work, but very little else. The nail-shops were narrow little buildings at the end of the backyards, unlighted except by the half-door and the glower of the forge. Uncle David's shop still seems a gloomy labyrinth of crowded gear and gins, redolent of the lost arcana of all smithing. Under the tiles, above the roof-beams, were the spring-poles of the trip-hammers, lithe limbs of birch that loosely whipped up the hammer-heads, nodding like marionettes, from the steel moulds, the 'olifers'. This wrought the cut nail-head from the red-hot steel bar: another tap of the hammer clipped it off, and it was levered out and tossed hissing into a bath of cooling water. The leather bellows had their own pole, also disappearing into the mirk of the roof. There were anvils and treadles to stumble over. The raw brick walls were hung in the light of the forge like a torture chamber, with tongs, hammers, pincers and twisted bundles of iron strip. Sounds were a jerky concert of thump and clack and tinkle, and Uncle David's ceaseless singing of Methodist hymns, jaunty tunes and lugubrious sentiment. I can see too, in the fuming half-light, the gentle bearded face and steel-rimmed glasses, unlikely companion to the huge hairy forearms.

(*SGS* 13-14)

27 *martingale and blinkers*: parts of horse harness.

29 *clinkers*: globules of black iron oxide produced when red hot iron is hammered.

37 *slag*: refuse from the forge.

\* \* \*

**Note:** In this sonnet the octave and sestet have been transposed. A further irregularity is the insertion of an additional unrhyming two-foot line after line 13, almost like a caesura to add emphasis to the final line. "June" was originally entitled "Hesitations IV" and was part of Brettell's privately printed collection "A Rhodesian Leave", produced in 1956.

5 *proved*: given proof of itself.

\* \* \*

## FELLED WATTLE

p.301

**Note:** In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn, dated 27 August 1973, Brettell noted:

His (Wilfred Owen's) influence, especially this, the breaking of the tyranny of rhyme by an even more demanding discipline, is incalculable as it is—although it has been abused by a lot of poetasters (yes, me too) who have been either too dim or too lazy. But it has given me the spur to one or two of my happiest efforts—'Felled Wattle' for one, where I tried to grade the progress of the poem from quasi- to full rhyme: as Owen does, with cold devastation in 'Futility'

(NELM MS 96.19.137).

**Title:** *Wattle*: the Black wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) found throughout the eastern Highlands in Zimbabwe.

10 *red-hot-poker*: perennial southern African plant (*Kniphofia*) with tall stems and bright scarlet and yellow conical flowers.

13 *stinkblaar*: see note to "April" (l. 6).

22 *trash*: broken twigs.

\* \* \*

## JULY

p.303

5 *pointing*: sharpening, giving definition to.

5 *curlew*: possibly the African stone curlew, see note to "Vox Populi" l. 30.



5 *plover*: small birds of the Charadriidae family.

6 *speckled stones*: Curlew and plover eggs are speckled and are laid on the bare earth.

7 *bleach owl*: possibly the White-faced owl (*Otus leucotis*).

7 *spraint*: otter dung.

14 *porcuquill*: an apparent Brettell neologism, a portmanteau word for porcupine quill.

\* \* \*

## ANTBEAR

p.305

**Title:** *Antbear*: a large ant-eating nocturnal mammal (*Orycteropus afer*), also called “aardvark”.

7 *mousing and miching*: searching and skulking (see *OED* “mousing” n. 1b & “miche” v. 2a).

14 *Adam’s task, not Mars’*: According to Gen. 3:23 as punishment for his sin Adam was sent “forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.” Mars, in Roman mythology, was the god of war. The antbear’s claws are for digging, not fighting.

16 *world-forsakers*: poets—see first stanza of Arthur O’Shaughnessy’s (1844-1881) “Ode”:

We are the music-makers,  
And we are the dreamers of dreams,  
Wandering by lone sea-breakers  
And sitting by desolate streams;  
World-losers and world-forsakers,  
On whom the pale moon gleams  
Yet we are the movers and the shakers  
Of the world for ever, it seems.

(ll. 1-8.)

24 *where your treasure is*: see Mt. 6:21: “for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

26 *setts*: underground dens.

28-29 These two lines are an adaptation of a couplet penned first by the Jacobean playwright John Webster (1578-1632) in *The White Devil*, and later modified by T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land*. Webster wrote:

But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to men,  
For with his nails he'll dig them up again.  
(V. iv. 103-4)

Eliot wrote:

O keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,  
Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!  
(II.74-5)  
\* \* \*

AUGUST

p.309

**Note:** The sestet in this sonnet precedes the octave.

2 *keep my sheep*: Insomniacs are said to count sheep in order to grow drowsy.

14 *shepherdess*: the standard sweetheart of pastoral poets.

\* \* \*

IN THE WATTLE: FRANKLY AN IDYLL

p.311 ☒

**Title:** *Wattle*: see note to "Felled Wattle".

7 *mast*: see l. 19 "Spring Song" (For A Hypertensive).

8 *slot*: see l. 46 of "Antelope and Mad Baboon".

10 *duiker*: see "Duiker Doe".

22 *The ploy, the scoop, the coup d'etat*: the subjects of newspaper stories.

32 In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn dated 10 March 1971, Brettell responded to earlier criticism by Betty of his use of adjectives in his poetry, making the following observation:

I'm still thinking about Livingstone's opinion that the line 'The standing duiker and the hanging flower' would be better without the adjectives (anyway they're participles and that's different). I don't know. They were put in, perhaps a bit self-consciously, to linger out the close a bit and deepen the sense of timeless indolence.

(NELM MS 96.19.106)

\* \* \*

## THE SUMMIT

p.315

**Note:** After retiring to Inyanga (renamed Nyanga after 1980), Brettell, every year on his birthday, used to climb to the top of Inyangani—the highest peak in the Eastern highlands—as a way of testing his fitness. The imagined setting for the poem is the summit of Inyangani (8,504 ft above sea level).

In a letter to Betty Finn dated 24 July 1970, Brettell wrote:

I spent my 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday on the top of Inyangani—partly ritual, partly vanity, but mostly fun. I had a grand day—much bucked by finding I could climb to the summit much more easily than ten years ago. I wandered right across the top of the mountain, as wild a bit of moor and morass as you could find, and descended on the far side into the Gleneagles valley amid a multitude of waterfalls. I had it all to myself except for a family of klipspringers, a black eagle and a reedbuck. And so to 'the last decade'.

(NELM MS 96.19.100)

19 *guerdon*: reward.

27-28 This poem was written after Brettell had turned sixty. These lines echo the biblical reference in Ps. 90:10 to mankind's life expectancy as "three-score years and ten".

\* \* \*

## OCTOBER

p.317

3 *gnomons*: indicators of a sundial.

9 *subtlety*: Cf. Gen 3:1: "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made."

\* \* \*

**Note:** In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn dated 31 March 1979 (NELM MS96.19.198) Brettell noted:

As I implied in 'Deri-deri', he (Chaucer) is always, more than Shakespeare, the complete answer—living through what any reading of history must show as one of the most wretched of times, and yet remaining so urbane and gay.

**Title:** *Deri-Deri*: evidently an African wild flower with ragged grey leaves and white, star-shaped flowers see l.23. It has not been possible to identify the plant. "Derry derry" is also a refrain found in old ballads (see notes to l. 10).

**10 the old refrain:** Variations on line 13 "Derry derry down derry O" can be found in many old folk ballads. For instance in the ballad of "The Three Ravens" (see below for the first stanza) which dates back to 1611 where it appears in *Melismata. Musically Phansies Fitting the Court, Cittie, and Countrey Humours* by T. Ravenscroft. It is also known as *The Two Corbies* (see *Folk Songs of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales*).

There were three ravens sat on a tree,  
Down a down, hey down, hey down  
They were as black as black might be,  
With a down.  
The one of them said to his mate.  
'Where shall we our breakfast take?'  
With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down.  
(ll. 1-7)

**14 dancing in their rings:** folk dances.

**16 knees lifted with bells:** In folk dancing bells are sometimes attached to the knees of the male participants.

**17 Chaucer and his meed of flowers:** see Geoffrey Chaucer's (1343-1400) General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*:

Embrouded was he, as it were a meede  
Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede.  
Syngyng he was, or floytyng, al the day;  
He was as fressh as is the month of May.  
(ll. 89-92)

20 *lackland*: land-hungry. This may also refer to the tyrannical King John, nicknamed “John Lackland” (1167-1216) who was eventually forced by his Barons to sign the Magna Carta.

25 ‘*Knyf under the cloke*’: see “The Knight’s Tale” in *The Canterbury Tales*:

Ther saugh I first the derke ymaginyng  
Of Felonye, and al the compassyng;  
The crueel Ire, reed as any gleede;  
The pykepurs, and eek the pale Drede;  
The smylere with the knyf under the cloke;  
The shepne brennyng with the blake smoke;  
(ll. 1995-2000)

27 *forked beard*: The Hoccleve portrait of Chaucer shows him with a forked beard.

29-30 These lines are almost identical to lines 13-14 in the unpublished and probably earlier “Retreat from Rapture” (see “Uncollected Poems”).

30 *Oriflammes*: bright heraldic standards.

\* \* \*

NOVEMBER

p.321

1 *Rosemary’s for remembrance*: Brettell here is quoting from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*

IV.v. In her madness Ophelia says:

There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance;  
pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies, that’s  
for thoughts.

(ll.175-7)

5 *the winds pipe threnody*: The image here is of the wind piping a lament for those who have died in lines 6-12.

6 *Jerked from the sky, spattered in desert sand*: the reference seems to be to former pupils who died as soldiers and airmen in Egypt in World War II.

7 *And our dead infant*: The Brettells had a daughter who died within hours of her birth.

9 *Voices of children, hid in a garden maze*: perhaps an echo from lines by T. S. Eliot in “Burnt Norton”:

Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,  
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.

(ll.42-43)

11 *seared*: sunburnt. November is a hot dry month in Zimbabwe.

\* \* \*

## KWASHIORKOR

p.323

**Title:** *Kwashiorkor*: a severe nutritional disease in the tropics caused by a lack of protein in the diet of children. It stunts growth, the skin becomes discoloured and liver malfunction occurs.

2 *physician*: Dr Gerard Ballance was a doctor at Bonda mission hospital and a friend of Brettell’s. Brettell served on the board of the hospital.

17 *news of rain*: Zimbabwe gets its main rainfall between October and March.

23 *Revally*: reveille, reawakening.

24 *foison*: profusion.

25-28 The kingdom of heaven as described in the Bible. Jesus healed the lame (see Mt. 21:14) and the dumb (see Mt. 12:22). In the Sermon on the Mount he said “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Mt. 5:5).

31 *the spears of the harvest rattle on their shields*: Warriors rattled their spears on their shields to intimidate the enemy at the outset of a battle. The reference here is to the hard maize cobs in their coverings of dry leaves.

32 *Aim at our hearts, our craven incompassions*: Brettell here contrasts the courage of the doctor with the cowardliness of an uncaring society.

\* \* \*

**Note:** Here, as throughout “One Year”, Brettell attempts to resolve the dichotomies and paradoxes of Western and African existence.

**Dedication:** *Cripps*: Arthur Shearly Cripps (1869-1952): The blind priest, poet and visionary whom Brettell befriended while he was Headmaster at Enkeldoorn School (1940-42) (see notes to “Maronda Mashanu”). Advent is the ecclesiastical season which culminates in Christmas.

4 *erythrina*: coral tree (see note to “kaffirboom” in Threnody in Spring I–III ll. 6-7).

4 *cassia*: see “Walking in Woods”.

6 *incense*: One of the three magi gave the baby Jesus frankincense (see Mt. 2:11).

7-8 an allusion to the nativity scene of Christ’s birth, based loosely on Lk. 2 and inverted as an African scene.

8 *kraal*: Brettell uses the anglicised pronunciation to make the word rhyme with “all” in l. 1.

9 *magus from the west*: Cripps is contrasted with the magi from the East. Their physical gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh are contrasted with his gifts of action, preaching and self-sacrifice.

10-11 The Magi from the East brought the baby Jesus presents of gold, frankincense and myrrh (see Mt. 2:11).

14 *sightless*: Cripps went blind.

14 *seraphim*: the highest order of angels.

\* \* \*

**Note:** Brettell in a draft letter to Olive Robertson (1909- ) described the wood carving which is the subject of this poem:

I saw it when Kekana was just finishing it in his workshop, and I'm afraid I don't know who owns it now. ...—Kekana did several of them. The crucifix also glanced at in the poem was also in his workshop, but, so far as I remember, the work of one of his pupils.-

(NELM MS 98.4.74)

**Title:** *Mother and Child*: The virgin Mary and the baby Jesus.

**Dedication:** *Job Kekana*: a skilled African wood-carver. In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn on Whit Sunday 1986 Brettell wrote: "I got to know Job well on my visits to St Faith's when I supervised their Cambridge examinations. ... Job himself is a cripple with only one eye. But what that eye can see (NELM MS 96.19.330).

**1 mukwa**: a Zimbabwean hardwood (*Pterocarpus angolensis*).

**6 doek**: see note to "Heard at Inyanga" l. 5.

**8 frontal bar**: forehead.

**11 annunciation**: Christ' birth was foretold by angelic annunciation (see Lk. 1: 26-38).

**14 wife of carpenter**: Jesus's mother was married to a carpenter. See "Birth in Bethlehem".

**15 love moulded into man**: see Jn. 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

**15-20** a carving of the crucified Christ.

**21 God made flesh**: see Jn. 1:14: "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."



LAKESIDE: WORD AND REVERIE: SEBAKWE AND NGEZI, 1976. ☒

(Vol. I: 333-351)

“Lakeside: Word and Reverie: Sebakwe and Ngezi” was produced and circulated in 1975 and 1976. It draws its inspiration, at least in part, from the Sebakwe and Ngezi dams in National Parks in central Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. The Brettell family occasionally holidayed beside these waters and it was after one such holiday and a rereading of Wordsworth’s poetry that Brettell wrote this collection (see letter from Brettell to Bill Berry dated 2 May 1977 NELM MS 2002.17.20).

Brettell dedicated “Lakeside: Word and Reverie” to the memory of William Wordsworth. References to Wordsworth and his poetry abound throughout the four poems that make up the major part of this collection. Each of these poems may be divided into two sections: a lyrical first half followed by a more contemplative second section. Throughout, English and African images are contrasted, as are the two poets Brettell and Wordsworth. The fifth and last poem in the collection “Envoi: for my wife” is a love poem for Eva.

“Lakeside: Word and Reverie” shows Brettell experimenting with a new form as he emulates a master craftsman whose work he greatly admired. Brettell contrasts himself “a pigmy Wordsworth” (Poem I, l.28) beside African waters against Wordsworth and the English Lake District. While the contrast invites comparison between the two poets, this is not Brettell’s intention. Brettell did not regard himself as an African Wordsworth: “Lakeside: Word and Reverie” is rather his tribute to the earlier poet.

\* \* \*

**Note:** From June 1958 onwards Brettell and Hugh and Betty Finn constantly exchanged thoughts and comments about literature, poetry and their own writing. They also sent each other copies of their latest works. Below are Betty Finn’s response to “Lakeside: Word and Reverie” and Brettell’s reply. The two letters provide an insight into the creative process and the significance of the interaction between these poets.

Letter from Betty Finn to Noel Brettell dated 28 January 1976:

... You and Bill Wordsworth fit together and seem right. Now that I’m fit again, I’m raring to go, so here are my comments for what they’re worth. And such critical comments are the greatest sign of attention.

Title: I see the Wordsworth idea in it, but I don’t like it. ‘Reverie’ is awful 19<sup>th</sup> Century. What does Eva think? What about ‘The Water’s Glass’ (from poem II)? Poem I—the lyric—a lovely thing. I keep coming back to it. —the comment—very powerful opening but I don’t like ‘dingle’ / ‘a-tingle’—too mannered and I would cut out ‘Elfin, elusive’ though ‘thin’ is just right. ‘Elfin’’s a bit twee!!

Poem II—lyric—one of my favourite bits of Wordsworth and one that started the creative juices when I was 18 or so: a view of him I whole-heartedly feel, this. I'm not very happy with 'grin of tooth / In twisted lip' —it's a bit Hardyish and melodramatic. I love the cumulus image, though.

The comment—cut out 'Suitably haggard, woe-begone' it is neither true to you nor does it do much, poetically—too flat. Hugh says the ton bit is 18<sup>th</sup> Century rather than you. Then suddenly you are back on form and in character at 'Above the loved and lovely downs', on—so memorable and singing. Does 'an own untroubled anchorage' work though? ...

Poem III—the lyric—the free lines 'a' and 'c' of the quatrain create a difficulty in sound in the very last line, your climax— 'tranquillity' seems to hang out especially as it's a feminine ending. I like the fish / Wordsworth / you analogy.

The comment—it takes a long time to get to the real Brettell at 'At last' onwards (subconsciously recognising what you really want to write?) The last 10 lines, except for the 'conjoint' / 'counterpoint' ones, are beautiful: powerful and controlled and say something. The whale, the flying fish and the Table Mountain are curiously mannered, as if you are really marking time until you get to what matters. I like 'The mountain combers just a lazy scrawl' but feel you could condense the other detail with the advantage of greater intensity and impact: and avoid the 18<sup>th</sup> Century cadence. It is not you! I think from 'Where the flat sheen' to 'important men' needs thinking about. And I'd cut out the 'conjoint' and 'counterpoint' lines because the images are mixed and get in the way. Let the verse go straight on from 'follow after' to 'And through' and so on to a logical emotional climax of 'the theme. In any case, there's no truth in 'my narrow one'.

IV—the lyric—a vivid and memorable one but I don't like 'With Strident fanfare of their sound' —it is clumsy and it is obvious—or 'frantic quill' (mannered) or 'a-creep (ditto). I think stanzas 2 and 3 should be re-written as one stanza, keeping the 'arrowing' image, the 'stiff rods', the sperm simile, the white and bronze and your transfixed chin (!). The sound you've already conveyed in 'screaming vee' though 'strident vee' might now be possible? I think these images thus condensed will suggest more effectively the speed of their 'mile a minute' flight.

—the comment—I don't like your vat and mould image, rendering down fat—ugh! I cannot 'reconcile' it with 'poetry'! But I love the final music simile—as good as you have ever written. Lovely.

Envoi—Hugh loves this. It is a flawless beautiful poem. Don't you dare say you cannot write poetry any longer because we'll hold this poem as evidence against you! Eva must be proud.

General comments: a moving and honest volume, with odd bits of mannerism occasionally getting in the way of profound and powerful feelings—nothing that cannot be rectified with it and with this sight of your own particular pilgrimage of the soul. It is like a rich fruit cake—someone left in the odd sultana pip, but there's all those cherries, raisins, golden cake and rum.

(NELM MS 96.19.154)

Letter from Noel Brettell to Betty and Hugh Finn dated 18 February 1976:

...Many thanks, Betty, for your long letter anent my 'Lakeside'. It is good to see that somebody reads the stuff intelligently and with your usual acumen you place your finger very deftly on the weak spots—of which I'm only too aware.

Not that I agree with all your remarks ... I wonder if you're not too closely committed to the 'modern' idiom? You talk about expressions being 'mannered' but a genuine manner is inevitable, isn't it? and it doesn't invalidate it if it's a bit old-fashioned, so long as it doesn't just lapse into the indolence of mannerism (not that I'm unaware of my own proclivity that way). What I do find a bit difficult to understand is your suspicion—mentioned more than once, of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century manner. If I've managed to be at all 'dix-huitième' I'd take that as an achievement and a compliment! anyway, with Wordsworth for the avatar, can one get away from it.

...

But most of your comments are most perceptive and valuable. I'm not satisfied myself with the progression to the 'anchorage' in III—although I suppose the pattern does attempt to suggest a movement from irrelevance to relevance. It'll have to simmer for a bit.

As regards diction—I know 'elfin' is wrong: but don't you find that once a word has insinuated its way in, it's damned difficult to get out—not so bad in manuscript, but once it's been typed, it's there: like a stone wall in front of a steeple chaser. Awkward here to find a word that's at once childish and adult—same with 'tingle' (though you seem to object to the '-a' prefix—'a-creep'). Well, I don't know—perhaps I'm out of date enough to take it. And I don't share your 'frisson' at 'reverie': I don't think that it's particularly 19<sup>th</sup> C, as you say, and it seems to me the right sort of balance to 'word', which after all, is one of the themes. Your finding 'twisted lip' etc. a bit 'Hardyish'. Hardy is one of those who breathes down my neck, but I don't suppose he ever saw a crocodile!

I'm bothered about your comment on the 'free' lines in the 3<sup>rd</sup> lyric. It was (maybe a bit self-consciously) meant to imply the conjunction of pattern and no-pattern in falling water. I thought it might come off. Your censure of the feminine endings would be right, though it was intended to elide into what follows. Perhaps if I find a rhyme just for the last stanza, it might do.

Your comments on lyric 4 are most interesting and make me think. I'm inclined to think to shorten it by a stanza might be too drastic—how to cram everything into one verse I just can't see at the moment. And again, there it stands—as uncompromising as the dam itself, blast it (which is probably what the saboteurs will soon do anyway). I'm glad you liked Envoi. It wasn't really part of the scheme at all—just arrived on its own; and once its presence asserted itself it was much easier to write the rest.

Don't try and equate me with old Bill: some of the details (sic) you object to is an attempt to evade that presumption.

(NELM MS 96.19.158)

In the edition of "Lakeside: Word and Reverie" that Brettell sent to his daughter Rosemary he included a note which highlighted references to Wordsworth in the text of the poems. The note is reproduced below with her kind permission and Brettell's comments have been transcribed, marked "NHB" and included in the notes below.

NOTES (sorry about this but there are a lot of references to Wordsworth)

II "Winander" - W's name for Lake Widemere  
"his purloined skiff" - ref to a boyish experience  
The Prelude

"broken troth" - W's affair with Annette Vallon

"raucous sprawling town" - W's year in London

"too deep for tears" - Immortality Ode

"philosophic mind" - "Immortality Ode"

III "motion & tranquillity" - preface to "Lyrical Ballads"

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Above note currently in the possession of Ms Rosemary Brettell.

**Note:** Brettell consistently misspells "Ngesi" as "Ngesi." This has been corrected.

**Dedication:** *William Wordsworth:* As the dedication suggests William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was an important influence on Brettell's poetry. In a letter to Guy Butler, dated 21 July 1956 Brettell observed:

Wordsworth himself was constantly seeking an 'unhumanised' landscape. He is, of course, a confusion of voices, but his great wild lonely voice is beyond the hedges and the sheepfolds - the further from Surrey and the nearer the austere mountains, the more Wordsworth he. I am sure the highest point his poetry ever reached was in his passage of the Simplon. The whole of the Prelude swings in huge hyperboles to and from these high solitudes; and I think that should the accident of birth put a Wordsworth in South Africa, he could 'Commune' with the veld and kranztes as easily as with the alien Alps. I know only Rhodesia: it has often perplexed me to hear Campbell, Plomer, Olive Schriener [*sic*] taking its daemon to be 'harsh, forbidding, capricious'. The heraldic scorpion is a splendid image, but is it any truer than a nightmare? There is a real Wordsworthian exaltation of high places, for instance, in van der Post's description of the calm and luminous uplands of Nyasaland, or in Paton's beautiful (perhaps a little sentimental?) hillsides.

(NELM MS PLO56(1))

Brettell's words are prophetic, for where his poetry communes "with the veld and krantzes" he is the inheritor of Wordsworth's mantle. The South African poet Douglas Livingstone (1932-1996) writing to Brettell on the 19 April 1977 (NELM MS 98.4.25) went so far as to say: "Please don't be annoyed but, utterly truthfully: you are a better poet than Wordsworth." It is appropriate that this collection was inspired by, and dedicated to the memory of, William Wordsworth.

**I**

**p.335**

**23 words worth:** a deliberate play on William Wordsworth's name to whom "Lakeside" is dedicated"

**39 linenfold:** See Line 13 in "Wagtail".

\* \* \*

**II**

**p.339**

**1 That boy the waters of Winander knew:** an echo from Book Five of Wordsworth's "The Prelude":

There was a boy: ye knew him well, ye cliffs  
And islands of Winander!

(*The Prelude ll.* 364-5.)

NHB: "Winander—Wordsworth's name for Lake Windermere."

**2 purloined skiff:** NHB: "reference to a boyish escapade in The Prelude." Wordsworth, one night as a boy, stole a rowing boat and sculled out to the middle of Windermere. He describes the experience in lines 81-116 of the first part of "The Prelude, 1799".

**13 broken troth:** NHB: "reference to Wordsworth's affair with Annette Vallon."

**16 raucous sprawling town:** NHB: "Wordsworth's year in London."

**18** *And turned indignantly away*: Wordsworth returned to the Lake District in 1799 where he and his sister rented Dove Cottage in Grasmere, Westmorland. They lived at Dove Cottage till 1813.

**21** *Frog-throated demagogues*: possibly a reference to Aristophanes's play "The Frogs". There are repeated disparaging references to frogs in Brettell's poetry, usually as a lumpen proletariat (see l. 35 of "Vox Populi").

**30** *Too deep for tears*: NHB: "Immortality Ode." The line echoes line 204 in Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"

To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

(*Wordsworth's Poetical Works II*. 203-204)

**32** *a spare square youth of twenty-one*: Brettell here is describing himself. At "twenty-one" he had just finished his BA degree at the University of Birmingham.

**39** *reach*: a stretch of water.

**45** *leveret*: a young hare.

**53-56** Brettell grew up in Lye, near Birmingham, in what was called the "Black Country" because of the heavy industrialisation of the area in the nineteenth and twentieth century (see "On Clent Hill").

**60-71** Brettell wanted to farm, but when this became impossible with the onset of the Great Depression, he accepted a teaching post at Ruzawi school in Southern Rhodesia, arriving there in September 1930. These lines communicate both why he left England and why in 1958 he chose to retire to the rural Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

**71** *philosophic mind*: NHB: "Immortality Ode." This phrase echoes line 189 in Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality":

We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind,  
In the primal sympathy

Which having been must ever be,  
In the soothing thoughts that spring  
Out of human suffering,  
In the faith that looks through death,  
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

(*Wordsworth's Poetical Works* ll.180-187.)  
\* \* \*

### III

p.343

**Note:** As he takes the long sea voyage from England to Africa, and then the long train journey from the sea inland to Rhodesia, Brettell sees a parallel between Wordsworth's withdrawal into the English Lake District and his own settling in rural Rhodesia.

**2** *Roman curve*: shaped like an aqueduct.

**24** *motion and tranquillity*: NHB: "preface to lyrical Ballads." An allusion to Wordsworth's statement "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity" (*Wordsworth's Poetical Works*, vol 2. p.400)

**26** *dropped a plumb*: measured the depth of the water with a plumbline.

**37** *playboard*: checkerboard.

**42** *steppe*: veld.

**47** In NELM MS 2004.24.1 l. 47 consists of only two words: "At last". What in all other versions of this poem is the rest of the line: "where the level seasons sprawl and drowse and dream" is, in NELM MS 2004.24, placed on a new line. Line 47 and 48 of NELM MS 2004.24 have been combined in this edition as the afore-mentioned line break was probably occasioned by the length of the line 47 in relation to the size of the page in NELM MS 2004.24. The pages in NELM MS 2004.24 are significantly smaller than in all other versions examined (see notes on Manuscript Sources for "Lakeside").

56 *Upspurts*: “Unspurts” in NELM MS 2004. 24. 1 (the foregrounded text) has been emended to “Upspurts” as in NELM MS 98.4.10. The *OED* does not recognise the word “Unspurts”.

\* \* \*

IV

p.347

7 *priapian*: The outstretched necks of geese in flight look phallic.

20 *squatter*: splash, flutter.

21 *Withdraw to Rydal*: NHB: “Rydal—Wordsworth’s last home in the Lake District.” Wordsworth moved to Rydal Mount in 1813 and lived there for the rest of his life.

24 *glory and the dream*: NHB: “Immortality Ode”. This phrase echoes line 57 in Wordsworth’s “Ode: Intimations of Immortality”:

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

(*Wordsworth’s Poetical Works*. II. 56-57)

28 *there distribute stamps*: NHB: “Wordsworth got the sinecure of ‘Distributor of Stamps’ for Cumberland” in 1813. Brettell mistakenly assumes that stamps refers to “postage stamps”, a later invention.

31 *cowlick of führer*: Adolf Hitler’s (1889-1945) hairstyle.

\* \* \*

ENVOI

p.351

12 *likkewaan*: alternate spelling of leguaan: a large amphibious monitor lizard (*Varanus niloticus*) common in rivers in southern Africa.

13 *kudu*: large southern African antelope (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*).

17 *crests*: Certain species of lizards have crests.

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## ECLOGUE IN THE HILLS, 1976-1977.

(Vol. I: 353-377)

In a letter to Betty Finn Brettell, in commenting on the accompanying “Eclogue in the Hills”, noted the following:

The enclosed tremendous trifle is a fragment of a failure. ... Don’t quarrel with the title—it was meant to go on with a dialogue in the best Virgilian manner; but I know I’ll never do it because I can’t. If only I had Douglas’ [Livingstone] devastating and incisive irony—I know I lack—who was it who called it the architectonic talent.

(Letter to Betty Finn dated 17 March 1976.  
NELM MS 96.19.159)

Only two known copies of this typescript exist and the “Eclogue” was never finished.

Responding to prompting from Betty Finn to complete it Brettell responded as follows:

No, I’m sorry the poor little Eclogue can’t make the next gradient. ‘John’ (of the motor-car) was intended to be a city tycoon out of touch with the realities of the country—but I have no passport to that territory. I thought the “Dick” lyric was the best of the bunch—but still.

(Letter from Brettell to Hugh and Betty Finn,  
dated 12 April 1976. NELM MS 96.19.160)

The Eclogue attempts to bring together the spirits of four different men to tell their forgotten stories (see “Personae”). The men and their stories are imaginary, but they are supposed to represent four different periods of history. The men’s response to the environment they find themselves in is also recorded and contrasted, as is their means of transport. As with “Lakeside: Word and Reverie” Brettell in “Eclogue in the Hills” is experimenting with poetic form. Whereas “Lakeside: Word and Reverie” looks back to Wordsworth, “Eclogue in the Hills” is an attempt to write poetry in the “Virgilian manner”. Though Brettell regarded this unfinished collection as a failure, it reveals both Brettell’s darkening political mood and his attempt to write poetry in new ways by going back to the poetic traditions of the past and applying them to Rhodesia in the 1970s.

\* \* \*

### PERSONAE

p.355

**Title:** *Personae*: Dramatis Personae, a list of the actors in the drama to follow.

1 *Tom, Dick, Harry, John*: “every Tom, Dick and Harry” is a common expression signifying everyone. The inclusion of John might indicate everyone plus one, or John might stand for

the inclusion of another familiar combination of names: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, reminiscent of several versions of a popular nursery rhyme.

**10** *Take us back where you come from*: The last line of this poem is reminiscent of the children's prayer: "Matthew, Mark, Luke and John // Bless the bed that I lie on."

\* \* \*

## LOCUS

p.357

**Title:** *Locus*: Latin for place, location.

**10** *night-ape*: a translation of the Afrikaans "nagapie": a small, temperamental, nocturnal monkey (*Galago maholi*).

**12** *blood-flower*: probably the "blood lily" (*Scadoxus puniceus magnificus*).

\* \* \*

## GENIUS LOCI

p.359

**Title:** *Genius Loci*: Spirit of the place. At the start of traditional eclogues the poet invokes the spirit of the place. Brettell sees the "spirit" of Africa as "A huge and lubbard shape" (l.6) which is the speaker in the second section.

**10** *dragon-spawning maps*: Early maps were decorated with fanciful depictions of mythical creatures, though only one, the sixteenth-century Lenox Globe, is known to have the legend: "Here be dragons": "*Hic sunt dracones*".

**16** *tarsus*: anklebones.

**25** *marl*: clay mixture.

**26** *orts*: scraps, left-overs.

\* \* \*

I.

[A DARK AND MIDNIGHT SHAPE]

p.361 [Title supplied by Editor]

**Note:** The poem describes early nomadic man. This poem sets the scene for the entrance of the nomad hunter-gatherer “Tom”.

5 *ironwood*: the name given to several unrelated species of very heavy hardwood such as Borneo ironwood (*Eusideroxylon zwageri*)

7 *wallet*: see l. 46 of “The Eavesdropper”.

9 *Horn*: African snuff-box made from the horn of a small antelope.

\* \* \*

[SPEAR IN AN OLD MAN’S HAND]

p.365 [Title supplied by Editor]

6 *slot*: see l.46 of “Antelope and Mad Baboon”.

9 *slip*: thin wet clay used to decorate a clay pot.

10 *With nail or quill or thorn*: Finger nails and other primitive tools used for incising decorations on clay pots.

\* \* \*

II.

p.367

[MUFFLE OF HOOFF-BEATS]

[Title supplied by Editor]

**Note:** The poem describes the mounted nineteenth-century British soldier / adventurer and serves as an introduction to “Dick”.

\* \* \*

DICK

p.369

**Note:** As noted earlier Brettell thought that “the ‘Dick’ lyric was the best of the bunch.” (Letter from Brettell to Hugh and Betty Finn, dated 12 April 1976. NELM MS 96.19.160)

2 *Leamington made me, Rugby schooled me*: The Georgian town of Leamington is in Warwickshire, England, as is the public school Rugby which was founded in 1567. Under the leadership of Thomas Arnold, headmaster from 1828 to 1842, Rugby became one of the leading public schools in England and the model for similar boys's schools throughout the British Empire. Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857), is a vivid portrayal of life at Rugby during the early nineteenth century (see *EE* "Rugby, school").

4 *The armies of unalterable law*: see George Meredith's (1828-1909) poem "Lucifer in Starlight" l. 14: "The army of unalterable law". The reference is to the immutability of the divine order and the futility of resistance to it.

9 *cabbage roses*: large-headed, many-petalled old-fashioned roses.

18 *Leam*: Leamington Spa is on the river Leam.

23 *holm*: The holm-oak (*Quercus Ilex*) is an evergreen whose leaves resemble holly.

31 *winter aconite*: European yellow flowering plant (*Eranthis hyemalis*) in bloom at the end of winter.

35 *Clio*: In Greek mythology, the muse of History.

\* \* \*

[FROTH OF A YOUNG MAN'S DREAM]

p.371 [Title supplied by Editor]

4 *blades*: young men-about-town.

20 *To open every oyster*: an allusion to the sentiment expressed in "the world is your oyster", signifying limitless opportunity.

24 *Eldorado*: a mythical city of gold in South America. It was the object of Spanish conquistadors.

**24** *Serendip*: a former name for Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. The word was “coined by Horace Walpole, who says (Let. to Mann, 28 Jan. 1754) that he had formed it upon the title of the fairy-tale ‘*The Three Princes of Serendip*’, the heroes of which ‘were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of’” (*OED*, “serendipity” n.).

\* \* \*

**III [TWO GLEAMING WHEELS COME WESTWARD]** [Title supplied by Editor]  
p.373

**Note:** The poem describes the twentieth-century Europeanised African cyclist Harry.

**6** *two worlds*: traditional rural African and modern urban western.

**8** *poke*: bag or pocket.

\* \* \*

**HARRY** p.375

**Note:** In the manuscript he sent to the Finns (NELM MS 98.82.12) Brettell wrote “no-go area” adjacent to the second section of “Harry” indicating his inability to finish the poem.

**1** *Ruvavi*: Shona name for a chameleon (Family Chamaeleontidae).

**8** *sadza-substance*: sadza, a stiff porridge made from maize-meal, is the staple diet of traditional African people in Zimbabwe.

**9** *Flat-land*: the city.

**10** *figures cut in tin*: probably advertising billboards.

**15** *shattered clans*: a reference to the destruction of the tribal ways which was a byproduct of colonialism and urbanisation.

**16** *corrupted cans*: discarded rusting tins emptied of the food or beverage they had contained.

17 *The idle stones lie in the six-lined holes*: a reference to the African game played with stone counters where 6 x 4 shallow hollows in the ground serve as the “board”.

18 *nine-mens-morris*: a strategic board game played since at least 1400BC. Such traditional games as this one and the one in *l.* 30 have been supplanted by meaningless modern pastimes; see *ll.* 41-3.

21 *shearing of the sod*: ploughing.

24-31 a description of work opportunities and conditions available to black Africans on farms and in factories in Rhodesia.

32-40 incomplete sketches describing the experience of mindless work in factories.

\* \* \*

IV [CAR]

p.377 [Title supplied by Editor]

**Note:** The poem describes the twentieth-century motorist John. While the title “John” was never actually given to this unfinished poem, Brettell indicated what the poem was to deal with and why he did not write it:

‘John’ (of the motor-car) was intended to be a city tycoon out of touch with the realities of the country—but I have no passport to that territory  
(Letter from Brettell to Hugh and Betty Finn,  
dated 12 April 1976. NELM MS 96.19.160).

In the manuscript he sent to Hugh and Betty Finn (NELM MS 98.82.12) Brettell wrote “(cul-de-sac, stocking-street-pis aller (French or English pronunciation—preferably the English)” below this poem.

11 *lion, crown or lictor’s axe*: The symbols used by the motor car manufacturers Peugeot, Toyota (on the Corona) and Fiat on their cars.

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## AND UNDERFOOT SEPTEMBER, 1977.

(Vol. I: 379-425)

“And Underfoot September” takes its title from the first line of the first poem in this collection, “Spring in the Air”. Brettell, however, first used the phrase “and underfoot September” in his poem “Umsasa” (see *BF*) which reads: “May in the air and underfoot September” (2). It is interesting to note the change to the line. In “Umsasa” Brettell clearly intended “May” to suggest Autumn and “September” Spring, as they do in a southern Hemisphere context. In “Spring in the Air” Brettell condenses the imagery so that only the new life which Spring brings is suggested. The collection comprises four sections: an introductory group of three poems entitled “Proem”; a second group of four “Roman” poems; a third group of seven poems rather bitterly titled “Heirs to the Kingdom” and a final group of two under the title “The Wall: A Fable”.

Spring may be seen as the overriding metaphor for this collection, but the new life waiting underground to be born is far from comforting. These poems are generally darker than Brettell’s earlier work and show his anger at the political situation in Rhodesia and his frustration with mankind in general. Apocalyptic poems such as “Spiderwebs” and “The Wall” speculate on the annihilation of humanity, while poems such as “Arson” draw parallels between the destruction of civilised Roman Britain by barbarians and a possible future Rhodesia. It should be noted that the collection was produced two years before the destruction of the Brettell’s home by insurgents in 1979.

Tribute is paid to late Roman civilisation in three poems to the Roman poets Ausonius, Claudian and Prudentius, but Brettell’s frustration is evident in the section “Heirs to the Kingdom” in poems such as “Schoolgirls”. Not all the poems, however, are negative in outlook. “Agrippa” and “The Birds” show a stoic acceptance of the present while tentatively displaying hope for the future of Rhodesia.

Produced and circulated in 1977, this collection was later reproduced in full as part of Brettell’s autobiography *Side-Gate and Stile*, published in 1981. It was Brettell’s last collection before the change of regime by which Rhodesia became Zimbabwe.

\* \* \*

## I. PROEM

**Note:** This section serves as an introduction or preface to what is to follow.

\* \* \*

### SPRING IN THE AIR

p.383

**11** *gaslight*: The streets of Brettell's childhood would still have been illuminated by gas lights rather than electricity.

**12** *soot-grimed enslavements*: Brettell grew up in Lye, near Birmingham, in what was called the "Black Country" because of the heavy industrialisation of the area in the nineteenth and twentieth century (see "On Clent Hill"). It is therefore not surprising that in wet weather the trees would be "soot-grimed".

**16** *dry nut and withered pippin*: nuts and fruit were common gifts in children's Christmas stockings; "dry" and "withered" because fresh fruit was a rarity in mid-winter.

\* \* \*

### MOON

p.385

**Note:** After the new growth envisaged in Spring, Brettell contemplates the waning of the moon's power and influence in the face of the rising sun.

**4** *cenobite*: a monk, one vowed to "poverty, chastity and obedience", by contrast with the "lusty sun" (l. 14).

**16** *annunciation*: the light of dawn announcing the arrival of the sun.

\* \* \*

### ARSON

p.387

**Note:** The final poem in the "Proem" is a pessimistic consideration of the likely outcome of a radical change of regime in Rhodesia. The following extract from a letter to Hugh and Betty



Finn, dated 17 November 1974 helps to put this poem (and the collection “And Underfoot September”) in context:

I was appalled, copying out some of my twenty-year-old verses to send to a friend in England, to see how what I said then is now in the terrifying process of coming about. What’s the use of Owen saying that all a poet can do is to warn—nobody took much notice of his warning.

Sorry if this is a bit glum. I feel a bit nauseated by the complacent platitudes of the Prime Minister and others. Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive—so it is, but only the red dawn over the hills.

(NELM MS 96.19.143)

Commenting on this poem specifically in a later letter to Betty Finn, dated 29 January 1978, Brettell acknowledged that: “‘Arson’ gave me a bit of trouble—perhaps I was a bit bugged by the rhymes” (NELM MS 96.19.185).

**6** *msasa pods*: See line 9 of annotations for “Threnody in Spring”.

**9** *like Tennyson’s*: see Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) “The Princess”, Part VII: “Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font” (l.163).

**10** *sworded iris*: Irises (Family Iridaceae) have sword-shaped leaves.

**16** *steading*: farmstead.

**16** *Uricon*: A. E. Housman, in his poem “XXXI” from *A Shropshire Lad*, refers to Uriconium as Uricon. Brettell was familiar with this poem (see l. 20 in “Wind and an Eagle Owl”) which shares common themes with “Arson”. Brettell repeatedly pondered the obliteration of Roman civilization in Britain, as Housman does here:

On Wenlock Edge the wood’s in trouble;

His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;  
The gale, it plies the saplings double,  
And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

’Twould blow like this through holt and hanger  
When Uricon the city stood:  
’Tis the old wind in the old anger,  
But then it threshed another wood.

Then, ’twas before my time, the Roman

At yonder heaving hill would stare:  
The blood that warms an English yeoman,  
The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.

There, like the wind through woods in riot,  
Through him the gale of life blew high;  
The tree of man was never quiet:  
Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I.

The gale, it plies the saplings double,  
It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone:  
To-day the Roman and his trouble  
Are ashes under Uricon.

(ll. 1-20)

**18** *hypocaust*: hollow space under the floor in Roman houses by which the room above was heated with hot air.

**21** *Signifer*: standard bearer in the Roman army.

**31** *Uriconium*: Uriconium (Viroconium), was a large Romano-British country town on the Severn, five miles east of Shrewsbury. Though originally a Roman legionary fortress against the Welsh hill tribes (45-55 AD) “its garrison was soon removed and it became a flourishing town with stately town hall, baths and other appurtenances of a thoroughly civilized and Romanized city” (*LoveToKnow 1911 Online Encyclopedia* par 1).

**31** *Wilfred Owen*: The poetry of the English First World War poet Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) had an important influence on Brettell’s own writing. Brettell was particularly impressed by Owen’s innovative use of half-rhymes within tightly structured poems (see draft letter to Leonard Rix NELM MS: 98. 4. 75).

Brettell’s original footnote “Voyage from Obscurity” has been corrected to “Journey From Obscurity”: the correct title of Harold Owen’s abridged autobiography which describes the years 1890-1920 in the life of the Owen family when Harold, Wilfred and their siblings were growing up.

**37** *Vergil*: the Roman poet Publius Vergilius Maro (70-19BC). The reference is to Vergil’s epic poem the *Aeneid* which takes as its starting point the destruction of Troy and then traces

the journey of the Trojan prince Aeneas to Italy where the foundations for what will become the Roman empire are laid.

**38** *Troy*: The ancient city of Troy was “located about 6.5 km from the Aegean Sea ... overlooking the Dardanelles, in the north-western extremity of Asia Minor, in present-day Turkey” (*EE* “Troy”). Founded about 3000 BC, it was destroyed in the Trojan War by a combined Greek army in 1260 BC. The Trojan war is the subject of the Greek poet Homer’s epic poem the *Iliad* (*EE* “Troy”). Brettell may be recalling a line from Christopher Marlowe’s play *Faustus* where Mephistopheles says of Helen of Troy:

Was this the face that launch’d a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?  
(V. i. 96-97)

**39** *But not like theirs, in noble numbers versed*: Responding to criticism from Betty Finn (see letter to Noel Brettell dated 19 January 1978. NELM MS 96.19.184) that the last line of the poem was “horrid” and “could be dropped” Brettell wrote:

I can’t see why the last line should annoy you. How do you think I can put myself abreast of Vergil and Owen—me an obscure civil defence leader with a shotgun in the same rank as Lt. Owen M.C.!

(Letter to Betty Finn, dated 29 January 1978.  
NELM MS 96.19.185)

Later in the same letter, however, he returned to the topic:

I’ve been thinking over the close of ‘Arson’. Maybe it is a bit clumsy, but somehow I’ve got to get in the sense of inadequacy—gnome versus naiad—between us and them. Their numbers, in face of the same horrors, were noble, and ours aren’t. And Hardy’s pessimism is more and more throwing its shadow forward.

(Letter to Betty Finn, dated 29 January 1978.  
NELM MS 96.19.185)

\* \* \*

## II. TRIUMVIRATE OF SILVER

p.391

**Note:** Brettell characterises three post-Augustan poets as a “Triumvirate of Silver” by contrast with the poets of the Augustan “golden age”. They all reflect the decline of empire and the gradual disintegration of a sophisticated social system. Parallels with the post-colonial African experience are implied.

In a letter to Betty Finn, dated 29 January 1978 (NELM MS 96.19.185), Brettell remarked:

I'm glad you have the little Latin to appreciate the 4<sup>th</sup> Century triumvirate. I was afraid I was being a bit pedantic over it. I thought the voice of the Roman poets of the fall might well speak to us. Even more so, even more urgent and cogent would be any Roman poets in Britain: there must have been some, but that they've vanished so utterly is a sort of grim warning to our own pretensions. For my triumvirate, it was more a decline than a fall. There's little in them of impending doom. Ausonius did a bit of grumbling about the hazards of the roads leading to Rome. All of them tended to rhetoric rather than poetry—also a bit of a warning to us. Lucretius had set the pace, but he was big enough to sustain it. I find it odd to remember that in my Sixth form I regarded *De Rerum Natura* as the end-all of poetry, above Milton and Wordsworth and doing things even Shakespeare couldn't. His successors tended just to go on talking to fill the vacuum. But at any rate, they talked in the tradition. Perhaps I was a bit less than fair to Prudentius, but his magnum opus does rather go on and on, stereotyped moral allegory that confuses the issue—rather as the Faerie Queen does. Claudian was a bit of a cheerful chancer—though if he did write the *Pervigilium Veneris* (unlikely, though nobody knows who else did) that's enough. But all three of them here are just hobby-horses—perhaps I feel a bit conscience stricken about it. Douglas (Livingstone) —I sent him a copy—reckons it's a successful interlude of 'decadence and world-weariness.' In the sequence, I think it does lead on quite nicely to 'Arson' and 'Agrippa'. Sorry to point out the obvious. .

2 *silvern*: in the letter above Brettell commented on his choice of this word:

I howled over and scratched it out several times, but finally decided the mannerism was right enough there, and I .... [word obscured by punched hole—conjecture: 'left'] it—needs something a bit more than just description.

17 *Ausonius, Claudian, Prudentius*: see notes below to these three poets.

19 *alien thunder*: the advance of the barbarian hordes and the collapse of the Roman Empire.

\* \* \*

## AUSONIUS

p.393

**Title:** *Ausonius*: The Latin poet and rhetorician Decimus Magnus Ausonius (310-395) was tutor to the Emperor Valentinian's son, Gratian "through whom he received rapid official advancement, becoming consul of Gaul in 379." His voluminous poetry displays "an illuminating account of provincial life in his native Gaul" and was written in a variety of metres on numerous themes (*EE* "Ausonius").

16 *Bordeaux*: the site of Ausonius's estate near Bordeaux is still known as Ausone.

\* \* \*

**Title:** *Claudian*: The Roman poet Claudius Claudianus (370-408) was the “last important Latin classical poet” (*EE* “Claudian”). Born in Alexandria (see *l.* 1), he moved to Rome in approximately 395 where he came to enjoy the patronage of the Roman general and politician Flavius Stilicho and the Roman emperor Honorius, both of whom he honoured in his poetry. His epics and panegyrics also celebrated the wars of Rome. His poetry is full of myth, allusion and allegory (see *l.* 10) (*EE* “Claudian”).

**13** *Eve of Venustide*: It is not clear if Claudian wrote this work.

**24** *assegais*: short African stabbing spears here symbolising the weapons of the barbarians who destroyed the Roman Empire.

\* \* \*

**Title:** *Prudentius*: The Christian poet and rhetorician Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348-405) was born in northern Spain (see *l.* 2) where he later practised law. Twice provincial governor, he also served at the court of the Emperor Gratian before, in later life, renouncing the vanities of the world to become a devout ascetic. His poetry is largely Christian in nature (see “Prudentius” par. 1).

**4** *Janus*: see note to “New Year”, *l.* 23.

**9-10** the triumph of Christianity over the penates (household gods of Roman homes) and its taming effect on passionate, wild nature (Pan).

**17** *Putti*: tiny naked children in Renaissance painting and architecture.

**23** *coat turned inside out*: treachery. See *l.* 9 which alludes to the cock crowing on the morning of Good Friday which convicted St Peter of his betrayal of Christ.

**24 slave's son:** The emperor Diocletian (ruled 284-305 AD) was born the son of a slave. His persecution of Christians was legendary.

**25-26** See 1 Sam. 9-10 for the story of how Saul became the first king of Israel.

\* \* \*

### III. HEIRS TO THE KINGDOM

**Note:** "Heirs to the Kingdom" is the sceptical, even mistrustful, general title of the next section.

\* \* \*

#### AGRIPPA

p.401

**Title:** *Agrippa*: In addition to their African names, black people were formerly also given a name in the language of the coloniser. Biblical names like Philemon and Festus were common. Brettell here ponders the oddity of a Zimbabwean man (evidently of mixed racial origins) bearing a Roman name. Agrippa probably alludes to King Herod Agrippa II (27-93AD) [see Acts 26].

**Subtitle:** *Tobacco Boss Boy*: A "boss-boy" was a non-European foreman in charge of labourers, in this instance, workers on a tobacco farm. The word "boy" for a grown man was derogatory and is now offensive.

**3-5** These lines describe the curing of tobacco.

**7** *flamen*: priest.

**9-10** The suggestion is that the subject of the poem is of mixed ancestry (see *l.* 2: "bronze" lineaments and *l.* 28 again).

**13-14** While the descriptions in these lines need not be specific, it is possible that Brettell is thinking of the ruins of Great Zimbabwe (See "Zimbabwe").

**18** *briar and cherrywood*: wood from which pipes for smoking tobacco are made.

**23 franchise:** In a letter to Betty Finn dated 29 January 1978 (NELM MS 96.19.185) Brettell noted: “‘Agrippa’ ... amendment—put suffrage instead of franchise.” No manuscript copy, however, shows this correction and when Brettell published the poem in 1981 in his autobiography *Side-Gate and Stile* “franchise” was not changed. It has therefore been retained in this edition.

**24 curule:** A curule chair was “a seat inlaid with ivory and shaped like a camp-stool with curved legs, used by the highest magistrates of Rome” (*OED* “curule” a. 1).

**25 praenomen:** Herod.

**27 buzzard:** Brettell suggests that an African Herod would act more like a predatory buzzard than a noble Roman eagle.

\* \* \*

## **PETTY THIEF**

**p.403**

**1 link-light:** see l.17 in “Giraffes”.

**15-16** a reference to “Justice”, traditionally personified as a woman blindfolded while holding scales in which she weighs impartially the crimes of the guilty against the innocent.

**20-23** Brettell here is recalling Peter’s release from prison as detailed in Acts 12:6-19.

**26 Smash the bastilles:** The fall of the Bastille, an infamous prison in Paris, marked an important moment in the French Revolution of 1789. The suggestion is that only a revolution will divert the course of justice.

**27 Barabbas:** The murderer whom Pontius Pilate set free instead of Jesus at the insistence of the rabble in Jerusalem (see Mt. 27:15-26, Mk. 15:6-15, Lk. 23:13-25, Jn. 18:39-40).

\* \* \*

**Note:** In a letter to Betty and Hugh Finn dated 21 February 1973 (NELM MS 96.19.133), Brettell wrote:

Judith Moyo is an interesting girl, a good example of the tensions of culture. She comes, I'm told, from a very poor and primitive home (one can see that in her verses) and I wonder what appalling contradictions exist in such minds, divided between the timeless and crumbling pastoral and the entirely sophisticated life of a sixth form in a ladies college. Do they, I wonder, peel it off steadily as the bus carries them nearer home? She is now filling time working in the school library, as her somewhat forlorn hope is to become a librarian—waiting, of course, now for the A-level results, long delayed. ...

... Having just looked out a copy of Judith Moyo's 'Nyamakondo' for you, and re-read it: it does seem to me that it is only on these lines that Shona poetry can go. Most of the other things I've had from the girls are either very pretentious moralisings or very awkward attempts in the regular measures—heroic couplets, ballad metre and so on—good as exercises, but nothing else. And that, maybe, is an argument against my nostalgic preference for things in the 'tradition'. Or perhaps it isn't—as this seems to show that these people, to be able to make anything valid, have to accept and adapt their own tradition, not ours. This you see, is in places quite remarkably like the undulating repetitions of Shona ballads. Incidentally, it also gives the lie to the idea that the African has no feeling for nature. I suppose the ordinary peasant, like all boors, haven't [*sic.*]; but here there does seem a genuine affection. Maybe she's an exception too and all her stuff certainly isn't on the same level by any means.

In 1972 after being awarded the Book Centre / P.E.N. Centre of Rhodesia Annual Literary Prize, Brettell established a prize for original composition at St David's Girls High School in Bonda at which he did voluntary teaching after his retirement. Moyo was probably the first recipient of the prize. Moyo's winning poem "Nyamakondo—Haunt of the Kingfishers" was published in *Two Tone* 9 in June 1973 and is reproduced below in full

The people worship your waters, oh Nyamakondo,  
Is there any other river so beautiful!  
The people come in supplication,  
Your sparkling waters are so plentiful.

Meandering between the small kopjies,  
You contain their ancestors in the 'madziva'.  
Your reaches have names like 'Shereni' and 'Deka';  
Oh Nyamakondo, river of my heart,  
Can any other river be so beautiful!

When the rains have fallen, loved one,  
People flock to you for fish.  
Your wide waters produce drink,  
Your clear waters produce beer for none,



But only for your own folk.

The ever pulsating pool of life,  
The haunt of young and old,  
Tired and dirty from work in the fields,  
Your balmy waters soothe their bodies;  
You give them that refreshing touch  
Which, all day, keeps them clean and healthy.

The kingfishers brightly coloured,  
Always lured by your waters,  
Patiently standing on the edge,  
Waiting to partake of your bounty,  
View the waters with one eye,  
Which is the only one that sees.

When shall I see you again,  
With the kingfishers swarming unchecked  
Like grooms around their beloved?  
They eat and drink from your waters,  
O native river of my own,  
Nyamakondo, haunt of the kingfishers!

**2 Pandora's box:** a term used to describe a present that appears valuable, but which is actually a disguised curse. In Greek mythology Pandora was the first woman and was created by the gods as their revenge on mankind for Prometheus's theft of fire. She was sent as a gift from Zeus to Prometheus's brother Epimetheus and brought with her a box in which all the gods had placed some power to ruin man. Epimetheus married Pandora and despite the gods' warnings, her curiosity finally overcame her and she opened the box, whereupon all the evils and calamities that now plague the world escaped. Only Hope remained [EE "Pandora"].

**5 guinea-hen:** female guineafowl. The call of the Crested Guinea-fowl (*Guttera edouardi*) is "a rattling alarm note." During breeding season it "utters a challenging note like 'tick-tack ticktack tirr tirr tirr'" (RBSA, "Crested Guinea-fowl", 130).

**10 mourning doves:** The mourning dove's (*Streptopelia decipiens*) call is a "rather quiet 'kuk kurr' ... repeated two or three times with some variation." (RBSA, "Mourning Dove", 218).

**15 raven:** The White-necked Raven's (*Corvultur albicollis*) call is a "deep-throated 'kraak'" (RBSA, "White-necked Raven", 358).

18 *quern*: a grinding stone for making meal out of grain.

19 *The old men rapt on intricate basketry*: In traditional African culture basket weaving was reserved for the old men who could no longer hunt or fight.

21 *spreuus*: Spreeu is Afrikaans for “starling”. Brettell is perhaps thinking of the Plum-coloured Starling (*Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*) whose call is: “a few chippering notes followed by a slurred whistle ‘tipu-tipu-teeuu’” (*RBSA*, “Plum-coloured Starling”, 510).

26 *hornbill*: The call of the Ground Hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*) is “a deep booming by both sexes, but different in tone” (*RBSA*, “Ground Hornbill”, 293). This booming call

has caught the imagination of natives, who give it various interpretations, such as the female saying ‘I’m going, I’m going, I’m going home to my relations’, and the male retorting ‘You can go, you can go, you can go home to your relations!’ This booming is also uttered at the first sign of dawn.

(*RBSA*, “Ground Hornbill”, 293)

\* \* \*

## SCHOOLGIRLS

p.407

**Note:** In a letter to Betty Finn dated 10 July 1971 (NELM MS 96.19.108), Brettell wrote:

... my little bit of teaching has no blues about it. The young ladies are far too unsophisticated and in spite of their nimble and imitative wit really quite illiterate and uncivilised. I revised ‘Othello’ with them recently with the ‘Marlowe’ Players recording—which they took in real groundling fashion. Iago they take easily—they have none of our doubts that there never was such a villain. But Othello (who is rather overdone by this particular reader)—no, all his inspired rantings they just giggle at. The handkerchief is a bit difficult to swallow ... unless it’s in the hand of an Olivier or a Godfrey Tearle. Salutary, though, to see that with primitives all our heroics and rhodomontades can just collapse in laughter.

Words like shrill (l.9), dafter (l.10), witless (l.11) reveal the poet’s irritation with the schoolgirls’s inability to comprehend Othello’s tragedy.

**Subtitle:** *Othello*: Revenge tragedy by William Shakespeare, first performed in 1604. It shows how Othello, a Moor who commands the Venetian forces, is deliberately deceived by one of his officers, Iago, into believing that his wife, Desdemona, is unfaithful. He kills her,

but when Iago's plot is exposed by his wife Emilia, who has been an unknowing accomplice in it, Othello kills himself.

2 *meted*: measured / assessed.

8 *flimsy witness of a handkerchief*: The evidence that convinces Othello that Desdemona has been unfaithful is a missing handkerchief which Emilia steals at Iago's request. It was Othello's first gift to Desdemona. When he sees it in the hands of her supposed lover Cassio, he is convinced of her adultery.

\* \* \*

## HUNCHBACK

p.409

**Note:** In response to a letter from Betty Finn dated 19 January 1978 (NELM MS 96.19.184) in which she suggested that he should cut out stanza three "because you know it is not true and does 'condescend'" Brettell wrote:

I don't know. Your suggestion is interesting, but you've got to get the transition in somehow. Why shouldn't he get the gaudy dresses and the garlic. The condescension has to be there, like it or not. All our productions of MND have a lot of condescension in them—come on chaps, lets make the most of the knockabout. 'This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard'

(Letter dated 29 January 1978. NELM MS 96.19.185).

Brettell, however, seems to be missing Betty Finn's point, which is that he is condescending to the black pupil. From line 22 Brettell expresses a pessimistic view of this particular student's prospects of happiness in a social system more sophisticated than the rural one to which he is accustomed. Brettell's attitude may be offensive to twenty-first century readers but it should be viewed within the context of 1970s Rhodesia. This is not an attempt to condone condescension, but it should be noted that Brettell here is describing one particular less gifted student, the "Butt of his fellows" (l. 3), who is not meant to be seen as representative of his fellow pupils or black Africans in general.

**Subtitle:** *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "for O-level": This comedy by William Shakespeare was evidently set for Ordinary-level examinations. Pupils aspiring to go on to tertiary education proceeded to Advanced-level examinations.

**2** *Punchinello's hump*: In the Italian Commedia dell' Arte and also in the later Punch and Judy puppet show, the character Punchinello (Punch) is always a hunchback.

**7** *scrip*: examination paper.

**15** *civet and garlic*: Civet and garlic were both used as perfume during the sixteenth century.

**18** *bergomask*: a rustic dance.

**19** *Gobbo, Dogberry and Lance*: Shakespearean comic characters. In *A Merchant of Venice* Old Gobbo is the father of the clown Launcelot Gobbo, servant to Shylock. Dogberry is the idiot constable in *Much Ado about Nothing*. All three characters simply function as comic relief.

**21** *Caliban*: For post-colonial readers Caliban, in *The Tempest*, is a problem character. Often portrayed as a representative of dispossessed and colonised indigenous peoples, he is an anomaly to modern audiences. Elizabethans, however, would have had no trouble accepting him. To an Elizabethan audience he represented base man, devoid of spirit, the earthy opposite to the winged spirit Ariel. While both are slaves of Prospero, Caliban is the son of the witch Sycorax, the former ruler of the island on which the play is set, and was regarded as a monster akin to those whose existence was reported by early explorers. His name suggests cannibal and he is as much animal as human. The suggestion is that Caliban would be better off away from the sophisticated pretensions of the "new master, the new man" (*LCEL* "Caliban" 425).

**26** *shadow-shows*: Entertainments where the puppets' / actors' shadows are projected onto a sheet / screen between them and the audience.

**28** *Quince ... Snout*: members of the amateur troupe of amateur actors known as the mechanicals, who stage "Pyramus and Thisby" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

29-31 In Act II sc. i of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Puck, while detailing his mischief, says:

The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,  
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;  
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,  
And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough;  
And then the whole quire hold their hips and loff,  
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear  
A merrier hour was never wasted there.

(ll. 51-7)

34 *The penny-a-time uncensored show*: Seaside "entertainment" in Edwardian England where one put a penny in the slot of a machine, cranked the handle and saw a lewd picture.

36 *Falstaff cracks with Prospero*: Falstaff and Prospero demonstrate polar opposites of human nature. Sir John Falstaff, the comic anti-hero in the history plays *Henry IV* 1 & 2 and *Henry V*, and the buffoon in the comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, is a wayward knight who represents indulgence of the flesh. Prospero, the deposed Duke of Milan in *The Tempest*, is a wise and virtuous sorcerer. Brettell cynically imagines these two characters joking with each other.

37 *Where Snug, the slow of study, roars his fill*: In "Pyramus and Thisby", the play acted out by the mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Snug the joiner plays the part of the Lion and has to roar.

38 *Bottom rolls in asphodel*: In the rehearsal of "Pyramus and Thisby" Puck magically changes Bottom's head into that of an ass. From then on, until the enchantment is lifted, Bottom's appetites are those of an ass. While "asphodel", traditionally regarded as the lily of the immortals, does not occur in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Titania, queen of the fairies, allowed Bottom to enjoy himself in unimagined delights, completely inappropriate to his nature, status and position. Brettell is probably also using "asphodel" to pun on "ass."

\* \* \*

**GORSE**

**p.411**

**Title:** *Gorse*: a prickly European shrub (*Ulex europaeus*) with bright yellow flowers.

2 *long droughts*: The climate of Rhodesia / Zimbabwe is very different to that of the rainy British Isles where the gorse seeds were picked.

10 "*When gorse is out of flower, kissing's out of favour*": a proverb linked to spring when the bright yellow flowers of the gorse bloom. The implication is to make the most of spring and summer for courting.

17 *whin*: another name for gorse.

21-28 Brettell wonders whether the springtime loveliness of the gorse blossoms will continue to inspire lovers once war engulfs the country.

28 *When, as Browning said, the kissing has to stop*: see "A Toccata of Galuppi" by Robert Browning (1812-1889): "What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?" (l. 42).

\* \* \*

## SPIDERWEBS

p.413

**Note:** In response to Betty Finn's praise for "Spiderwebs" as a

perfectly 'right' poem: and a move to modern flowering punctuation, hurray. You see it does work, it has its place in our armoury. A touching communion with your mind.  
(Letter to Noel Brettell dated 19 January 1978.  
NELM MS 96.19.184)

Brettell wrote

'Spiderwebs': what a joke. I wrote this first as prose and then chopped it up and messed it about a bit. It's just as good in prose—and would have the virtue of getting more people to read it. Why can't we be honest and get back to the good old essay?  
(Letter to Betty Finn dated 29 January 1978.  
NELM MS 96.19.185)

The prose description Brettell is alluding to appears in the section entitled: "August" in *Stumbling on Melons 1964*:

It was a few days after a veld fire that I went down to the stream to attend to the pump. It had been a particularly savage blaze, galloping furiously through several years of rank and clotted grass, and it had left not a shred of green behind it. Every tree was a forlorn skeleton or a tatter of scorched leaves, and the earth a desolation of grey ash and shrivelled tufts: the long shadows of early hour were hardly visible on the black ground. But as I turn to face the sun, just lifted above the high eastern ridge,

I am surprised by a most extraordinary sight. Cobwebs, single strands of them, are woven everywhere among the burnt tussocks, lying horizontal and at right angles to the sun, shaken by the least stir of wind into a gentle silken shimmer as they mounted the sloping ground, and making endless luminous perspectives ris-to [sic] the lip of the valley. They must, of course, have been spun in every direction, but only those diametric to the sun are lighted into these glimmering pathways. But for a few minutes, they transfigure the desolate scene as a fantasy, persuasive as a miracle.

Gossamer, lovely ancient and suggestive word: the stuff that wove the sails of Coleridge's ship of death, the stuff that in a hundred tales has made the dress of the fairies and clothed the royal limbs of Titania herself, 'Shimmering like a bride-cake' as Henry Brocken has it. But such moonshine fancies obscure the other more astonishing fact that, for its size, a thread of spider's silk is one of the toughest things fashioned by any creature, the lifeline and the gladiator's net of these relentless little carnivores. And what a story of toughness and indomitable survival was this, that after living in their underground retreat through a roaring holocaust, they could come out again and in a few days have carpeted again hundreds of acres of burnt veld. And, more macabre reflection, never far from the thoughts of today—they could outlive, maybe, the deadlier cataclysm. After we have destroyed the earth, on the morning after the last of all our wars, they might emerge, the dour survivors, to cover the enormous desert with their pellucid woof of homespun.

("Stumbling on Melons 1964")

9 *combers*: waves / breakers.

19 *black ship of death on Coleridge's ocean*: a reference to Part III of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's (1772-1834) ballad "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (l. 143-223).

22 *troglydte*: cave-dwelling, utterly primitive.

26 *poisoned desert*: Brettell here is anticipating that man's last war will be either a chemical or nuclear one.

\* \* \*

#### IV THE WALL: A FABLE

p.417

**Epigraph:** Assuming the persona of Snout the joiner in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Brettell presents the reader with a glimpse, through the "chink" in the wall, of the resurgence of the forces of nature after an apocalyptic destruction of the works of humankind. The final poem is a reflection on the inevitability of his and Eva's deaths.

**Note:** The wall appears to be a reference to the damming of a river (as in the building of the Kariba dam on the Zambezi). Brettell uses this image to embody a pessimistic conception of the abrupt blocking of the progress of human evolution. With the disappearance of sophisticated civilisation Brettell envisages the earth lapsing into a primitive and savage state similar to that envisaged by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) in *Leviathan*:

No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.  
(Hobbes 65)

The poem traces the progress of human life through infancy (*ll.* 1-23), childhood (*ll.* 24-78), youth (*ll.* 79-95), middle age (*ll.* 96-120), senescence (*ll.* 121-138), and ends with a coda on the regeneration of the natural world after the demise of humankind. In response to Betty Finn's criticisms of this poem (see letter to Noel Brettell dated 19 January 1978. NELM MS 96.19.184) Brettell wrote the following:

... it's been on my diaphragm like a lump of lead for years. Douglas (Livingstone) said it was the most important poem he's read for years— 'cerebral imagination or imaginative cerebration', he calls it, which is all my aunt. But, as you imply I'm not clever enough for it. I don't think it'd be any good hacking it in two and chucking the tail overboard. Better take it or leave it: but at least I've got it off my chest, which is what poetry is for. As for its relevance—well, let's see in five years time, if we can see anything then.

(Letter to Betty Finn dated 29 January 1978.  
NELM MS 96.19.185)

Commenting on the poems in "And Underfoot September" Len Rix, however, in a letter to Brettell dated 14 August 1978 noted the following:

I was surprised to see such direct 'political' imagery – surprised, from you, that is. Which brings me to the extraordinary ending of the Wall – which took me right back to the ending of Doris Lessing's The Grass is Singing for a comparable exercise in sustained metaphor. It would interest me very much to know if you have read the Lessing recently: I suspect you haven't, and I shall be very intrigued if this is the case. What a splendid item this poem would make for the forthcoming, & doubtless last so-named, Rhodesian Poetry. If I had charge of the publication, I should print it whole. Perhaps this is off the top of my head, but it seems to me that your poetry (& in a different way Lessing's) is alone in its capacity to say meaningful things about 'Rhodesia' – that extraordinary, so distinctive, now doomed – bubble of history. I'm sorry to be fulsome – I know you deplore it – but not much has been written since your first Cripps poem ('It stood alone, that grim euphorbia') that makes sense (or clarifies the confusion) about what it is to live in Rhodesia. Rhodesia. The very name is tired. I am filled with alarm about what it will mean to find oneself 'rooted' (horrid word) in something that not merely is officially wicked, but which no longer exists.

(NELM MS 98. 4. 35)



13 *ratel*: see l.11 in “No Road to Xanadu”.

14 *them*: used reflexively, with “basked”.

16 *tails hoist*: an allusion to the upright tails of warthogs in flight.

29 *lengthened into fiddles*: violin-shaped faces of, for example, hartebeests, horses etc.

35 *engrams*: traces of memory.

45-56 These lines follow the pattern of the song “Fear no more the heat o’ th’ sun” in

*Cymbeline* IV. ii:

Fear no more the heat o’ th’ sun  
Nor the furious winter’s rages;  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home art gone, and ta’en thy wages.  
Golden lads and girls all must,  
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o’ th’ great;  
Thou art past the tyrant’s stroke.  
Care no more to clothe and eat;  
To thee the reed is as the oak.  
The sceptre, learning, physic, must  
All follow this and come to dust.

(ll.258-269)

60-61 Brettell is alluding to the children’s game of Cowboys and Indians.

64 *antique songs*: nursery rhymes and children’s games alluded to in ll. 46-69.

66 *toppled*: an allusion to the nursery rhyme of Humpty Dumpty who could never be put back together again.

66 *cracking bough*: an allusion to a line in the nursery rhyme “Rock a Bye Baby”: “When the bough breaks the cradle will fall” (l. 3).

69 *nine men's morris*: see line 18 of "Harry" in "Eclogue in the Hills"

71-78 These lines combine childish rhymes and pettiness with what appears to be an apocalyptic vision for the future (see l. 78).

79 *tossed by the cap and satchel*: abandoned education and its benefits in favour of warfare.

86 *their common rooms*: gatherings of impressionable undergraduates at universities.

88 *wine-dark sea*: a recurring phrase in Homer's *The Odyssey*, the larger-than-life account of the heroics of Ulysses, the prototypical adventurer.

94 *Arden*: The forest of Arden features in Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. The implication is that youthful romance and idealism have been abandoned.

98 *shibboleth*: a distinguishing, exclusive password; see Judg 12:5-6:

And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

107 *reaches*: upper sections of rivers

108 *freshets*: springs.

120 *bourdon*: a drone bass.

139 *loophole*: gun-slit

145 *Rosebay and willowherb, loosestrife and goldenrod*: flowers of the English countryside. Rosebay here probably refers to the rose-laurel (*Nerium oleander*), but rosebay and willowherb are names for the same plant (*Epilobium angustifolium*). Willow-herb is also a

common name for Yellow loosestrife, (*Lysimachia vulgaris*). Goldenrod belongs to the genus *Solidago*.

151 *Their columns wheeling over endless steppes*: An apparent reference to the mounted hordes (as of Huns) that terrorised western Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire.

154 *mouldboards*: blades of ploughshares.

\* \* \*

## NOCTURNE

p.425 ◀

10 *mow*: mocking grimace.

13 *holloways*: excavated lanes (see *OED* *Holl* adj.<sup>3</sup>).

15 *Voices of children*: a reference to Brettell's son, John, and his daughter Rosemary.

21 *Lethe's beach*: see note to l. 20 of "Birthday of a Sloth".

24 *Charon*: the boatman in Greek mythology who "ferried the spirits of the dead across the river Styx to the gates of the underworld." Only those who had "received the rights of burial and whose passage had been paid with a coin placed under the tongue of the corpse" were so transported (*EE* "Charon").

27-28 Brettell, in commenting on this poem in a letter to Betty Finn dated 29 January 1978 (NELM MS 185) wrote: "Our present sense of shared danger ties us ever closer together."

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## RECESSIONAL, 1981.



(Vol. I: 427-461)

“Recessional” was produced and circulated in 1981 and was published in full in 1982 as part of an anthology featuring the work of four Zimbabwean poets entitled: *Four Voices: Poetry From Zimbabwe* (Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1982). The overarching theme in this collection is death. In a letter to Betty Finn dated 12 December 1981 (NELM MS 96.19.263) Brettell, in commenting on “Recessional” noted that “...it’s taken a long time to wait for some of the words to drop out of a failing memory.”

The collection is dedicated to the memory of five people, represented only by the initials: “DLG., DAH., JNS., RAW., PB.” Each set of initials corresponds with a poem describing the individual being commemorated. “DLG” refers to the poem “Naturalist”, “DAH” to “Neighbour”, “JNS” to “Clerk in Holy Orders”, “RAW” to “Suicide” and “PB” to “Poetess”. Careful detective work has established the identities of all five individuals, all friends of Brettell’s. Their identities and notes on them have been inserted in the commentary on the poems.

The epigraph from Catullus’s “Carmen CI” may be translated as: “Brought across many nations and many waters, I come, brother, to these your sad obsequies” (ll. 1-2).

\* \* \*

### PROSPECT

p.429

**Title:** *Prospect*: look-out, view ahead.

**Subtitle:** *Cape Point*: the southernmost tip of the Cape Peninsula. Brettell and Eva spent a month with their daughter Rosemary in Cape Town in December 1980 and January 1981.

**1 no man’s an island:** In Meditation XVII from Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions John Donne (1572-1631) wrote:

No man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*; if a *Clod* bee washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the lesse, as well as if a *Promontorie* were, as well as if a *Mannor* of thy *friends* or of *thine owne* were; any mans *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankinde*; And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; it tolls for *thee*.

(Donne 538).

9 *thrift*: cliff roses (*Armeria maritime*). These grow on sea cliffs and mountains and have pink or white flowers.

10 *butty*: a form of buddy, pal.

21 *argent and gules*: silver and red.

24 “*They all go into the dark*”: see T. S. Eliot “Four Quartets”: East Coker, III: “O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark” (l.1).

\* \* \*

## NATURALIST

p.433

**Note:** This poem commemorates one of Brettell’s oldest friends in Rhodesia, David Garley (“DLG”), who was murdered by insurgents in 1978. In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn, dated Christmas Eve 1978 (NELM MS 96.19.194) Brettell wrote about Garley’s death.

...Sorry not to have written before, but I’ve been completely occupied with the melancholy business of clearing up David Garley’s belongings. It was a frightful tragedy. Within their ‘pre-fab’ walls they didn’t stand a chance—the bullets of course went right through. David was killed with the first burst, which also put the Agri-alert out of action. Poor Dorothy spent a night of horror. She said she lay beside him, hoping she also would be hit, but when she realised that the house was on fire, she had to get out. They had no security fence, thank heaven, so she was able to hide in the garden and at daybreak sent one of their servants to Bonda with a message. She has borne up with quite amazing courage and fortitude.

The house was an utter ruin and everything in it, but the outbuildings, guest cottage, workshop garage and engine room were practically untouched: so I’ve had the doleful task of sorting out David’s possessions of a lifetime and trying to dispose of them all before the jackals moved in—practically finished now, thank goodness. He was, you know, one of our oldest friends—was on my staff at Enkeldoorn and has shared our life ever since.

1-2 A reworking of the old maxim “seeing is believing”. This is a scientific approach to the world.

9 *pictures*: photographs (of biological specimens).

14 *pompadour*: elaborate and intricate arrangement, like the eighteenth-century court fashion in France.

20 *bindweed*: Family Convolvulus, also known as “morning glory”.

26 *high-veld*: high inland plateau in southern Africa.

41 *flute*: groove.

46 *phagocytes*: A phagocyte is a “leucocyte (white blood-corpuscle or lymph-corpuscle) which, under certain conditions, has the power of absorbing and destroying pathogenic microbes by a process of intracellular digestion, and thus of guarding the system against infection. More widely, any cell in the body that phagocytoses bacteria or foreign particles” (*OED* “phagocyte” n.). Brettell’s consistent misspelling of this word in all manuscript versions of this poem has been corrected here, as in the only published version, in *Four Voices: Poetry from Zimbabwe*.

58 *Utopia*: the perfect state.

\* \* \*

NEIGHBOUR

p.437

**Note:** As Brettell notes in a letter to Betty Finn dated 16 January 1985 (NELM MS 96.19.314) this poem commemorates David Henson (“DAH”).

I get by, somehow. The ache I suppose is getting a bit numbed but it is still there. I suppose it always will be. One of the letters I got was from Meg Henson, who was a neighbour at Bonda; her husband David (the ‘D.A.H.’ of Requiem) died, must have been ten years ago, and she says she still has moments of desolation. I’ve tried to turn to verse, but the words, as I’ve said, stick in my throat—literally.

No other mention of Henson has been found in Brettell’s work and letters.

2-7 *Clunton, Clunbury, Clungerford, Clun ... Clee*: villages in the Clun valley, Shropshire.

9 *Merlin*: the enchanter in the legends of King Arthur. Brettell implies that the villages are as unknown to him as the wizard’s runes.

13 *Teme*: The river Teme runs through the Clun valley.

14 *grayling*: a trout-like freshwater fish (*Thymallus thymallus*).

20-21 Brettell here may be thinking of the intrusion of automobiles into the quiet English countryside of his boyhood. He may also be drawing a comparison between the hill of “increasing age” with the one which forces the motorist to change to a lower gear.

27 *incubus*: nightmare.

36 *Shropshire lad*: a reference to A. E. Housman’s popular collection of poems *A Shropshire Lad* (1896). Many are pessimistic in tone.

37 *The clock at ten to three*: an echo of a line in Rupert Brooke’s poem “The Old Vicarage, Grantchester”:

... yet  
Stands the Church clock at ten to three?  
And is there honey still for tea?  
(ll. 139-141)

39 *Pantaloons*: see note to l. 34 of “Christmas Carol”.

45 *quieter*: Despite Hugh and Betty Finn’s objections to his ending the poem with “quieter” which they felt was too weak for a serious poem (see Letter to Brettell dated 7 December 1981. NELM MS 96.19.261) Brettell refused to change it:

To resume: why your objection to ‘feminine’ rhymes? ... Housman is partial to them (and this is Housman) And ‘quieter’ *isn’t* a feminine rhyme anyway. It’ll have to stand: one of those things where the ending ‘came first’  
(Letter to Betty Finn dated 12 December 1981. NELM MS 96.19.263).

and:

I’m obdurate about ‘quieter’. There is a stress—weak—on the last syllable: otherwise it wouldn’t go with ‘star’. And that dredges up the memory from which it probably comes—the branches star // Across the moon at Grantchester

(Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn dated 20 January 1982. NELM MS 96.19.264).

\* \* \*

**Note:** In a letter to Betty Finn, dated 12 December 1981, Brettell identifies “JNS” as John Stopford:

one of our oldest and dearest friends ... who whimsically referred to himself as that—he endorsed his recommendation for a passport for me with that ‘qualification’. He came out as a missionary to Cripps’ Wreningham at the same time as we arrived at Enslinsdeel—later built Daramombe Mission. The archdeacon of Matabeleland—a real “wit” and a good classical scholar. He was just my age and died in England last year.

(NELM MS 96.19.263)

**1** *dead men tell no tales*: An English proverb first recorded in the sixteenth century, it is often found in pirate tales as a motivation for killing witnesses to crimes.

**5** *pitch and toss*: see “Southern Cross and Charles’ Wain”, line 14.

**11** *Cantab*: Cambridge University

**12** *more of Primrose, less of Crabbe*: The English romantic poet George Crabbe, (1754-1832) was ordained in 1781. His poetry portrayed nature and English village life in a realistic and unsentimental way (see *EE*, “Crabbe, George”). Primrose is an apparent reference to a more frivolous approach than Crabbe’s. There may be an echo here of Shakespeare’s: “the primrose path of dalliance” (*Hamlet* I. iii. 50) and: “Crabbed age and youth cannot live together: Youth is full of pleasance, age is full of care” (“The Passionate Pilgrim” XII).

**23** *That hitched my headlong fancies by the heel*: overturned my poetic / romantic imaginings.

**29-30** *sable hair ... palette knife*: different means of applying paint to canvas, indicating here the range of styles reproduced on the calendar, possibly one of the popular Phaidon Art Calendars.

**32** *Vermeer*: The Dutch painter Jan Vermeer (1632-1675) is renowned for his paintings of “comfortable interior scenes that are composed with mathematical clarity and suffused with



cool, silvery light” (EE, “Vermeer, Jan”). The painting here is probably: “Girl reading a letter at an open window” (1657) in the Gemaldegalerie, Dresden, Germany.

**35 Breughel:** Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569) a Flemish painter whose works often depicted aspects of peasant life. The painting being described is probably: “Peasant Wedding” (1568) in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria. Bruegel dropped the “h” from his name in the 1550s. His painter sons later restored it. Brettell, however, transposed the “e” and the “u” in Bruegel.

**38 Lely and Gainsborough, Stubbs and Cox:** Four well known English painters. Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680) and Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) were influential portrait painters. George Stubbs (1724-1806) specialised in painting and engraving animals, especially horses. David Cox (1783-1859) was a landscape artist.

**44 Turner:** The work of the nineteenth-century English landscape painter and watercolourist Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) is particularly noted for its spectacular and innovative depictions of light.

\* \* \*

## SUICIDE

p.445

**Note:** In his personal copy of *Four Voices* Guy Butler noted: “‘RAW’—R. A. Webster A district officer who killed himself”.

**8 Jackson willow:** Port Jackson Willow (*Acacia cyanophylla*) an evergreen willow-like tree with bright yellow flowers. Native to Australia it is classed as an invader in southern Africa.

\* \* \*

## POETESS

p.447

**Note:** “PB” is Phillippa Berlyn (1923-1980). A poet, Shona linguist and journalist she and another Rhodesian poet Olive Robertson started the poetry magazine *Two Tone* in which a number of Brettell’s poems were published. She was killed in an air crash in 1980. The poem’s sonnet form has special significance. Betty Finn, in a letter dated December 7 1981 (NELM MS 96.19.261), wrote: “I see an irony in ‘not-quite-a-sonnet’ for Flippy (13 too); she

had such trouble with form” to which Brettell responded: “...I’m glad you spotted the 13-line sonnet—don’t suppose many readers would” (Letter to Betty Finn, 12 December 1981. NELM MS 96.19.263).

4 *Dicing with death*: During the Rhodesian bush war Berlyn worked as a war correspondent.

\* \* \*

#### VILLAGE HEADMAN

p.449

2-8 Brettell here is describing the traditional burial given to black African people in parts of southern Africa. Traditionally the body of the dead man was wrapped in skins (later a blanket) and buried sitting upright “hands clasping knees” with a gourd of beer and a portion of mealie meal by his side.

9-11 Reverence for one’s ancestors is an essential feature of traditional black African society. Living family members sometimes consult their ancestors.

12 *Against bribes wrapped in cellophane, good-fellowship in cans*: the tawdry blandishments and temptations of modern Western culture and media that threaten to destroy African traditional practices and values.

13 *snake-sloughs in Arcady*: Shed snake-skins in Arcady indicate the presence of evil in an otherwise innocent pastoral landscape.

\* \* \*

#### MAX GATE

p.451

**Note:** In a letter to Betty Finn dated 12 December 1981 ( NELM MS 96.19.263) Brettell observed:

As Graves says in *Goodbye to all that* and Sassoon in *Siegfried’s Journey*, Hardy’s public presence was the genial old country gent: the biographer even goes so far as to say he ‘twinkled’. The poem (Max Gate), as you can see is not so much Hardy as me (& Graves and Sassoon). ... You object to the poems being ‘cold’. Well, I don’t know. He himself said they were A cheerful B neutral C gloomy, and such later poems as the ‘candle-shroud’ one and ‘Survival’ chill my bones anyway.

**Title:** *Max Gate*: the name of the Victorian villa in Dorchester which Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) designed and built in 1885. He lived there until his death.

**Subtitle:** *After Reading a Biography of Hardy*: The book that Brettell is referring to is one that the Finns gave him as a Christmas present in 1980. It may have been R Gittings's two volume biography of Hardy, the second volume of which was published in 1980. In a letter dated 11 November 1980 (NELM MS 96.19.240) Brettell wrote:

Many renewed thanks for the Hardy. I've done no more yet than read a few chapters of vol 1: it presumes to throw some light on the odd contorted poetry which I think is so much better than the novels, so much more honest. Though, talking of honesty, I didn't know that Hardy had written his own 'life' to be passed off as the work of his widow. Now that *is* an idea. But the book is refreshing too in its picture of the England of my father and grandfathers, the last trace of which I knew and which has now, it seems, gone for ever.

1 *We once wandered along the Dorset coast*: In 1934 before they were married Brettell and Eva undertook a walking tour along "the deserted verge of the Dorset coast into Devon" (SGS 77).

7 *Talbothayes*: Thomas Hardy was born at Brockhampton about a mile from West Stafford in Dorset. In his novels he referred to it as Talbothayes. The Talbothayes church bells are rung at the wedding of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* ("West Stafford" par. 1).

11 *Wareham*: the town of Wareham, in Dorset, lies between the rivers Piddle and Frome.

15 *Emma fumed and Florence schemed*: Hardy married Emma Gifford in 1874. The marriage lasted for thirty eight years but was not always happy. When she died in 1912 Hardy was overcome with grief and remorse and this resulted in his collection *Veteris Vestigiae Flammae* which describes their marriage and his feelings of loss. The poems in this volume are amongst his finest. In 1914 Hardy married Florence Dugdale, his secretary since 1912, who wrote his biography after his death. Though he expressed a wish to be buried next to Emma, his body was interred in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey (see *EE* "Hardy, Thomas").

12 *Frome*: a river running through Dorset.

25 *Sharing talk and toast with the young Graves or young Sassoon*: In Hardy's later life Max Gate became a site of pilgrimage for younger poets like Robert Graves (1895-1985), Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967) and Edmund Blunden (1896-1974) who would journey there to meet and talk with the older poet. Hardy's poetry bridges the gap between the Victorians and the Moderns. His influence on the Georgian and early modern poets was significant.

26 *revenant*: ghost.

\* \* \*

## AUBADE FOR ORPHEUS

p.455 ◀

**Note:** Responding to a letter from Betty Finn dated December 7 1981 (NELM MS 96.19.261) in which she criticised "Aubade for Orpheus" as being "too self conscious" and "not one of your best" Brettell wrote:

...I'm unrepentant about "Orpheus". Both Eva and I think it's one of the best. I think the trouble is—as you've implied before—that you're disappointed that the affair (the insurgent attack on the Brettell's house on 12 February 1979. See Below.) didn't leave us with a 'trauma' as you call it. We had no terror, no anger even, or sense of desolation—quite simply joy and gratitude. So why not Orpheus and Eurydice? Though, even there, you don't seem to see that the classical myth is turned back to front.

(Letter to Betty Finn, 12 December 1981.  
NELM MS 96.19.263).

**Title:** *Aubade for Orpheus*: An aubade is a song that announces the dawn. Orpheus, in Greek mythology, was a highly skilled musician whose music could move animate and inanimate objects.

Orpheus married Eurydice but soon after their wedding she was bitten by a snake and died. Overcome with grief Orpheus followed her into the underworld to fetch her back. Hades was so moved by Orpheus's music that he freed Eurydice on condition that Orpheus not look back at her till they had left the underworld. Orpheus could not restrain himself and as he reached the surface he looked back and Eurydice disappeared forever (*EE* "Orpheus").

On the 12 February 1979, as the Rhodesian bush war began to wind down, Brettell and Eva's home was attacked by insurgents. What is remarkable is the stoic fortitude with which the old couple, aged 71 and 76 respectively, met the tragedy. There is no trace of anger or bitterness in any of the letters, poems or prose that followed the event, which is the

backdrop to this poem. This is how Brettell, in a letter written to Betty Finn on the 21

February 1979, describes the events of that night:

Eva and I have ever since been (in) a state of high elation at having such a quite incredible escape—we've both had an ear-drum ruptured, but the doctor says they are healing nicely—rather to my disappointment, as I hoped to be completely immunised from the chatter of the coteries. I lost the other one fifty years ago with my first and last dive from the top board.

Not only our lives were so miraculously saved, but most of our possessions. Some of our clothes went up in the fire (that I was able to put out with half a dozen buckets of water). My copy of the *Prelude*, no—the Collected Poems, had a bit of shrapnel in it (now there's a theme for you!) and my beautiful Kekana head just missed a bullet and was only completely smothered in dust that has impregnated his peppercorns and makes him appear to have gone white in the night.

I suppose (for the record) I'd better tell you all about it, as it's really quite entertaining. We'd gone to bed a little later than usual, having listened to a music programme, and awoke to our second birthday about half past ten. One rocket came through the grenade screen and the window and exploded against the opposite wall of the bedroom which was completely pulverised. The second one hit the stone wall below the window and exploded outside. The roof went up and the ceiling came down. Eva was quite magnificent—not a shred of fear or panic. She found that our 'Agri-Alert' was out of action (we found later that by one chance in ten thousand a bullet or a bit of shrapnel had cut the aerial wire) and when we found we were both whole, she crawled off to the kitchen to telephone and I dug my Sten gun out of the rubble and found my way through a fog of dust to the front door. By this time we were under a hailstorm of bullets—the tracers like mad fireflies in the mirk. I opened fire through the shattered front door and the sitting room window—and their fire stopped immediately. I emptied my magazine and the second one jammed after half a dozen shots. My faithful old 303 was full of dust and grit, the bolt wouldn't work, but I managed to load one or two rounds by hand and fired off the only cartridge I could find for the shotgun. But by that time it was all over. Our stout fifteen inch walls stopped everything except the rockets. All that remained was the long vigil waiting for the army and to deal with the fire—not a serious matter—that a tracer had started in the wrecked wardrobe. Rosemary's portrait (by my sister-in-law) which was on the wall that was completely pulverised by the explosion, was blown out of its frame and we found it flat on its face beneath a heap of rubble, untouched and smiling serenely as ever. The cottage was badly damaged—a quarter of the roof off and most of the ceiling gone and no glass on three sides of the house. I broke the last remaining pane the next day by letting my rifle fall against it. We had to decide ruefully as the moon gave place to dawn, that this was the end. Apart from the ear-drums, I got a slight scratch on the head and Eva one on her arm.

When the army arrived, just before first light (they'd lost their way poor chaps) they found the remains of three rockets—one went right over the roof and hit a tree (on) the other side—half a dozen grenades, and scooped up AK 'doppies' by the double handful. They reckoned there were something like twenty assailants—an expensive way of disposing of two harmless old folk like ourselves.

Well, there we are, and here we are. We still have the curious feeling that it happened to somebody else and that the two bodies that so incredibly survived the blast belong to a pair of strangers.

5 *Dis*: another name for Pluto, god of the underworld; the Roman counterpart of Hades.

6 *shattered room*: The remains of the Brettells's house after the attack.

11-12 see above for myth of Opheus.

13 *antre*: a cave.

\* \* \*

## SPASTIC CHILD

p.459

**Note:** In "Eva 1984" Brettell noted that while he and Eva had lived in Nyanga, she "had given what help she could to the Mukawapasi [sic] Clinic for disabled and spastic children" ("Eva 1984", RB Col 13, 43). In Shona, "mukuwapasi" means "falling down."

\* \* \*

## DUNG BEETLE

p.461

11 *Sisyphus*: In Greek mythology Sisyphus, King of Corinth, witnessed Zeus carrying off Aegina and told her father what he had seen. Zeus punished him by condemning him to roll a boulder to the top of a hill for eternity. Every time he reached the summit, however, the boulder would roll back down the hill and he would have to start again (*EE Sisyphus*).

**Title:** *Dung beetle*: (Family Scarabaeidae).

13 *Gulliver to his Lilliput*: In Part One of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) entitled *Lilliput* by Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) Gulliver is "wrecked on an island where human beings are little bigger than insects, and their self-importance is clearly laughable" (*LCEL*, "Gulliver's Travels", 557).

15 *God from the machine*: divine intervention, a translation of the Latin "Deus ex machina" which refers to a god who is introduced to resolve the plot in Greek and Roman drama.

## COUNTRY INTO TOWN, 1985.



(Vol. I: 463-511)

In September 1984, shortly after the Brettells' fiftieth wedding anniversary, Eva Brettell died as a result of a car crash. Brettell's grief found expression in this collection of poems entitled "Country into Town". The subtitle "Threnody, with some echoes" indicates its nature as a song of lamentation for her who—in Catullus's words—had gone "hence on the shadowy journey from where they say no-one returns." The English translation printed below the dedication is Brettell's own. In their style and subject matter the poems are similar to the poems written by Thomas Hardy after the death of his wife of thirty-eight years, but unlike Hardy's first marriage Brettell's seems to have been happy. These poems, while expressing the intensity of his loss, are not weighed down by the feelings of guilt evident in Hardy's *Veteris Vestigiae Flammae*.

As a direct result of his grief the poems in "Country into Town" were written in quick succession. In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn, dated 22 August 1985, which accompanied the finished collection Brettell wrote:

Not very good, perhaps: you'll judge that better than I can—but it's been good for me. I don't think I've ever written 15 poems in a month before, and am quite exhausted—in the literal sense, drained out. I can understand now what Housman said about the ferment of writing *The Shropshire Lad*— 'I can no longer expect to be re-visited by the continuous excitements - - - nor could I well sustain it if it came.'

(NELM MS 96.19.323)

The poems are amongst Brettell's most poignant. In a later letter to Hugh and Betty Finn dated 10 February 1987 Brettell quoted the novelist and critic Walter Allen on "Country into Town". Allen, Professor of English at Ulster, had been two years below Brettell at Birmingham University. He wrote:

They are very moving, and beautiful with a kind of muted beauty. I have been trying to analyse why they move me so much, and, as ever, words fail. The impression they give me is of a proud reticence and dignity; I suppose by that I mean a stoic quality, which comes partly from the measured gravity of the language—they are superbly well written. And I think it's because they're so well written that they are so moving.

(NELM MS 96.19.338)

The simpler, pared down diction of these poems, their intense clarity of intention, focus and effect, give them a profundity seldom achieved in his earlier poems. One is reminded of the maturity and simplicity in Yeats's final poems. If Brettell had written no other poetry, these poems alone would have secured him a place amongst the finest poets in southern Africa.

\* \* \*

**Title:** *Sparrow*: Brettell questions how an ordinary European house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) has appeared in Zimbabwe.

**1** *Cockney*: a townsman born within earshot of the Bow bells in London. Sparrows, which are common in London (they were introduced as an alien species into southern Africa), are seen as sharing some of the characteristics of the London working class: quick, pert, saucy, brash, indomitable, impudent.

**6** *cape of storms*: The Cape of Good Hope was originally called the “Cabo Tormentoso” (Cape of Storms) by the Portuguese navigators because of the violent weather they encountered there.

**7** *sutler*: literally: camp hawker, camp follower—here: a self-serving survivor, a hanger-on.

**18** *Passer domesticus*: Latin for House sparrow.

**18** *two for a farthing*: See Mt. 10:29: “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” The farthing coin (worth a quarter of a penny) had two sparrows on the reverse side.

**21** *a more tortured heart than mine*: that of the Roman lyric poet Gaius Valerius Catullus (84-54 BC). According to *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*:

Among the most famous of Catullus’s works are the so-called Lesbia poems, which variously express deep passion, devotion, hatred, and scorn for a mysterious lady, identified only as Lesbia. Scholars conjecture that Lesbia was in reality Clodia, a beautiful but unscrupulous woman who had been unfaithful to the young poet. Although the focus is on Lesbia, many of the poems reflect Catullus’s own self-doubt, self-criticism, and self-pity. Whatever the exact facts of the affair may be, critics generally agree that the Lesbia poems rank among the most intense and effective expressions of passion in Roman literature. His poems are mostly short pieces, varied in subject, written in lyric form.

(*EE* “Catullus”).



One of Catullus's best-known poems is "Lesbia's Sparrow", from which Brettell took the epigraph to this collection.

25 *eleven snips of words*: the epigraph: *Qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum // illuc, unde negant redire quemquam*, which Brettell translated as: "Now he travels the solitary darkness // towards that region from which there's no return."

26 *courtesan*: Lesbia; see above.

28 *a more gracious ghost*: Eva Brettell. See introductory notes to "Country into Town".

31 *Hop in her walks and gambol in her eyes*: In Act III sc. i of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Titania instructs her fairies to:

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman,  
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;  
(ll.164-5)  
\* \* \*

SUNSET

p.469 ◀

1 *We walked again with beauty*: a reference to the first line of Byron's lyric: "She Walks in Beauty":

She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
(ll. 1-2)

2-3 The "flat green" is one of those belonging to Jameson High School in Kadoma. After their home was attacked by insurgents in February 1979 the Brettells moved to Gatooma, now Kadoma, and lived at 39 Robert Taylor Drive which was very close to the school playing fields. Brettell would sometimes go and watch the schoolboys playing sport of an afternoon.

10 *eucalypt*: tall blue gum trees, members of the Myrtaceae family.

12-13 a reference to the insurgent attack on the Brettells' house in Nyanga. See notes to "Aubade for Orpheus".

17-20 In a letter to Hugh Finn, dated 8 September 1985, Brettell explained:

And Mozart—the passage I had particularly in mind was the Andante in Symphony no 35, where he breaks off a cadence of chords to go on to another tune, and later returns to finish it: a trick he often plays, delightfully—and I imagine, delightedly.

(NELM MS 96.19.325)

21 *stealing and giving odour*: In Act I sc. i of Shakespeare's comedy *Twelfth Night* the Duke Orsino, in describing music in his famous opening speech says:

... it had a dying fall;  
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound  
That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
Stealing and giving odour.

(ll.4-7)

29 *Espalier boughs*: branches of fruit trees trained to grow flat against a wall or fence.

30 *Reach me an apple, Eve, ripe with your laughter*: By referring to the Biblical story of the fall of man (see Gen. 3) and punning on the name Eve, Brettell here is expressing his readiness to die.

32 *dayfall*: a Brettell neologism, formed on the model of "nightfall."

\* \* \*

## SPITTING COBRA

p.473 ◀

**Title:** *Spitting Cobra*: a cobra (*Naja nigricollis*) which shoots its venom into the eyes of potential enemies, for the interim blinding them and causing excruciating pain.

17 *Medusa*: In Greek mythology Medusa was one of the three winged monster daughters of the sea god Phorcys and his wife Ceto. Known as gorgons, these terrifying dragon-like creatures with tusk-like teeth and serpents for hair could turn to stone any man they looked upon. Of the three only Medusa could be slain (*EE* "Gorgons").

19 *her*: Eva.

\* \* \*

**Title:** *Thrush*: The Kurrichane Thrush (*Turdus libonyanus*) has an “orange beak ... and greyish back” (RBSA, “Kurrichane Thrush”, 377).

**19** *Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low*: In Act V sc. iii of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, Lear holds the dead body of his daughter Cordelia in his arms and says:

What is’t thou say’st? Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.  
(ll. 273-4)

\* \* \*

**Subtitle:** *Chirwe falls*: a waterfall in Nyanga in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe.

**4** *lawn*: fine white cloth fabric.

**5** *merlin*: small European falcon (*Falco columbarius*).

**10** *granny-bonnets*: purple South African wild flower (*Disperis capensis*) shaped like an old-fashion woman’s bonnet hence the name. In Afrikaans it is known as Moederkappie (mother’s bonnet).

**11** *cuckoo-pint, toadflax, cowslip heads*: popular names for wild flowers of the English countryside. Cuckoo-pint refers to the plant wake-robin (*Arum maculatum*), while toadflax refers to the flaxen leaved plant *Linum usitatissimum*. Cowslip is the common name for *Primula veris*, which has drooping umbels of fragrant yellow flowers.

**13** *The spinsters and the knitters in the sun*: In Act II sc. iv of Shakespeare’s comedy *Twelfth Night* the Duke Orsino, says:

O fellow, come, the song we had last night.  
Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain.  
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,  
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,  
Do use to chant it. It is silly sooth,

And dallies with the innocence of love,  
Like the old age.

(ll.42-48)

**14** *Mazawattee and Pear's soap*: Brettell here is recalling the Victorian / Edwardian pictures on the tins of Pears' Soap and Mazawattee Tea. Pears decorated their tins with a commissioned picture by John Everett Millais (1829-1896) entitled "Bubbles" (1886) which depicted a young boy with a pipe blowing soap bubbles, while Mazawattee Tea tins displayed a bespectacled and bonneted grandmother and grand-daughter drinking tea.

\* \* \*

**CLOUD**

p.479 ◀

**8** *cameo*: a gem with a figure carved in relief.

**9** *Rodin*: the French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1814-1917).

**10-11** *imprison'd in the viewless winds, // And blown with restless violence round about*: In Act III sc. i of Shakespeare's comedy *Measure for Measure* the condemned Claudio makes the following speech about death:

Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;  
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;  
This sensible warm motion to become  
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit  
To bathe in fiery floods or to reside  
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;  
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds  
And blown with restless violence round about  
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst  
Of those that lawless and incertain thought  
Imagine howling—'tis too horrible!  
The weariest and most loathed worldly life  
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment  
Can lay on nature is a paradise  
To what we fear of death.

(ll.117-131)

**19** *you*: Eva.

\* \* \*

6 *Flags*: irises (*Iris pseudacorus*) (see l.20).

8 *You*: Eva.

13 *dung-smear on a floor*: The earth floors of houses used to be smeared regularly with wet cow dung in order to lay the dust.

14 *barm*: a frothy yeast formed during fermentation of liquor.

15 *mangold-tump*: a mound of mangel-wurzel (*Beta vulgaris*): a type of beet grown for cattle fodder.

15 *hoopoe*: see note to "Hoopoe". Hoopoes' nests are particularly foul-smelling.

16 *ridgeback*: the breed of dog known as the Rhodesian ridgeback. The breed is of medium size with a short, light brown coat and a ridge of reversed hair running along the back from neck to tail.

17 *Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds*: the final line from Shakespeare's Sonnet 94:

For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;  
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.  
(l.13-14)

18 *His nose fastidious wrinkled in The Globe*: a reference to William Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre in Southwark, London, where many of his plays were performed.

22 *The savour's lost from salt*: possibly an echo from Mt. 5:13 "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

24-25 *shudder and fix // And flush up*: a description of three characteristic actions of a hunting dog.

25 *phoenix*: see note to “Weathercock”, line 32.

\* \* \*

## HENGRAVE HALL

p.485 ◀

**Title:** *Hengrave Hall*: The manor house Hengrave Hall is near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. The present hall was built by Thomas Kytson (see l.11), an “enterprising merchant” (“Hengrave Hall” par. 5) knighted in 1533, but its history dates back to the reign of Edward the Confessor, (1042-1066) when Hengrave formed “part of the territory of St. Edmunds”(“Hengrave Hall” par. 1). Kitson bought Hengrave in 1520 and in 1561 it became the property of his son Thomas who was “an object of suspicion” (“Hengrave Hall” par. 7) during the early part of Queen Elizabeth’s reign. In 1578 the Queen visited Hengrave on her way to Norwich “where in very deed the fare and banquet did so far exceed a number of other places that it is worthy of mention” (“Hengrave Hall” par. 7). It is now an Ecumenical Retreat and Conference Centre (“Hengrave Hall” pars. 13, 14).

4 *Tudor*: See note to “Fantasia in Pseudo-Tudor”, line 6.

5 *Putti*: See line 17 in “Prudentius”.

8 *mock baroque*: architectural features in the style of the Baroque period.

11 *Kytson, Sir John*: See above.

13 *you*: Eva.

15 *Phyllis*: Eva Brettell’s sister. She was cook, probably to Sir John Wood who “restored the House to much of its ancient beauty by renovating the banqueting hall, chapel, great gallery and summer parlour. He also built the annexe to replace the wing that had been demolished in 1775” (“Hengrave Hall” par. 14).

18 *wedges*: feature of a formal garden.

18-19 common English garden flowers and herbs.

23 *sparrowgrass*: asparagus.

27 *Elizabeth, Anne, George, Victoria*: Kings and queens of England. Elizabeth I (1558-1603), Anne (1702-1714) and Victoria (1837-1901). "George" could refer to any of the four kings of the name who reigned successively from 1715-1830.

29 *between the wars*: the First and Second World Wars.

31 *All honour's mimique all wealth alchemie*: a line from John Donne's "The Sun Rising":

She's all States, and all Princes, I,  
Nothing else is.  
Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,  
All honour's mimique; All wealth alchemie..  
(21-24)

35 *Edward, the Georges, William, Elizabeth*: English monarchs listed in random order here. Edward the Confessor (reigned: 1042-66), George I-IV (reigned: 1714-1830), William III (William of Orange, reigned: 1689-1702) and Elizabeth I (reigned: 1558-1603).

\* \* \*

**SHADOW SHOW**

p.489 ◀

**Title:** *Shadow Show*: Cf. l.26 in "Hunchback"

7 *word*: command.

8-10 Brettell seems to be thinking of Felix Mendelssohn's (1809-1847) composition "A Midsummer Night's Dream", Op.61.

12 *sunbird*: The reference here is to the iridescence and rapid movement of sunbirds's wings (Family Nectariniidae).

14 *scream of cicada*: male cicadas or “Christmas beetles” (possibly here *Platypleura haglundii*):

have a pair of circular sound-producing organs (tymbals) that appear as 2 round membranes on either side of the abdomen, each reinforced with a strong circular ring. A muscle attached to the centre contracts, and the recoil produces a click; rapid contraction of these muscles produces a shrill continuous noise.

(*FGISA*: 156)

16 *The leaves have edges like knives*: probably the hard flat crescent shaped leaves of eucalypt trees (Family Myrtaceae).

\* \* \*

FRITZ

p.491 ◀

**Note:** In a letter to Hugh Finn dated 8 September 1985 (NELM MS 96.19.325) Brettell wrote:

I’m glad you liked ‘Fritz’—about the only poem I’ve ever written that came on to the paper almost immediately as it stands. And Fritz was a real man.

**Title:** *Fritz*: It has not been possible to establish Fritz’s identity.

23 *wood-dove*: the Emerald-spotted wood dove (*Turtur chalcospilos*). It has

one of the most characteristic and monotonous sounds of the bush. Consists of a series of coos, “du, du ... du; du .. du .. du, du .. dudu, du du, du, du, du, du, du, du, du, du, du”, the final run descending quickly. Likened by various native tribes to ‘My mother is dead! My father is dead! All my relations are dead! Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh....’

(*RBSA*, “Emerald-spotted wood dove”, 222)

26 *Hours, dayes, moneths, that are the rags of time*: see John Donne’s “The Sun Rising”:

Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,  
Nor heures, dayes, moneths, which are the rags of time.

(ll. 9-10)

32 *And I saw*: Brettell here is echoing the apostle John’s vision of life once death is no more (Rev. 21:1): “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

33 *Time close up like a book*: In Revelation the book of life is opened. Here Brettell sees it being shut finally at the end of all things.



34 *The day's lesson read*: The portion of Scripture appointed to be read on that day.

\* \* \*

NOCTURNE

p.495 ◀ ☒

**Title**: a meditative piece of night music.

3 *galleon or quinquireme*: old ships mentioned in popular poems in school anthologies.

Compare Alfred Noyes's (1880-1958) "The Highwayman":

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,  
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas  
(ll. 1-2)

and John Masefield's (1874-1967) "Cargoes".

Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir  
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,  
(ll. 1-2)  
\* \* \*

SONG BY OWL-LIGHT

p.497 ◀

14 *fifty years*: The Brettells had celebrated their golden wedding anniversary before Eva died.

17 *spear of Keats*: a reference to a phrase in a letter from Keats to Charles Brown dated 1 November 1820, three months before his death, where he expresses his regret at not consummating his relationship with Fanny Brawne.

...I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. Oh, God! God! God! Every thing I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear.  
(Keats 541)

19 *The owl for all his feathers is a-cold*: The first stanza of Keats's "The Eve of St Agnes" reads:

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!  
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;  
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,  
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:  
(ll. 1-4)  
\* \* \*

**Subtitle:** According to John Brettell: “the first six verses refer to a flight to Cape Town where my father and mother had a holiday in 1983. The last two verses refer to a flight to London for Noel Brettell’s visit of 1985” (Letter to Gregory Hacksley from John Brettell, dated 23 December 2004).

**6** *That age of easy verse:* Brettell is thinking of Elizabethan poetry. The Alexandrine is uncommon in English poetry, but Edmund Spenser (1552-99) employed it as the final line of each stanza in *The Faerie Queene*.

**12-16** “*Dr Bill*” in *minus 43*: In a letter to Hugh Finn dated 8 September 1985 (NELM MS 96.19.325) Brettell wrote:

‘Dr Bill’, by the way, was Dr [Edward] Wilson of the Scott expedition—affectionately so called by his companions. His exquisitely delicate water-colours of Antarctica are one of the most extraordinary things to have come out of that ill-starred venture. He, of course, died with Scott.

**27** *recusants:* rebels.

**27** *Nineveh:* the capital of the ancient Assyrian empire at the height of its power. An important political and cultural centre, it was sacked by the Babylonians and the Medes in 612 BC. In the Bible God ordered Jonah to preach against Nineveh (see Book of Jonah) but he deliberately headed in the opposite direction to Tarshish in Spain. While he was on board ship a violent storm arose and the terrified sailors threw Jonah overboard when they discovered his disobedience. He was swallowed by a big fish (see *l.* 28) which spat him out on dry land.

**28** *leviathan:* a Biblical sea monster such as swallowed Jonah. Here, the aeroplane with its bellyful of passengers.

**28** *aesophagus:* a (possibly deliberate) misspelling of oesophagus suggesting a link with the fables of Aesop.

31 *For in that sleep of death what dreams may come*: an echo of Hamlet's soliloquy in Act III

sc. i:

... To die, to sleep—  
To sleep, perchance to dream— ay, there's the rub,  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause;

(l. 63-67)

\* \* \*

CUCKOO

p.503 ◀

**Title:** *Cuckoo*: The African Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) whose call is

a loud melancholy 'hoop-hoop' rather like the African Hoopoe and with the accent on the second syllable unlike the European birds which call 'Cuck-oo'; the latter are silent in Africa.

(RBSA, "Cuckoo", 233)

1-3 Two of many superstitions associated with the cuckoo throughout Western Europe. "The cuckoo was often celebrated in the mediaeval poetry of all ages and all languages, and was looked upon as possessing some share of supernatural knowledge" (Chambers, "Book of Days" par. 15). In Norfolk for instance it was a popular belief that "an unmarried person will remain single as many years as the cuckoo, when first heard, utters its call" (Chambers, "Book of Days" par. 9). Another entry reads:

Mr. Marryat found a curious legend among the Danes regarding the cuckoo. "When in early springtime the voice of the cuckoo is first heard in the woods, every village girl kisses her hand, and asks the question, 'Cuckoo! cuckoo! when shall I be married?' and the old folks, borne down with age and rheumatism, inquire, 'Cuckoo! cuckoo! when shall I be released from this world's cares?' The bird, in answer, continues singing 'Cuckoo!' as many times as years will elapse before the object of their desires will come to pass."

(Chambers, "Book of Days" par. 10)

The superstition of consulting the cuckoo is found in many stories by mediaeval Latin writers. Caesarius of Heisterbach wrote in 1221:

A converse in a certain monastery—that is, a lay-man who had become a monk—was walking out one day, when, hearing a cuckoo and counting the number of times its note was repeated, he found it to be twenty-two. 'Ah!' said he, 'if I am yet to live twenty-two years more, why should I mortify myself all this long time in a monastery? I will return to the world, and give myself up to the enjoyment of its pleasures for twenty years, and then I shall have two years to repent in.' So he

returned to the world, and lived joyously two years, and then died, losing twenty out of his reckoning.

(Chambers, "Book of Days" par. 15)

8-9 *Why should a bird, a weed, have life, // And she no breath at all*: a reworking of lines from Act V sc. iii of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The original reads:

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
And thou no breath at all?

(ll.307-8)

13 *No more of that, cries Lear*: In Act III sc. iv of *King Lear* the dispirited King says:

O, that way madness lies, let me shun that!  
No more of that.

(ll. 21-22)

17-22 In "Eva 1984" Brettell recalled this incident in more detail (see "Cuckoo" in the collection "One Year").

18 *long journey home*: Brettell here is mistaken in thinking that the bird is returning home to Europe. "European birds migrate to Africa and African birds migrate south within Africa" (*RBSA*, "Cuckoo", 233).

20 *morose*: silent (see note to title above).

21 *The old ribaldries*: deceived husbands were mocked with the cuckoo's call. Cuckold has its roots in the word cuckoo (see *OED* "cuckold" n.<sup>1</sup>).

21 *mow*: see line 10 in "Nocturne: For My Wife".

23 *earthgall and ramson*: medicinal herbs. "Earthgall" is a common name for the Lesser Centaury (*Erythraea centaurium*), ramson is a broad-leaf garlic (*Allium ursinum*).

\* \* \*

**ITCHEN ESTUARY: BITTERNE**

**p.507** ◀ ☒

**Title:** *Itchen Estuary: Bitterne*: Brettell visited Itchen Estuary in Hampshire when he was in England in 1985 after Eva's death. Bitterne is a suburb of Southampton, Eva's hometown. In

lines 16-18, however, Brettell is referring to the “bittern”, a type of marsh heron. Brettell might have been unaware of the difference in spelling between the two.

8 *cheap tin trays*: compare John Masefield’s (1878-1967) “Cargoes”:

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack  
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,  
With a cargo of Tyne coal,  
Road-rail, pig-lead,  
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

(ll.11-15.)

14 *meadowsweet and loosestrife*: tall plants found near water. Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) has white flowers while loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*) has yellow flowers.

16 *To the dim boom of that secret bird*: The bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) is a marsh heron with a booming call.

18 *bill upthrust*: The nesting bittern characteristically points its long, sharp beak vertically upwards.

\* \* \*

**SEVERN: ABOVE BEVERE LOCK**

p.509 ◀ ☒

**Subtitle:** The Scottish novelist and poet Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson (1850-1894) moved to Samoa in 1888 in an attempt to restore his health. While there he wrote a number of prayers that were published after his death in a collection entitled: *Prayers written at Vailima*. One, entitled “For Friends” reads:

grant us courage to endure lesser ills unshaken, and to accept death, loss, and disappointment as it were straws upon the tide of life.

(Stevenson par. 13)

In his account of the immediate aftermath of the attack on their home in Nyanga, while the elderly couple were waiting for the arrival of the security patrol, Brettell remembered “the fortitude with which she [Eva] softly repeated Stevenson’s noble prayer, her favourite of all the prayers —’to accept death, loss, and disappointment as it were straws upon the tide of life’” (“Eva 1984”, RB Col 13, 40).

**2-3** *the steel glass // They used to say told truth*: The implication is that whereas glass mirrors can be made to distort the truth, steel cannot. Brettell may, according to Betty Finn, “be thinking of the cheap metal mirrors gypsies peddled as ‘safe’ as opposed to the more costly mercury and glass ones” (Letter from Betty Finn to Gregory Hacksley dated 22 July 2004).

**7** *Naiad or lorelei*: female water spirits. The lorelei, in German mythology, lured boatmen to their death with her singing.

**15** *stormcock*: the missel thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*). It “begins to sing early, often on the turn of the year in blowy showery weather, whence, in some places it is called the Stormcock” (“Bewicks Birds” par. 1).

**17** *I catch at the straws*: metaphorical: desperately looking for a source of hope.

**17** *discern*: read the future.

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## UNCOLLECTED POEMS

(Vol. I: 513-603)

This section contains all Brettell's known but uncollected poems, the majority of which were never published. They are presented in approximate chronological order, dating from 1928 to 1991 and display Brettell's poetic development from his undergraduate student days at Birmingham University to his poetic maturity. Some of the poems in this collection were rejected by Brettell as inferior, but no known poem has been excluded. This Collected Poems is intended to present of Brettell's entire oeuvre.

\* \* \*

### THE SINGER

p.517

9 *I sing the life of life*: The subject matter of the second stanza suggests that this line should possibly read "I sing the love of life", but no textual evidence exists to confirm this conjecture.

### SEVERN MAY 22

p.519

**Note:** an address to the river Severn which rises in Wales and flows through Shropshire, Worcester and Gloucester into the Bristol channel.

\* \* \*

### ODYSSEUS

p.521

**Title:** *Odysseus*: Odysseus was King of Ithaca and one of the Greek heroes who took part in the siege and sacking of Troy. In the *Odyssey*, Homer's account of Odysseus's ten-year journey back to Ithaca from Troy, Odysseus devised the scheme of the Trojan Horse which gave the Greeks victory. In the *Iliad* he is portrayed as brave and cunning, but later Greek and Roman writers reduced him to a cowardly scheming politician. Upon finally arriving home, after many adventures, he reclaimed his throne and slew the suitors who were attempting to seduce his faithful wife. Odysseus, however, found that he could not remain at home and so, after handing over his throne to his son Telemachus, he set out to sea again (*EE* "Odysseus"). Brettell's poem may have been inspired by Tennyson's "Ulysses". It, too, is set at the moment before Odysseus's departure.

8 *I'll never be content*: an echo of the sentiment expressed in line 12 of Tennyson's poem "Ulysses": "always roaming with a hungry heart" (*Tennyson's Poetry* 82).

8 *swine*: Odysseus visited the island of Aeaea where the sorceress Circe transformed his men into swine, but Odysseus, having received a herb from Hermes which made him immune to her powers, forced her to lift the spell (see Homer, *Odyssey* 158).

12 *I come*: While it is possible to make a close-reading point about the absence of a period after the word "come" at the end of the poem, the reason for the absence of a period could as easily be attributed to typesetting negligence in *The University Gazette* where the only known copy of this poem appears. No other poem by Brettell ends without a punctuation mark, thus making the likelihood of a printing error even greater. A period has therefore been added.

\* \* \*

JUNE 14

p.523

**Note:** The experience being recalled in the poem is described in *Side-Gate and Stile* where Brettell recounts falling in love for the first time.

Cynthia (not her name, but it will do for a boy's first love) was no walker, but masterfully I insisted on showing her my hills. The bus took us to the foot and we climbed up slowly through the woods. A summer storm was gathering as we walked out on to the downs. The first spatters drove us under the shelter of a great oak. The first tremendous crash and the flash riving the purple of the sky drove her into my arms, and we kissed long and frantically while the storm smashed the afternoon to splinters.

(*SGS* 57-58)

A note at the top of a draft letter from Brettell to a Dorothy Baker, (NELM MS 94. 4. 74) identifies Dorothy Baker as the "Cynthia" of *Side-Gate and Stile*. Baker, however, was Dorothy's married name. From a letter to another university friend, Myfanwy Bridges, née Davies, dated 11 January 1982 (NELM MS 98. 4. 98), it seems likely that Dorothy Baker's maiden name was Hytch. A drawing by H Rowley (one of Brettell's university friends) in Brettell's university copy of *The Works of Chaucer* depicts a man and a woman (identified by means of initials underneath each figure) as "NB" and "DH", walking hand in hand into the



morning sunlight above the inscription: “Against the morning beam // I strode beside my team.” This appears to support the conjecture above.

\* \* \*

TRES VIA

p.525

**Note:** The woman in this early poem, a fair copy of which was made on 29 July 1929 (see notes to Stakenbridge. July 13<sup>th</sup>), is Brettell’s first love, referred to only as “Cynthia” in his autobiography *Side-Gate and Stile* (p.57-58) — see note to “June 14”.

**Title:** *Tres Via*: three ways.

\* \* \*

STAKENBRIDGE. JULY 13<sup>TH</sup>

p.527

**Note:** This poem and “Tres Via” are on opposites sides of the same page and seem to have accompanied a letter to Brettell’s university friend Bill Berry dated 29 July (NELM MS 2002:17:4). In that letter Brettell writes the following which seems to pertain to “Stakenbridge. July 13<sup>th</sup>”. In 1929 the 13<sup>th</sup> of July fell on a Saturday.

What do you think of the enclosed effort. [sic] I hardly know what to call it—essay, prose poem story—but it’s the record of an experience I had on Saturday. I went (on) a walk right into the heart of my Worcestershire. When term starts, I’ll take you some day. You should appreciate it. I must take Dorothy too.

Similarities in paper, ink and handwriting, between the leaf on which the poem is written and that of the letter, seem to indicate further that fair copies of both poems were made on 29 July 1929 to accompany the aforementioned letter.

**Title:** *Stakenbridge*: a hamlet in north Worcestershire, England.

4 *It was the birth of mysteries*: perhaps a reference to the festivities of the Eleusian mysteries, one of the most sacred ritual celebrations of ancient Greece (see *EE*).

\* \* \*

**WHEN I GO DOWN TO STRATFORD ON AVON** p.529

**Title:** *Stratford on Avon*: The town of Stratford in Warwickshire was the site of William Shakespeare's birth and death.

6-13 The references are to leading female characters in plays by Shakespeare: Rosalind (*As You Like It*), Juliet (*Romeo and Juliet*), Desdemona (*Othello*), Maria (*Twelfth Night*), Cleopatra (*Antony and Cleopatra*), Miranda (*The Tempest*) and Cordelia (*King Lear*).

16 'Gentle and low': a phrase from *King Lear* Act V sc. iii:

What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.  
(ll. 273-4)

19-20 probably Brettell's first love Dorothy Baker (see note to "June 14").

\* \* \*

**CHARLEMAGNE**

p.531

**Note:** This poem was published in *The University Gazette: The Journal of the University of Birmingham*. Vol. VI, no. 3: 70 in January 1930. In an earlier manuscript version, written below the poem, Brettell wrote:

Do you feel like this Bill any time? I feel so splendid nowadays. It's those great heroes of romance, great hearts in glorious bodies, Charlemagne, Roland, Arthur, Galahad—I feel something like them somehow. And a pickaxe is as noble a weapon as a battle axe; and there might possibly have been some queen like this in those days of fair women.

(NELM MS 2002.17.39)

**Title:** *Charlemagne*: During the early Middle Ages Charlemagne (742-814) was the most important king in Europe. He was King of the Franks (768-814) and Emperor of the Romans (800-814). The tales of his and his knights's courage and heroism became the subject of Romances like the eleventh-century epic *Chanson de Roland* (EE "Charlemagne").

\* \* \*

**RELIQUIA**

p.535

**Title:** *Reliquia*: fossil remains.

1 *you*: probably Dorothy Baker (see note to “June 14”).

9 *Raindrops and birdwhispers round our first embracing*: see note to “June 14th”.

\* \* \*

SONG

p.539

**Note:** An earlier version of this poem was published in *The University Gazette: The Journal of the University of Birmingham*. Vol. V, no. 2: 40 in November 1928 under the title “Athleta”. It reads:

O we're running, running, running,  
And we feel the rain's wet kisses on our brows,  
While the last rose drops its paleness,  
And the trees of autumn toss in wild carouse;  
And the wind is full of voices,  
And the brooks are swirling low with secret mirth,  
And we're running, running, running,  
Through the magic of the earth.

Sweet mist is on our eyelids,  
The air with curl of woodsmoke hovers sweet,  
And there's joy in every sinew,  
And there's laughter in the glowing of our feet;  
And our blood is hot with revel,  
And there's madness of sweet life in every part,  
And we're running, running, running,  
To the magic of our heart.

(ll. 1-16)

In a letter to his university friend Bill Berry, probably written in 1928 / 1929 (NELM MS 2002.17.3) Brettell expressed his early views on poetry. It gives insight into the early version of this poem.

You mention an effort of mine—I gather it appeared in the Gazette (if so keep your copy for me to see[.] [I]n any case[,] the Gazette[,] interesting). Now don't you see that the extra value it gains from the fact that you know me is an entirely false value. It doesn't exist beyond you and me, and the value of poetry MUST be universal, not personal—as Matthew Arnold says by the way. Giving full rein to your imagination, suppose that people of our third and fourth generation should read that horrible doggerel. Does it add anything to their poetic experience to know that I ran 50<sup>th</sup> in last year's inter-varsity? It does NOT, I say.

And this is the danger with your personal details. It might work the other way. If you read Byron's magnificent lines on the sunset in Don Juan and think about their author—in all his vanity and hypocrisy and foulness—there is a danger of the glory

passing. The instrument in this case—and in all poetry—is greater than the player. Poetry is greater than the poet because it is pure and the poet—be he Milton or Tennyson or Bunyan—is impure.

And so we come to your point—your main point, I take it—that poetry is the man himself. I admit that, I must admit it because it is the fundamental of all genuine art. But there is also the fact that follows from this—that poetry is not the whole man but only the part of him that really matters—really matters because it is at once the *best* part of him and the eternal part of him. Apart from his poetry then, a dead poet *IS* as dead as Dickens' door nail and apart from his poetry a poet does not therefore matter. And even *in* his poetry, *the personal note, through being universal, becomes im-personal*. To take an outstanding example—Sir Thomas Browne. That noble and loveable old fellow, passing through the limbec of his art into immortality, has ceased entirely to be the justice who condemned old women as witches. He has become an impersonal figure as impersonal as Mr Pickwick or Michael who can come and linger by our elbow at the fireside whenever we reach down Religio Medici—with me, it will not be an infrequent occasion, bless him. And from this I hope you see that although an artist does paint and write with his blood, the blood that does not form part of his art, is as cold as the frosty Caucasus. All we want therefore, is that which lives because it is immortal—art, poetry. And the rest doesn't matter.

1 *O we're running, running, running*: Brettell was a keen long distance athlete and ran for the University Harriers. He gained his blue in athletics, the one university achievement he was truly proud of.

\* \* \*

#### THIEF

p.541

14 *the golden apples of the sun*: a line from W. B. Yeats' "The Song of Wandering Aengus".

The last stanza of the poem reads:

Though I am old with wandering  
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,  
I will find out where she has gone,  
And kiss her lips and take her hands;  
And walk among long dappled grass,  
And pluck till time and times are done  
The silver apples of the moon,  
The golden apples of the sun.

(ll.17-24)

\* \* \*

#### RETREAT FROM RAPTURE

p.543

**Note:** The poem asserts that since ecstasy is unsustainable, the solution is to become involved in less rapturous but necessary mundane pursuits which bring their own rewards.

4 *Cock ribald fingers*: an impolite gesture; two fingers raised in a V in token of defiance or insult.

13-14 These lines are almost identical to lines 29-30 in "Deri-Deri" (see "One Year").

14 *Flags on a dunghill*: see l.6 in "Dung".

\* \* \*

#### CENTAUR'S SONG 1942

p.545

**Note:** The human head of the centaur-poet uses philosophic and abstract concepts in an attempt to control its equine body which reacts instinctively or sub-rationally to the news broadcast of the progress of World War II.

22 *cavalier*: a deliberately ambiguous choice of word: 1) cursory 2) courtly, in the manner of a cavalier, i.e. a mounted knight.

\* \* \*

#### TURN OF THE YEAR

p.547

3 *Haysel*: dialectal term for hay harvest or hay season. Brettell consistently misspells this word as "haysell". These misspellings have been corrected as the *OED* does not recognise "haysell" as an alternative spelling (see *OED* "haysel" n).

3 *corn-cobbing*: reaping of the maize heads.

7-8 rephrased these lines would read: And clouds cover the northern rim with grey.

25 *snell*: sharp, keen.

30 *bedizen*: dress over-brightly.

31 *jigging file of fire*: The veld was often set alight at the end of winter to encourage new growth in spring.

36 *Scissor away*: a reference to the sound that grasshoppers of the family Acrididae make by rubbing their back legs together (see *FGISA* "Orthoptera" 98); also, possibly, to the grasshoppers's consumption of grass.

40 *Readiness is all*: Cf. *Hamlet* V. ii. 220-222:

If it be now,  
'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if  
it be not now, yet it will come—the readiness is all.

\* \* \*

**SAFE INTERIOR**

p.551

11 *put outside*: an allusion to the practice of removing fresh flowers from bedrooms at night, supposedly to prevent an excessive build-up of carbon dioxide.

16 *the Sunflower vase*: Vincent van Gogh's (1853-1890) painting: "Sunflowers". Van Gogh painted seven still lifes of sunflowers between August 1888 and January 1889 in Arles.

19 *Breughel winter*: Pieter Bruegel the Elder's (1525-1569) painting: "Hunters in the Snow" (1565). It hangs in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria (see note to l. 35 of "Clerk in Holy Orders").

31 *And a horn will blow down valleys lonelier than Roland's*: The eleventh-century Romance epic *Chanson de Roland* tells the story of how Charlemagne's nephew Roland died fighting a rearguard battle as Charlemagne's army returned home after its campaign against the Saracens in Spain in 778. Legend tells that Roland had an enchanted horn called Oliphant which would summon help when blown, but when Roland blew his horn Charlemagne was persuaded that Roland was only hunting deer and so Roland was left to die (*EE* "Roland").

\* \* \*

**NIGHTFALL**

p.553

5 *Orion*: Orion is a "constellation located on the celestial equator east of Taurus. It is oblong, with three stars in a line near its centre. It is represented on pictorial charts as the figure of

Orion, the hunter in Greek mythology, standing with uplifted club. Three bright stars represent his belt and three fainter stars aligned south of the belt represent his sword" (*EE* "Orion, astronomy").

18 *halloo-ing*: see l.11 of "Weathercock".

\* \* \*

## RHODESIAN SPRING SONG

p.555

**Note:** The echo is from an anonymous twelfth / thirteenth century lyric "The Singing Maid"

Now springes the spray,  
All for love I am so seek  
That slepen I ne may.

Als I me rode this endre day  
O' my pleyinge,  
Seih I whar a litel may  
Began to singe,  
'The clot him clinge!  
Was es him i' love-longinge  
Shall libben ay!'

Son I herde that mirye note,  
Thider I drogh:  
I fonde hire in an herber swot  
Under a bogh,  
With joye inogh.  
Son I asked,  
'Thou mirye may,  
Why singes tou ay?'

Than answerde that maiden swote  
Midde wordes fewe,  
'My lemman me haves bihot  
Of love trewe:  
He changes anewe.  
Yiif I may, it shall him rewe  
By this day!'

(ll.1-24)

6 *The roundel and the rounne*: A "roundel" is a circle dance; a "roune" is probably a musical round, i.e. a circular canon.

8 *Lenten*: Lent falls in spring in the northern hemisphere.

23 *To green and garth*: “green” refers to a village green while a “garth” is an enclosed grassed yard, like those adjoining great mediaeval cathedrals and abbeys.

34 *sales*: probably stock sales.

37 *measures*: verses.

\* \* \*

## DEDICATION TO EVA

p.559

**Note:** This “dedication” did not appear in *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* when it was published in 1950.

10 *cloud-cuckoo*: imaginary, fanciful, illusory.

\* \* \*

## ZIMBABWE

p.561

**Note:** The poem’s setting is the Great Zimbabwe ruins, which was:

built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD and the town flourished for about 300 years before declining to the status of a minor settlement and, finally, abandonment. Rediscovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Great Zimbabwe was rumoured to have been the capital of an ancient northern civilization. Modern archaeological research has shown this belief to be without foundation; Great Zimbabwe was built by an African community, directly ancestral to the Shona people of modern Zimbabwe.

...The focal point of Great Zimbabwe’s town plan is a high granite outcrop that rises steeply above the valley below. On the summit of this hill is a set of stone-walled enclosures built (as is all Great Zimbabwe’s stonework) from carefully prepared granite blocks, without the use of mortar. One of the two larger hill enclosures was a place of worship; when rediscovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, carved stone birds (representing the spirits of former rulers) were still in place near plastered altars. The other large hill enclosure was a residential area.

(*EE* “Great Zimbabwe”)

1 *ruins*: see above note.

5-6 Cf. Part III of Tennyson’s “The Princess”:

The splendour falls on castle walls  
And snowy summits old in story:

(ll.348-349).



13 *reredos*: a screen or panel situated behind an altar or chair.

16 *flamen*: In Roman times a flamen was a priest who served only one deity.

18 *Queen Sheba's Ophir*: Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925) suggested in *King Solomon's Mines* that the ruins of Great Zimbabwe were actually the site of the legendary Ophir (see *King Solomon's Mines* 20). The land of Ophir is referred to in 1 Kn. 9 & 10 as one of great wealth from which King Hiram's fleet brought gold, juniper wood and jewels as gifts to King Solomon. According to Dennis Butts, while Rider Haggard denied that he was aware of "recent discoveries" when he wrote *King Solomon's Mines* (published in 1885),

the theory that the fabulously rich King Solomon might have obtained some of his wealth from Africa had recently been revived by Karl Mauch, a German geologist, who in 1871 suggested that the Great Zimbabwe ... might have been built by the Phoenicians, and that the temple was a copy of the palace where the Queen of Sheba stayed when she visited King Solomon

(Haggard 323)

Butts cites R.N. Hall's *Pre-Historic Rhodesia: An Examination of the Historical, Ethnological and Archaeological Evidence as to the Origins and Age of the Rock Mines and Stone Buildings* (Unwin: T.Fisher, 1909. 325-6) to support the assertion that "theories that these ruins were the remains of the Queen of Sheba's factories, and that the rock mines were King Solomon's had been discussed by Portuguese traders for at least four hundred years" (Haggard 323).

23 *blind and flightless birds*: In Great Zimbabwe there were soapstone carvings of a mythical seated bird now known as the "Zimbabwe bird". It adorns Zimbabwe's flag and bank notes.

23-26 These lines refer to the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon in 1 Kn. 10:1-13.

24 *winged lions flank the stair*: a reference to Solomon's wealth in 1 Kn. 10:18-20:

Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom.

25 *his vintage words*: According to 1 Kn. 3:12 God blessed King Solomon with unequalled wisdom. When the Queen of Sheba visited him and taxed him with difficult questions (see 1 Kn. 10:1-13) he answered them all.

42 *salaams*: Arabic greetings.

45 *Gold*: 1 Kn. 10:10 details the presents which the Queen of Sheba presented to Solomon, including “an hundred and twenty talents of gold.”

47 *traffickers*: Arab traders and slavers.

49 *ambergris*: the most precious of perfumes—here: gold.

52 *Sabi*: the Sabi river which rises in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe and flows south and east to the sea through Mozambique.

63 *Gazaland*: Gaza is a large province in Mozambique between the Zimbabwean border and the province of Inhambane.

64 *Semite*: Arab traders and slavers, who were Muslims—hence “crescent” in *l.* 65.

64 *Portuguese*: Mozambique was colonised by the Portuguese, who were Catholics—hence “cross” in *l.* 65.

65 *cross or crescent*: the religious symbols, Christian and Muslim, of the above-mentioned explorers / traders, colonists / missionaries.

71 *sea-cows*: direct translation of Afrikaans “seekoei”: hippopotami (*Hippopotamus amphibius*).

72 *living ebony*: black slaves.

93 *Salisbury*: formerly the capital of (Southern) Rhodesia, now called Harare, capital of Zimbabwe.

95 *dikkop*: see “Vox Populi” line 30.

99 *ringdoves*: The Red-eyed Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia semitorquata*) known in Afrikaans as the “Groot Ringduif” (large Ringdove). Adult birds have distinctive red markings round the eye, and a black collar.

108 *The urgent phallus and the quiescent ring*: Great Zimbabwe has a very tall circular central tower surrounded by lower circular walls and passages.

109 *slype*: a narrow passage between walls.

109-110 *priest*: Brettell is speculating about the probable uses of Great Zimbabwe.

118 *monkey-rope*: a common name for various “liana-forming species of climbing plants.” A monkey-rope is characterised by its “tough, pliant stem” (*DSAE* “monkey-rope” n.).

121 *dassie*: Brettell is probably referring to the rock-hyrax (*Procavia capensis*) a small tailless furry mammal found in rocky areas throughout southern Africa.

123 *weavers*: weaver birds (Family Ploceidae), so called because of the intricately woven nests they build.

123 *springhaas*: Afrikaans for springhare (*Pedetes capensis*), a large, nocturnal rodent whose “long hind legs ... make possible its kangaroo-like bounds” (*DSAE* “springhaas” n.).

**Footnote:** The acropolis presumably refers to the section of Great Zimbabwe which Brettell and his children were exploring. In 1950 John Brettell would have been fifteen and his sister Rosemary twelve.

\* \* \*

**EXPECTING PEACE**

**p.567**

**Note:** Originally part of the collection *Antelope and Mad Baboon* later published by OUP as *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* in 1950, this poem was not included in the publication because, as Brettell noted in a letter to Betty Finn dated 9 June 1977: “the pagination... demanded it” (NELM MS 96.19.173).

**Subtitle:** *V.J. day*: Victory in Japan: 2 September 1945.

6 *fringe*: a reference to Brettell’s sense of being on the margins of the world of the action during World War II.

13 *And rumour rides the aether waves*: speculation in radio broadcasts.

\* \* \*

## AT HOME

p.569

7 *bosky eyot*: island thicket.

10 *kept*: kept to, did not stray from.

11 *squired*: owned by country squires, landed gentry—unlike the “landless youth”.

35 *houseboy*: Male domestic servants were common in Rhodesia. Typically dressed in uniform white or dark blue linen shorts and shirts edged with red braid, the “houseboy” cleaned the house of his white employers, the “cook boy” prepared all their meals, and the “garden boy” looked after their garden. The terms are now regarded as offensive.

39 *Chanticleer and Pertelote*: the farmyard poultry (see Chaucer’s “Nun’s Priest’s Tale”).

\* \* \*

## EARLY HOUR

p.573

**Note:** Brettell contrasts life in England and Rhodesia through the symbolism of the dawn. The first three dawns in the poem highlight the England of Brettell’s childhood, student days and working life, while the last dawn realises the promise of the first two English dawns in the context of Rhodesia.

7 *nightshirts*: smocks worn to bed at night.

20 *shifting shuffling queues*: lines of unemployed work-seekers in the Great Depression in the early 1930s. Brettell left England for Southern Rhodesia in 1930 because he could not find work.

\* \* \*

## TRANSIT

p.575

**Title:** *Transit*: see “O quem cito transit gloria mundi” (O how quickly passeth away the glory of the world), Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471) *De Imitatione Christi* (The Imitation of Christ); I.iii.3 (Kempis, 7).

7 *lyre-, the scimitar horns*: perhaps old fashioned horse-collars.

11 *haysel*: see line 3 in "Turn of the Year." Brettell here is constructing an image of England at the turn of the century before electricity pylons dotted the countryside.

13 *The pylons stride the countryside*: reminiscent of images in Stanley Snaith's poem "Pylons" (see note to "Cosmos", l. 7).

18 *share*: ploughshare.

23 *Sabi*: the region dissected by the Sabi river in eastern Zimbabwe.

\* \* \*

## HESITATIONS :

### I

p.577

**Note:** There are two earlier variant versions of this poem: "The Lamplight" (see NELM MS 98. 82. 26. 1) and "Release" (see *University Gazette* 6 (2) 1929).

14 *Chopin*: the Polish Romantic composer Frédéric François Chopin (1810-1849) is famous for his piano compositions including nineteen nocturnes, a form which he made peculiarly his own.

\* \* \*

### II

p.579

**Subtitle:** an earlier version of this poem entitled "To Welcome, My Horse" (see NELM MS 98. 4. 110) indicates that Brettell is referring to his horse "Welcome". The Brettells relied on horses for transport while living in the Charter District.

19 *plough*: ploughland.

19 *beck*: a brook.

\* \* \*

### III

p.581

43 *Cain*: In Gen. 4 Cain kills his brother Abel and is condemned to wander through the world.

44 *peewits*: lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*).

\* \* \*

**Note:** Brettell, using the carpenter Joseph as a mouthpiece, contemplates the future by reflecting on political and literary events in history. The theme of work and workmen is present throughout the poem which considers the transitory and flawed accomplishments of power and personal ambition and emphasises the enduring significance of honest workmanship. The varying focal points of the poem's different sections also reveal humanity's inability to chart a course into the future.

According to *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography* (1890-1974/5) Brettell first published this poem in *The Link* in 1946 (*Rhodesian Literature* 116). He reproduced it in 1963 in his self-produced volume "Some Poems", but omitted it from his 1968 volume: "A Rhodesian Leave." "Birth in Bethlehem" was the only poem from "Some Poems" rejected for this self-produced volume. The version reproduced here is that of 1963.

**Title:** Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the son of a carpenter (see Lk. 2).

**Subtitle:** Jesus followed his father Joseph's trade of carpentry until he was about thirty when he began his ministry (Lk. 3:23).

**1 Perfume and jewels and a certain star:** Mt. 2:1-12 tells how the Magi from the East followed a star to Bethlehem to worship the new born Christ and to bring him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

**2 those three:** the Magi from the East (see Mt. 2).

**7 Wise Innocent, wise suppliants, wise mother:** Jesus, the Magi, and Jesus's mother, the virgin Mary.

**9 Within the girdle of virginity:** According to the traditional interpretation of Mt. 1:18-24 Jesus was conceived immaculately without the agency of a human father.

**10 He:** Joseph.

**14 cockleshell:** A cockleshell was the traditional sign that anyone who wore it had made the pilgrimage to the shrine of St James at Compostela in Spain. By extension it became the universal symbol of the Christian pilgrim.

**16 stable:** a reference to Christ's birthplace.

25 *You may sin the ancient sin*: pride, wanting to be divine.

26 *Mephisto*: the demon Mephistopheles to whom Dr Faustus in the *Tragedy of Dr Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe (1564-93), sells his soul

So he will spare him four-and-twenty years,  
Letting him live in all voluptuousness  
(I. iii. 91-2)

27 *proudest queen*: Helen of Troy. See "Attic Shape" in "Uncollected Poems". Faustus says

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.  
Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies!  
(V. i. 98-99)

29 *Cressida or Imogen*: characters in Shakespearean plays. The flighty Cressida appears in the Trojan war love tragedy *Troilus and Cressida*, and also in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. The virtuous Imogen is a wronged British princess in *Cymbeline*.

32 *Iachimo*: crafty character in *Cymbeline* who tricks Imogen's banished husband Posthumus into believing that he has seduced Imogen, after Posthumus placed a wager on her fidelity, see "I You and Cymbeline" in "Uncollected Poems". Iachimo gets his "evidence" of Imogen's infidelity by hiding in a trunk in Imogen's bedroom, out of which he climbs when she is asleep, hence "creaking lid" in *l.* 31.

45 *And knaves peer through into our privacies*: an indication of the breakdown in law and common decency.

46-47 doctors of the law, see Mt. 23: 23:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

50 *Signifer*: Roman standard bearer.

50-53 a reference to the Roman occupation of Judea.

54-57 possibly a reference to the invasion and occupation of Greece during the Second World War.

59 *schooled*: While all copies of this poem use the word “school”, “schooled” makes more sense both syntactically and in terms of meaning. “School” has thus been emended to “schooled”.

60 *Freud*: Austrian scientist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) who invented psychoanalysis “as a method of curing the mental diseases called neuroses” (*LCEL*, “Freud, Sigmund”, 535). His influence on Western thought and particularly on imaginative literature post 1910 has been immense.

61 *Bobadil*: a boastful cowardly character in Ben Jonson’s *Every Man in his Humour*. To Brettell’s mind the fact that people like Freud (an “amateur”) and Bobadil (“a cad”) can dictate the way in which the great works of literature mentioned, (Dante’s “*Paradisoës*” and Homer’s *Iliad*) should be interpreted is a clear indication of the degenerate state of the modern world.

63 *Teach them new Olympiads*: new Olympic sports.

64 *sten*: a hand-held machine gun.

65 *adze*: carpenter’s tool for cutting.

71 *frankincense*: the gift of the second wise man to the Christ Child (see Mt. 2:11). Frankincense is a sweet-smelling resin used for incense.

72 *baulk*: a rough beam.

73 *size*: adhesive waterproofing.

77 *burr*: “to make a whirring noise” (*OED*, “burr” v.<sup>3</sup>).

82 *dies*: moulding tools.

83 *Leander*: a young man from Abydos, a town of the Asian side of the strait which separates Asia and Europe. He was in love with Hero, a priestess of Aphrodite who lived on the opposite shore, in the town of Sestos. Every night Leander would swim across the strait to be with Hero, guided by a torch which she lit on top of a tower. One night a storm arose and Leander was drowned. When Hero found his body washed up on the European shore the next day she committed suicide by jumping off the tower into the sea (see Bulfinch 88).



86-87 sexual images, contrasting with the sterile preoccupations of casuists (80), propagandists (81) and idle talkers (84).

\* \* \*

## GEORGIC

p.589

**Note:** "Georgic" originally appeared in Brettell's privately produced collection "And Underfoot September" in 1977, but was discarded when this collection was later published in *Side-Gate and Stile*. As Brettell noted in a letter to Betty Finn dated 29 January 1978 (NELM MS 96.19.185), "Georgic" is "a transposition of an essay I wrote for ICA [Intensive Conservation Area] on the future of sheep farming in Inyanga." The language in the poem shows the influence of the African pastoral poet A. S. Cripps (see "Maronda Mashanu") but while Brettell answered Finn's criticism of subject with "of course I need to write a Georgic" he did acknowledge in the same letter that this poem "doesn't quite come off."

**Title:** *Georgic*: a poem dealing with husbandry.

2 *awns*: bristles on grass.

8 *brack*: bracken.

23 *Persian, merino, corriedale*: breeds of sheep.

27 *dams*: mother sheep.

30 *tyke*: dog.

41 *The unimaginable Star*: a reference perhaps to the story of the Magi from the East in Mt. 2:1-12 who followed a star to Bethlehem to worship the newborn Jesus Christ; possibly also to the star of the Pan African Congress whose rays cover the entire continent of Africa.

\* \* \*

**Note:** In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn dated 10 December 1972 (NELM MS 96.19.131)

Brettell wrote:

The elegy to John Cowie is pure Hugh, at his best—and how good that is: the perfect phrase, the perfect form, the simple sincerity—it restores my faith in verse after so much nebulae. The poem itself is the most moving thing I've seen for a long time.

**Title:** *Hugh Finn*: The poet and science teacher Hugh Finn (1928-1995) was a close friend of Brettell for over forty years. From 1958 to 1991 they, and Hugh Finn's wife, the poet D.E. Borrell (Betty Finn 1928- ), exchanged poetry and numerous letters. The latter are archived at the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown, South Africa: Accession number: 96.19.1-378.

**Subtitle:** *John Cowie*: John Cowie (?-1972) was Headmaster of Alan Wilson school, and Chairman as well as Honorary Secretary of the Salisbury Poetry Society. He was also Secretary of Education in the Federal Government and a Presbyterian minister. The poem Hugh Finn wrote for him is reproduced below as it appeared in *Rhodesian Poetry* 11, 1972 / 73.

FOR JOHN COWIE:  
SCOT, SCHOOL-MASTER, MINISTER, FRIEND

John, in the heather-braes of Heaven,  
With their North-Sea tang of the airs of Fife,  
Do you dream of Leuchars and fair Loch Leven,  
As you did in life?

Do you live the poems you used to love,  
Meet Burns and Scott and Henryson,  
Honour with brose those bards above,  
And guid black-bun?

Remember the chalk, the noise, the boys  
Your maths made scholars, your wisdom men?  
(Years that the heart, perhaps, enjoys  
More now than then?)

And at the kirk, in Geneva bands,  
Christening my sons, and many another?...  
Knowing the Christ in each child in your hands,  
Kind as the mother.

Gentle as only the strong can be,  
Wise and humorous, you are gone:  
With courage, grace, serenity,  
We miss you, John.

*5 tartan and lion crown*: a reference to Cowie's Scottish heritage and possibly also to the Royal Stewart clansmen's crest which has "a lion, sejant, affronte, gules, imperially crowned, or, holding in his dexter paw a naked sword and in sinister a sceptre both erected paleways, proper" (Bain 272).

*7 dominie's gown*: a Presbyterian minister's robe; here a reference to a schoolmaster's gown.

**15-16**: Robert Burns (1759-1796) was long regarded as the Scottish national poet while the novelist and poet Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) was one of the leading figures in English Romanticism. Brettell is reusing images from Finn's poem.

\* \* \*

#### **"POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATION OF A POET BLOWN UP BY A LANDMINE"**

**p.593**

**Note**: In a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn dated 18 January 1977 when the Rhodesian Bush War was at its height, Brettell wrote, enclosing the limerick:

Tomorrow I take my life in my gear box and steering wheel and go down for a meeting at St Mary Magdalene's school—a very tricky area. Now, there's a headline for you: 'Posthumous publication of a poet blown up by a landmine'. Betty could even write a verse about it.

(NELM MS 96.19.168)

\* \* \*

#### **ATTIC SHAPE**

**p.595 ☒**

**Note**: Early versions of this poem bear the dedication: "in memoriam: Eva". Brettell seems to have been misinformed about the illustration that inspired the poem, referring to it as an "attic red-figured plate, from the fifth century BC entitled "Helen and Priam". Dyfri Williams, head of the Greek and Roman department at the British Museum, however, identifies the illustration as follows: "This is the interior of the marvellous red-figured cup by the Brygos Painter in the Louvre. The exterior shows the Iliupersis, including the death of Priam. The

identity of the woman on the interior is certain: she is labelled Briseis. The man is usually identified as Phoenix” (Letter from Dyfri Williams to John Gouws, 18 February 2005).

Brettell has misinterpreted the figures as those of Helen and Priam.

**Title:** *Attic Shape*: a phrase in line 41 of Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”.

**Epigraph:** “*For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair*”: line 20 from Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”. In context it reads:

Bold lover, never, canst thou kiss,  
Tho’ winning near the goal,—O do not grieve!  
She cannot fade, tho’ thou hast not thy bliss  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

(ll. 17-20)

**1** *And did they pause, between draught and discreet belch*: From the illustration that accompanies this poem it is clear that Brettell is looking at a picture of what he takes to be Helen and Priam. When Brettell was preparing this poem for publication he wrote below the accompanying picture: “the raison d’être that has to go with the poem”. “They” thus refers to Helen of Troy and Priam, King of Troy.

**4** *wine-dark sea*: see l. 88 in “The Wall”.

**10** *The thousand ships, the cold dishonoured bed*: When Helen, the most beautiful woman in Greece, according to Greek mythology, deserted her husband Menelaus and fled with Prince Paris of Troy to Troy, Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon raised a massive Greek fleet and army to attack Troy. Brettell here is thinking of a phrase from Christopher Marlowe’s play *Faustus* where Mephistopheles says:

Was this the face that launch’d a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

(V. i. 96-97)

The ensuing ten-year conflict which led to the destruction of Troy was the Trojan War.

**12-16** lines reminiscent of the Keats’s Ode’s assertion that art immortalises passion.

21 *Elysian zephyrs*: In Greek mythology the souls of the dead found rest and happiness in the Elysian fields where they were surrounded by “grass, trees, and gentle winds and enveloped in rose-tinted, perpetual light” (*EE* “Elysium”).

34 *asphodel*: flowers of Elysium.

35 *lads-love and pimpernel*: wild flowers of the English countryside, (*Artemisia Abrotanum*) and (*Anagallis arvensis*) respectively.

37 *wait-a-bit*: the apt name given to various species of acacia / asparagus thorn trees / shrubs which have curved thorns; from the Afrikaans “wag-’n-bietjie”—“wait-a-bit”.

\* \* \*

## I, YOU AND CYMBELINE

p.597

**Note:** Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, written between 1609-1610, is a late tragi-comedy which is both a romance and a reconciliation play. *Cymbeline* has as a central theme “the loss of the world of a young girl, whose recovery expresses the recovery of the qualities of youth, purity, beauty, trust, and potentiality” (*LCEL*, “Cymbeline”, 474).

On the back of a hand-written copy of the poem which he sent to his daughter, Brettell wrote the following explanatory notes to the poem:

‘Cymbeline’ was one of Shakespeare’s latest plays. Story—*Cymbeline*, king of ancient Britain, had a daughter *Imogen* who got into hot water by marrying a commoner *Posthumus*. He was exiled and went to Rome, where the villain of the piece, *Iachimo* bet him that he could seduce his wife—and got the evidence false, of course, for that by hiding in a trunk in Imogen’s bedchamber. Imogen then flees from the king’s displeasure and the intrigue of her wicked stepmother, and disguised as a boy *Fidele* (that old Elizabethan gag) discovers in the wilds of Wales her two lag-lang [? *conjecture*: long-lost?] brothers. Posthumus also returns in disguise, joins up with the two young princes and helps to defeat the Romans and everything ends happy-ever-after. An absurd story and a second-rate play, but it does contain a lovely song and in the scene where Iachimo creeps out of the trunk to look at the sleeping Imogen one of Shakespeare’s most beautiful bits of writing—Act II, scene 2. Better read that, if nothing else.

Well, that’s what it did to me and my love—I’m still in love, you know  
(Second line echo from Jacques ‘Seven ages’ in *As You Like It*)

(Manuscript in possession of Rosemary Brettell).

2 *Pantaloon*: see l.34 of “Christmas Carol”.

**2** *Pantaloon almost, slippere'd, lean*: As noted earlier this is an echo from a line in Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. In Act II. vii Jacques, in describing the seven ages of man says:

The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side,  
His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound.

(ll.157-163)

**7** *Fidele*: see Brettell's note to the poem.

**12** *Posthumus*: see Brettell's note to the poem.

**16** *Imogen*: see Brettell's note to the poem.

**20** *Iachimo*: see Brettell's note to the poem.

\* \* \*

**BALLAD: MADONNA AND BAOBAB**

p.599 ☒

**Note**: This was one of the last Christmas poems that Brettell wrote before his death in 1991.

**2** *streets of gold*: an ironic reference to Johannesburg.

**3** *they*: the modern equivalent of the three wise men seeking salvation (see also ll. 13, 25, 33).

**5** *the tree*: a baobab (*Adansonia digitata*). Baobabs are massive trees indigenous to Zimbabwe whose diameter can reach up to nine metres (see *EE*).

**11-12**: see 1 Sam. 9-10 for the story of how Saul became the first king of Israel.

14 *no star*: Brettell is referring to the story in Mt. 2:1-12 that describes how the Magi from the East followed a star to Bethlehem to worship the newborn Jesus Christ.

20 *rand*: the Witwatersrand gold mines (from which the South African currency takes its name). The mines attract large numbers of migrant labourers especially from the rural areas all over southern Africa.

24 *ratel*: see l.11 in "No Road to Xanadu".

25 *Epiphany they may come back*: Brettell is suggesting that at the Ecclesiastical feast of the Epiphany (6 January), traditionally the occasion on which the Christ-child was revealed to the world in the persons of the Magi, the "they" in the poem may return.

31 *patchouli*: cheap perfume taken back by miners to their wives on their return from South Africa.

34-35 see Mt. 2:1-12.

\* \* \*

#### RAIN FOR ZIMBABWE CHRISTMAS

p.603

**Note:** This poem is a revision of an earlier one entitled "After Early Rain" published in *Rhodesian Poetry* 4 in 1957 which appears below:

The bateleur drops from the loosened sky,  
The crazy buds spurt upward into light,  
Now every chrysalis a butterfly  
Transmuted to a jewel overnight.

The green sheen sweeps the savanna grey  
Shouting its answer to the spring's request,  
And the old desert, Bechuana-way,  
Sheathing its claws, slinks backward one step west.

Eyes open everywhere: puddle and rivulet  
Fragments of fallen sky among the grass;  
Open, bright pimpernel, open mock violet:  
With stubble-scything flight the swallows pass.

Pass and re-pass, and their wings are tipped  
With amethyst of light snatched from the sky;  
With wink of leaf, the solemn eucalypt  
Flirts with the shouting breezes endlessly.

On naked sense the roustering odours slap,  
The steaming yeast of winter-pented dust;  
In surge and splurge of urgent mounting sap  
The seedling splutters with the sprouting lust.

The kaffirboom with incandescent bough  
In taper-tips of leaping fire is lit:  
If ever men were lucky, we are now;  
If ever land was blessed, this is it.

(ll. 1-24)

In a letter dated 22nd December 1991 from John Hodgeson (a music master at Peterhouse School) to George Niven (an English teacher at the school). Hodgeson wrote

John Brettell sent me a Christmas Card from Noel which he found already (sic) for posting and in it was the following poem which I thought you'd be interested to have.

Brettell's card to Hodgeson has not been located. It would appear that this reworking of "After Early Rain" was Brettell's last poetic labour.

1 *bateleur*: The bateleur (*Terathopius ecaudatus*) is a large bird of prey found throughout most of southern Africa.

7 *Kalahari*: The desert in central southern Africa (mainly Botswana), also called Kgalagadi.

9-12 According to Lk. 2:7 Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem and placed in a manger.

10 *His cot the tree-top in the nursery story*: an echo, though not in sentiment, of:

Rock a bye baby, on the tree top,  
When the wind blows the cradle will rock;  
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,  
Down will come baby, cradle and all.

("Lullaby Lyrics" par. 1)

13 *kaffirboom*: see note to "Threnody in Spring I-III".



## LIST OF MANUSCRIPTS

*Manuscripts in the possession of the National English Literary Museum in Grahamstown, South Africa.* NELM MS:

- 475/1 Brettell, N.H. Worksheets and rough drafts for "One Year".
- 475/2 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "One Year".
- 475/3 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "A Rhodesian Leave".
- 475/5 Slater, F.Carey. Letter to T. S. Eliot. 23 January 1947.
- 475/6 Eliot, T.S. Letter to F. Carey Slater. 24 March 1947.
- 475/7 Cumberlege, G. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 10 March 1949.
- 457/8 Cumberlege, G. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 3 April 1950.
- 475/11 Snelling, John. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 4 August 1951.
- 475/12 Robson, Lilian. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 15 November 1947.
- 475/13 Dodds, A.E. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 7 October 1950.
- 475/14 Hughes, A.M.D. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 9 July 1951.
- 475/15 Snelling, John. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 21 October 1947.
- 475/16 Redwood Anderson, John. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 29 September 1951.
- 475/17 Nash, Richard A. Letter to N.H. Brettell. [n.d.].
- 475/18 Cock, A.A. Letter to Rex [?]. July 22 [19-?].
- 475/27(a) Galley proofs for *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*.
- 475/27(b) Galley proofs for *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*.
- 475/28 "Antelope and mad baboon". (Ms. for *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*).
82. 22. 1 Brettell, N.H. Exercise book containing drafts of poems.
82. 22. 2 Brettell, N.H. Exercise book containing drafts of poems.
82. 22. 3 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Recessional".
96. 19. 1 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 16 June 1958.
96. 19. 2 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 21 July 1958.
96. 19. 3 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 5 November [1958].
96. 19. 4 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 9 September 1959.
96. 19. 5 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 16 September 1959.
96. 19. 6 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 14 October 1959.
96. 19. 7 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 25 January 1960.

96. 19. 8 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 3 March 1960.
96. 19. 9 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 19 March 1960.
96. 19. 10 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 26 August 1960.
96. 19. 11 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 2 September 1960.
96. 19. 12 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 11 November 1960.
96. 19. 13 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 15 January 1961.
96. 19. 14 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 15 March 1961.
96. 19. 15 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 3 April 1961.
96. 19. 16 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. 13 April 1961.
96. 19. 17 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 3 June 1961.
96. 19. 18 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 5 July 1961.
96. 19. 19 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 12 November 1961.
96. 19. 20 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. 3 February 1962.
96. 19. 21 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 3 February 1962.
96. 19. 22 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. 20 February 1962.
96. 19. 23 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 1 May 1962.
96. 19. 24 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 20 January 1963.
96. 19. 25 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 26 February 1963.
96. 19. 26 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 20 March 1963.
96. 19. 27 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. [1963].
96. 19. 28 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 28 May 1963.
96. 19. 29 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 5 September 1963.
96. 19. 30 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 15 October 1963.
96. 19. 31 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 17 December 1963.
96. 19. 32 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. December 1963.
96. 19. 33 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. [n.d.].
96. 19. 34 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 29 January 1964.
96. 19. 35 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 19[64].
96. 19. 36 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. 1 February 1964.
96. 19. 37 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 20 February 1964.
96. 19. 38 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. 9 April 1964.
96. 19. 39 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. 19 May 1964.
96. 19. 40 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. [n.d.].

96. 19. 41 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 28 June. 1964.
96. 19. 42 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 6 July. 1964.
96. 19. 43 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. [n.d.].
96. 19. 44 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn and Colin Style. 12 September 1964.
96. 19. 45 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. November 1964.
96. 19. 46 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 2 December 1964.
96. 19. 47 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 31 December 1964.
96. 19. 48 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 5 May 1965.
96. 19. 49 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. 25 June 1965.
96. 19. 50 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn and Betty Finn. 1 August 1965.
96. 19. 51 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Clark. 18 August 1965.
96. 19. 52 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. 25 September 1965.
96. 19. 53 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. 5 November 1965.
96. 19. 54 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn and Betty Finn. 23 November 1965.
96. 19. 55 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. [n.d.].
96. 19. 56 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 17 December 1965.
96. 19. 57 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 9 February 1966.
96. 19. 58 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 3 April. 1966.
96. 19. 59 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 7 June 1966.
96. 19. 60 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 8 June 1966.
96. 19. 61 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 28 June 19[66].
96. 19. 62 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 20 July 1966.
96. 19. 63 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 26 October 1966.
96. 19. 64 Brettell, Eva. Letter to Betty Finn. [November (?)] 1966.
96. 19. 65 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 24 November 1966.
96. 19. 66 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn. 1 December 1966.
96. 19. 67 Brettell, N.H. Postcard to Hugh and Betty Finn. 17 January 1967.
96. 19. 68 Finn, Betty. Letter to N.H. Brettell. [n.d.].
96. 19. 69 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn. 19 February 1967.
96. 19. 70 Brettell, N.H. Postcard to Hugh and Betty Finn. 1 March 1967.
96. 19. 71 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn. 7 March 1967.
96. 19. 72 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn. 15 March 1967.

96. 19. 73 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 22 April 19[67].
96. 19. 74 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 8 June 1967.
96. 19. 75 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 17 June 1967.
96. 19. 76 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 27 July 1967.
96. 19. 77 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. 9 August 1967.
96. 19. 78 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. [n.d.].
96. 19. 79 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh and Betty Finn. [n.d.].
96. 19. 80 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 28 October 1967.
96. 19. 81 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Hugh Finn. 12 November 1967.
96. 19. 82 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 25 November 1967.
96. 19. 83 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty and Hugh Finn. 27 November 1967.
96. 19. 84 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Betty Finn. 7 February 1968.
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98. 4. 3 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Country into Town".
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98. 4. 43 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Rowland Molony [n.d.].
98. 4. 44 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Douglas Livingstone. [n.d.].
98. 4. 45 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Colin Style [n.d.].
98. 4. 46 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Walter Allen [n.d.].
98. 4. 47 Molony, Rowland. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 1983.
98. 4. 48 Molony, Rowland. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 21 August [19--].
98. 4. 49 Molony, Rowland. Letter to N.H. Brettell. [n.d.].
98. 4. 50 Molony, Rowland. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 1990.
98. 4. 51 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Guy Butler. 17 June 1987.
98. 4. 52 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Guy Butler. [n.d.].
98. 4. 53 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Guy Butler. [n.d.].
98. 4. 54 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Guy Butler. 3 March 1991.
98. 4. 55 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Douglas Livingstone [n.d.].
98. 4. 56 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Douglas Livingstone [n.d.].
98. 4. 57 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Hugh and Betty Finn [n.d.].
98. 4. 58 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Hugh and Betty Finn [n.d.].
98. 4. 59 Brettell, N.H. Incomplete draft letter to Hugh and Betty Finn [n.d.].
98. 4. 60 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Robin Graham [n.d.].
98. 4. 61 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Robin Graham [n.d.].
98. 4. 62 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Ben Gingell [n.d.].
98. 4. 63 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to M.B. Zimunya [n.d.].
98. 4. 64 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to John Eppel [n.d.].
98. 4. 65 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to E. S. Chimsoro [n.d.].

98. 4. 66 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Colin Style [n.d.].
98. 4. 67 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Hugh and Betty Finn [n.d.].
98. 4. 68 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to Rowland Molony. [n.d.].
98. 4. 69 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to unknown recipient. [n.d.].
98. 4. 70 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to unknown recipient. [n.d.].
98. 4. 71 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to unknown recipient. [n.d.].
98. 4. 72 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to unknown recipient. [n.d.].
98. 4. 73 Brettell, N.H. Draft letter to unknown recipient. [n.d.].
98. 4. 74 Brettell, N.H. Book of sermons and undated draft letters to various recipients including: John [Hodgson ?], Leonard Rix, Douglas Livingstone, G.R.B, [Ben Gingell ?], Betty Finn, Anthony [Chennells ?], and E. R. Dodds.
98. 4. 76 A collection of extracts from letters about the contents of *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian* from: T. S. Eliot to Francis Carey Slater and from G Cumberlege, John Redwood Anderson, Mrs A.E. Dodds and Prof. A.M.D. Hughes to N.H. Brettell.
98. 4. 77 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 13 April 1966.
98. 4. 78 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 29 December 1987.
98. 4. 79 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 24 September 1984.
98. 4. 80 Butler, Guy. Card to N.H. Brettell. 30 September 1985.
98. 4. 81 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 2 February 1987.
98. 4. 82 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 26 May 1987.
98. 4. 83 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 14 June 1987.
98. 4. 84 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 29 July 1987.
98. 4. 85 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 4 April 1987.
98. 4. 86 Butler, Guy. Card to N.H. Brettell. December 1988.
98. 4. 87 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 30 March 1989.
98. 4. 88 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 15 September 1989.
98. 4. 89 Butler, Guy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 15 May 1990.
98. 4. 90 Style, Colin. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 5 May 1974.
98. 4. 91 Style, Colin. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 22 April 1976.
98. 4. 92 Style, Colin. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 26 August 1976.
98. 4. 93 Style, Colin. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 4 November 1978.
98. 4. 94 Style, Colin. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 10 October 1986.

98. 4. 95 Style, Colin. Letter to N.H. Brettell. [n.d.].
98. 4. 98 Bridges, Myfanwy. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 11 January 1982.
98. 4. 98. 1 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Myfanwy Bridges [n.d.].
98. 4. 99 Brettell, N.H. Poems: "Ballade: Madonna and Baobab" and "Rain for Zimbabwe Christmas".
98. 4. 101 Allen, Walter. Letter to N.H. Brettell. [December 1989].
98. 4. 102 Allen, Walter. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 23 April 1991.
98. 4. 103 Allen, Walter. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 22 October 1991.
98. 4. 104 Brettell, N.H. Draft Letter to Walter Allen [n.d.].
98. 4. 105 Brettell, N.H. Draft Letter to Walter Allen [n.d.].
98. 4. 106 Brettell, N.H. Draft Letter to Walter Allen [n.d.].
98. 4. 111 Brettell, N.H. [Poems] Typescript with holograph emendations of Brettell's collection of poetry entitled *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. See 475/28.
98. 4. 112 Brettell, N.H. Draft Letter to Guy Butler [n.d.].
98. 4. 113 Brettell, N.H. Draft Letter to Walter Allen [n.d.].
98. 11. 1 Brettell, N.H. Letter and poem to Guy Butler. 19 August 1991.
98. 11. 2 Brettell, N.H. Book of Newspaper clippings containing reviews of *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*.
98. 72. 2. 1 Hill, Stan. Letter to J.H. Brettell. 14 December 1991. Accompanied by an obituary Stan Hill submitted to the *Daily Telegraph* following N.H. Brettell's death.
98. 72. 2. 2 Brettell, N.H. Extract from a novel: "A Sixth-Former's Black Country in the Twenties".
98. 72. 8. 1 Brettell, N.H. Two exercise books containing drafts of lectures on poetry and some drafts of poems.
98. 72. 9. 1 Brettell, N.H. Draft Letter to [Walter Allen]. [n.d.].
98. 72. 9. 2 Brettell, N.H. Draft Letter to [Douglas Livingstone]. [n.d.].
98. 72. 9. 3 Style, Colin. Letter to N.H. Brettell. [n.d.].
98. 72. 9. 4 Allen, Walter. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 15 October 1982.
98. 72. 9. 5 Molony, Rowland. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 19 December 1982.
98. 72. 9. 6 Eppel, John. Letter to N.H. Brettell. 31 December 1982.
98. 82. 5 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "Letters from England".



98. 82. 6 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "A few sidelights on "Sidegate".
98. 82. 7 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "Sidegate and Stile: an essay in autobiography".
98. 82. 8 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Recessional".
98. 82. 9 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Country into Town".
98. 82. 12 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Eclogue in the Hills".
98. 82. 13 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Lakeside: word and reverie".
98. 82. 14 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Season and Pretext".
98. 82. 15 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Season and Festival".
98. 82. 16 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "One Year".
98. 82. 17 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "The Owl and the Ivy".
98. 82. 18 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "And Underfoot September".
98. 82. 19 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "1964 Prose Year".
98. 82. 20 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Some Poems 1963".
98. 82. 23 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "Some responsibilities of today's writer: a few words on being elected National President of the [P.E.N] Centre." 1977.
98. 82. 25. 1 Brettell, N.H. Christmas card to Hugh and Betty Finn. [n.d.].
98. 82. 25. 2 Brettell, N.H. Christmas card to Hugh and Betty Finn containing poem: "Advent in Africa". [n.d.].
98. 82. 25. 3 Brettell, N.H. Christmas card to Hugh and Betty Finn containing poem: "Dikkop" [n.d.].
98. 82. 25. 4 Brettell, N.H. Christmas card to Hugh and Betty Finn containing poem: "A Boy is Born". [n.d.].
98. 82. 25. 5 Brettell, N.H. Christmas card to Hugh and Betty Finn containing poem: "Ballad: Madonna and Baobab". [n.d.].
98. 82. 26. 1 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Attic Shape".
98. 82. 26. 2 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Dedication to Eva: for *Bronze Frieze*".
98. 82. 26. 3 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "To Hugh Finn (after reading his elegy on John Cowie)".
98. 82. 26. 4 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "End of Year Returns".
98. 82. 26. 5 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Cosmos".
98. 82. 26. 6 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "In the Wattle: frankly an idyll".
98. 82. 26. 7 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Cuckoo".
98. 82. 26. 8 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Birth in Bethlehem".
98. 82. 26. 9 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Sonnet" [June].

98. 82. 26. 10 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Expecting Peace with my horse, August 13<sup>th</sup> 1945".
98. 82. 26. 11 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "The Lamplight".
98. 82. 26. 12 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Retreat from Rapture".
98. 82. 26. 13 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Turn of the Year".
98. 82. 26. 14 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Nightfall in the hot season".
98. 82. 26. 15 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Thief".
98. 82. 26. 16 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Song for an athlete".
98. 82. 26. 17 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Centaur's Song, 1942".
98. 82. 26. 18 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "To Welcome, my horse".
98. 82. 26. 19 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Rhodesian Spring Song: 13<sup>th</sup> Century Echo".
98. 82. 26. 20 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "I, You, and Cymbeline".
98. 82. 26. 21 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "On Clent Hill".
99. 46. 2 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: Draft of parts of *Side-Gate and Stile*.
2000. 18. 1 Brettell, N.H. Ring-bound notebook and enclosures: includes the poems: "Personae", "Locus", "Genius Loci", "Tom", "Dick", "Harry".
2000. 18. 2 Brettell, N.H. Two exercise books containing notes and drafts. Includes draft of a letter to Hugh and Betty Finn and poems: "The Birds", "Georgic", "Spiderwebs", "Spring in the Air", "Moon", "Claudian", "Prudentius", "Agrippa", "Petty Thief", "Gorse", "Nocturne", "Arson".
2000. 18. 3 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Attic Shape".
2000. 18. 4 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Ballad: Madonna and Baobab".
2000. 18. 5 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "I, You, and Cymbeline".
2000. 18. 6 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "One Year".
2000. 18. 7. 1 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Lakeside: word and reverie".
2000. 18. 7. 2 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Lakeside: word and reverie".
2000. 18. 8 Brettell, N.H. Two exercise books and enclosures containing drafts of poems for: poetry Ms: "Country into Town".
2000. 18. 9 Brettell, N.H. Poetry drafts relating to poems "Eavesdropper", "Pseudo-Tudor", and "Maronda Mashanu Revisited in time of crisis".
2000. 18. 10 Brettell, N.H. Untitled poetry drafts.
- 2001.1.3.2 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "Side-Gate and Stile".
- 2001.1.3.3 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "Side-Gate and Stile".
- 2001.1.3.4 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Some Poems".

- 2001.1.3.5 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Lakeside: word and reverie".
- 2001.1.3.6 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Season and Festival".
2002. 17. 1 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "'Bill': A Testament of Friendship".
2002. 17. 2 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "Bill: Memory of a Friendship".
2002. 17. 3 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. [n.d.].
2002. 17. 4 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. 29 July 19[30].
2002. 17. 5 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. 8 August 19[30].
2002. 17. 6 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. 20 December 19[30].
2002. 17. 7 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. [n.d.].
2002. 17. 8 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. 12 February 19[31].
2002. 17. 9 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. 2 April 19[31].
2002. 17. 10 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. 25 May 19[32].
2002. 17. 11 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. [n.d.].
2002. 17. 12 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. 13 August 19[32].
2002. 17. 13 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. 4 November 19[32].
2002. 17. 14 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. 5 November 19[33].
2002. 17. 15 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill Berry. 3 June. 19[--].
2002. 17. 16 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 5 November 1972.
2002. 17. 17 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 1 November 1974.
2002. 17. 18 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 13 May 1975.
2002. 17. 19 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 27 November 1976.
2002. 17. 20 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 2 May 1977.
2002. 17. 21 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 11 October 1977.
2002. 17. 22 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 28 August 1978.
2002. 17. 23 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 9 May 1979.
2002. 17. 24 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 9 June 1979.
2002. 17. 25 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 27 January 1980.
2002. 17. 26 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 16 December 1980.
2002. 17. 27 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 2 November 1981.
2002. 17. 28 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 20 March 1982.
2002. 17. 29 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 8 September 1982.
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2002. 17. 31 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 12 August 1983.

2002. 17. 32 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. [8 December ?] 1983.
2002. 17. 33 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 2 October 1984.
2002. 17. 34 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 4 March 1985.
2002. 17. 35 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 17 May 198[5].
2002. 17. 36 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Bill and Irene Berry. 7 August 1985.
2002. 17. 37 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Susan Boocock, née Berry. 1986.
2002. 17. 38 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "When I go down to Stratford on Avon".
2002. 17. 39 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Charlemagne".
2002. 17. 40 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "June 14<sup>th</sup>".
2002. 17. 41 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Reliquia".
2002. 17. 42 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Caroline (Mrs Ken Barker). [n.d.].
2002. 41. 1 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "One Year".
2002. 41. 2 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Country into Town".
2002. 41. 3 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "A Rhodesian Leave".
2002. 41. 4. 1 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Recessional".
2002. 41. 4. 2 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Recessional".
2002. 41. 5 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Lakeside: word and reverie".
2002. 41. 6 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: Untitled poetry Ms: containing poems: "Crowned Cranes", "Locust Birds", "Wagtail", "Dikkop".
2002. 41. 7 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "And Underfoot September".
2002. 41. 8 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Flower of the Clove".
2002. 42 Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "Stumbling on Melons".
2003. 24 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "One Year".
2004. 24 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Lakeside: word and reverie".
2004. 24. 1 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Lakeside: word and reverie".
2004. 24. 2 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Recessional".
- Ms/196 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "A Rhodesian Leave".
- PLO45/1a Brettell, N.H. Letter to Guy Butler. 15 February [195-].
- PLO45/1c Brettell, N.H. Letter to Guy Butler. 17 July [195-].
- PLO56/1 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Guy Butler. 21 July 1956.
- PLO56/2 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Guy Butler. 14 September 1956.
- PLO56/3 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Guy Butler. 27 October 19[5-].
- PLO56/4 Brettell, N.H. Letter to Guy Butler. 7 March 19[57].

- PLO56/5 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Heard at Inyanga".
- PLO56/6 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "No Road".
- PLO56/7 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Window in Between".
- PLO56/8 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Wind and an Eagle Owl".
- PLO56/9 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "At Home".
- PLO56/10 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Zimbabwe".
- PLO56/11 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Harvest at Horsebridge".
- PLO56/12 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Threnody in Spring".
- PLO56/13 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Schoolmaster".
- PLO56/14 Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Hesitation III".
- PLO85 Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "One Year".

### Privately owned manuscripts

*Manuscripts in the possession of Rosemary Brettell.*

- RB Col: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "A Rhodesian Leave".
- RB Col 1: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "One Year".
- RB Col 2: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "One Year".
- RB Col 3: Brettell, N.H. Untitled poetry Ms: containing poems: "Crowned Cranes", "Locust Birds", "Wagtail", "Dikkop".
- RB Col 4: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Lakeside—Word and Reverie".
- RB Col 5: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "And Underfoot September".
- RB Col 6: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Country into Town".
- RB Col 7: Brettell, N.H. Christmas Card containing poem "Ballad: Madonna and Baobab".
- RB Col 8: Brettell, N.H. Card containing poem "Attic Shape".
- RB Col 9: Brettell, N.H. Poem: "I, You, and Cymbeline".
- RB Col 10: Brettell, N.H. Diary dating from 28 April 1986 to 1 January 1988.
- RB Col 11: Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "The Stile".
- RB Col 12: Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "England Revisited".
- RB Col 13: Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "Eva 1984".
- RB Col 14: Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "Eva 1986".

*Manuscripts in the possession of Rev Richard Holderness.*

- RH Col: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Some Poems 1963".  
RH Col 1: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Season and Festival 1965".  
RH Col 2: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "One Year".  
RH Col 3: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Country into Town".  
RH Col 4: Brettell, N.H. Poem: "Christmas Tree".  
RH Col 5: Brettell, N.H. Prose Ms: "Stumbling on Melons".

*Manuscripts in the possession of Gregory Hacksley*

- NIV: Brettell, N.H. Poetry Ms: "Country into Town".

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No. 22, June 2003 (*special issue to mark the jubilee of the society*).

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No. 1, Ed. Renault, Mary, Lewis Sowden, Edgar Bernstein, Tony Fleischer, A.C. Partridge, Dolores Fleischer.

No. 2, Ed. Fleischer, Tony, A.C. Partridge, Lewis Sowden, Edgar Bernstein, Dolores Fleischer.

No. 3, Ed. Fleischer, Tony, A.C. Partridge, Edgar Bernstein, Mary Morison Webster, Dolores Fleischer.

No. 5, Ed. Fleischer, Tony, Edgar Bernstein, A.C. Partridge, Mary Morison Webster, Geoffrey Haresnape, Dolores Fleischer.

*Occasional Papers & Reviews*. Grahamstown: Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa.

Vol. 6 No. 2, December 1991.

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Brettell, N. H. "Memories of The Lye." *The Blackcountryman* Vol. 22 No. 4, Autumn 1989.

Brettell, N. H. "Two Black Country Schools: 1. Orchard Lane School, Lye." *The Blackcountryman* Vol. 23 No. 3, Summer 1990.

Brettell, N. H. "Two Black Country Schools: 2. King Edward VI School, Stourbridge." *Blackcountryman* Vol. 23 No. 4, Autumn 1990.

Brettell, N. H. "The Black Country re-visited." *The Blackcountryman*, Vol. 24 No. 2, Spring 1991.

Brettell, N. H. "Three Clues to the Past." *The Blackcountryman*, Vol. 25 No. 1, Winter 1992.

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- Badcock, Peter, and Robin Graham, eds. *Shadows of War*. Salisbury: Galaxie Press, 1978.
- Brettell, N.H. *Bronze Frieze: Poems Mostly Rhodesian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- Brettell, N.H. *Season and Pretext: Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Salisbury: The Poetry Society of Rhodesia, 1977.
- Brettell N.H. *Side-Gate and Stile*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe Publishing Co., 1981.
- Brettell N.H. *Four Voices. Poetry from Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo: Books of Zimbabwe, 1982.
- Brettell N.H. *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hugh Finn. Plumstead: Snailpress, 1994.
- Brown, J. G, ed. *Verse for You Book Three: A Collection of Verse for Senior Forms*. 1958. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1966.
- Bunyan, David, ed. *Twenty Five Years of English South African Poetry*. Grahamstown: ISEA, Rhodes University, 1989.
- Butler, Guy, and Chris Mann, eds. *A New Book of South African Verse in English*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Butler, David and Guy, eds. *Out of the African Ark*. Craighall: Ad. Donker, 1988.
- Butler, Guy, selected. *A Book of South African Verse*. London: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Chapman, Michael, ed. *A Century of South African Poetry*. Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1981.

Finn, D.E, ed. *Poetry in Rhodesia: 75 Years*. Salisbury: The College Press (Private) Limited, 1968.

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Finn, Betty. Personal Interview. December 2001.

## Index to Introduction and Commentary

- Alexander the Great 93, 103  
 Alighieri, Dante 193  
 Allen, Walter 160  
 Amery, Leo 22  
*Anastasia* cxiii  
 Anderson, John Redwood 6, 36  
 Anne, Queen 168  
 Aristophanes 15, 119  
 Arnold, Matthew 26, 27, 180  
 Arnold, Thomas 125  
 Arthur, King 57, 151, 179  
 Ausonius, Decimus Magnus 128, 133
- Bach, Johann Sebastian 99  
 Baker, Dorothy (see "Cynthia")  
 Balance, Gerard 111  
 Baudelaire, Charles 26, 27  
 Belloc, Hilaire xxxiv, 65  
 Berlyn, Phillippa 154, 155  
 Berrie, Phill cxiii  
 Berry, Bill i, 41, 86, 114, 178, 180  
 Birmingham University i-ii, viii, xiii, xv-xvi, xix, xxix, lxix, 2, 9, 54, 90, 160, 176  
 Blake, William xcvi, 49, 57, 75  
 Blunden, Edmund xxii, lxvi, 2, 3, 6, 56, 157  
 Bock, Mary xlvi  
 Bonda mission v, xxiii-xxiv, lxiii-lxiv, 111  
 Borrell, D.E. (see Betty Finn)  
 Brawne, Fanny 170  
 Brettell, Eva ii, iv, viii-x, xvii-xx, xxii, xxv-xxviii, xxxiv-xxxv, lxii, lxiv, 16, 36, 39, 54-5, 57-8, 90-2, 95-6, 99, 114-5, 144, 149, 156-60, 162-3, 165-7, 170, 173, 196  
 Brettell, John iii, viii, xviii, xx, xxv, lxix-lxx, lxxv, 58, 148, 171, 188
- Brettell, Noel Harry**  
 PUBLISHED POETRY  
 COLLECTIONS:  
*Bronze Frieze* iv, xxii, xxv-xxvi, xxx, lxvi, lxx-lxxi, xcix, cii, 2, 6, 13, 39, 46, 52, 100, 185, 188  
*Four Voices* viii, c, 149, 151, 154  
*Season and Pretext* vii, xxiii, lxxiv, c, 48  
*Selected Poems* x, xcvi, c,  
 UNPUBLISHED POETRY  
 COLLECTIONS:  
 "A Rhodesian Leave" v, lxxii-lxxviii, lvi, cii-ciii, 46, 51, 53, 105, 191  
 "And Underfoot September" vii-viii, lxxxviii-ix, lvi, cii, civ, 96, 128, 130, 145, 194  
 "Country into Town" ix, xxvi-xxvii, xl, lxxx, xcii-xcvi, cii-civ, 97, 99, 160, 162  
 "Eclogue in the Hills" vii, lxxxvii-viii, xcvi, cii, civ-v, 97, 122, 147  
 "Lakeside" vii, lxix, lxxxv-lxxxvii, xcvi, cii-ciii, cv, 97, 114-6, 118, 120, 122
- "Not Time's Fool" / "Flower o' the Clove" ix, xxviii, lxxx, lxxxii, xcii, xcvi, xcvi, ciii-civ  
 "One Year" vi, lxxix-lxxxiv, xcii-xciii, xcvi, cii-civ, 39, 96, 99, 112, 173, 182  
 "Recessional" viii, xc-xci, xcvi, cii, civ, 97, 149  
 "Season and Festival" vi, lxxii, lxxiv-lxxv, lxxvii, xcvi, ciii  
 "Some Poems" / "The Owl and the Ivy" vi, lxxii, lxxiv-lxxv, lxvii, xcvi, ciii, 191  
 PUBLISHED PROSE:  
*Side-Gate and Stile* vii-ix, xii-xiii, xv-xvii, xix-xxii, xxx-xxxiii, xli, xliv-lxviii, l, li, lxxxviii, c, civ, 2, 7, 9, 11, 16, 21, 42, 44, 50, 87, 90, 104, 128, 136, 156, 177-8, 194,  
 UNPUBLISHED PROSE:  
 "A Few Sidelights on Side-Gate" ix  
 "Covenant with Silence" ix  
 "Eva 1984" xviii, xxii-xxiii, xxv-xxvi, lxiv-lxv, 35-6, 77, 95, 99, 159, 173-4  
 "Eva 1986" ix  
 "Far Enough / Ver Genoeg" viii  
 "The Farthest Way" / "Parallel of Time" viii  
 "Through a Glass Darkly" / "Through a Sheet of Glass" / "Far Forest" ix  
 "Stumbling on Melons 1964" / "Prose Year" vi, 101-3, 143-4  
 Brettell, Rosemary iii, viii-ix, xi, xx, xxvi-xxvii, xxxv, xl, xlii, lxv, lxxiv-lxxv-lxxvi, lxxx, xciii, xcvi, ciii-civ, 43, 80, 116-7, 148-9, 158, 188, 198
- Bridges, Myfanwy xv, 177  
 Bridges, Robert 56  
 Brooke, Rupert 152  
 Brown, Charles 170  
 Brown, Ray 6, 9, 46  
 Browne, Thomas, Sir 86-7, 181  
 Browning, Robert xlv, 143  
 Bruce, Robert the, 83  
 Bruegel, Pieter (the Elder) 154, 183  
 Bulfinch, Thomas 193  
 Bunyan, John 181  
 Burns, Robert 195-6  
 Butler, Guy v, x-xi, xxxii-xxxiii, xlv-xlvi, xlix, lxvi, lxix, lxxix, lxxxvi, xci, 117, 154  
 Buzzetti, Dino cxi-cxii  
 Byron, George Gordon, Lord 162, 180
- Caesarius of Heisterbach 172  
 Campbell, Roy xxviii, xxxii, xxxv, xlii, 13, 117  
 Carey, Robert, Sir 83  
 Carroll, Madeleine xv  
 Carver, Maurice xvi-xvii  
 Catullus, Gaius Valerius xiii, xl, 149, 160-2  
 Cauter, David 19, 74

- Central African Correspondence  
 College 65  
 Centre Party xxiii, lxii-lxiii  
 Chamberlain, Neville 34  
 Charlemagne 179, 183  
 Chaucer, Geoffrey 109-10, 177, 189, 192  
 Chesterton, Gilbert Keith 17  
 Chimsoro, E. M. xli  
 Chopin, Frédéric François 190  
 Church, Richard lxvi  
 Churchill, Winston 19  
 Claudian [Cladius Claudianus] 128, 133-4  
 Clouts, Sydney xxviii, xxxv  
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor 62-3, 144  
 Columbus, Christopher 49  
 Cowie, John 195-6  
 Cox, David 154  
 Crabbe, George 153  
 Cripps, Arthur Shearly iii-iv, xxii, xxxiii, lxiii, lxvi, cvi, 2, 6-10, 46-8, 52, 74, 112, 145, 153, 194  
 Cullinan, Patrick 88  
 Cumberlege, Geoffrey 5  
 "Cynthia" i-ii, xv-xvi, 90, 177-80
- Da Gama, Vasco 70, 102  
 Daramombe Mission 153  
 Davies, William Henry 28  
 De Bougainville, Louis Antoine 32  
 De la Mare, Walter xlvi, 10, 26-7, 56-7, 101  
 De Selincourt, Ernest xvi, cvi  
 Debussy, Claude 22  
 Diocletian, Emperor 135  
 Donne, John xl, xliii, xcvi, 39, 149, 168-9
- Edward II 83  
 Edward the Confessor 167  
 Eggert, Paul cxiii, cxv-cxvi  
 Eliot, Thomas Stearns xxxviii, xlii, lxvi, 3, 6, 15, 26-7, 72, 107, 111, 150  
 Elizabeth I 83, 167-8  
 Enkeldoorn iii, xxii-xxiii 2, 7, 112, 150  
 Enslinsdeel Primary School iii, xx, xxii, 16, 153  
 Eppel, John viii
- Fairbridge, Kingsley xxxiii, 22-3  
 Ferrier, Kathleen 97  
 Finn, Betty / D. E. Borrell xxvi, xxx, xl-xli, xliii-xliv, xlvii-xlviii, li, liii, lix, lxii-lxiv, lxvi, lxix, lxxiv, lxxx, xcix, cvi, 6, 8, 51-3, 56-7, 65, 76, 81-2, 85, 92, 102, 105, 107-9, 113-5, 122, 124, 126-7, 129-30, 132, 136-7, 139-40, 143, 145, 148-58, 160, 175, 188, 194-6  
 Finn, Hugh xxvi, xxx, xl, xlii-xliv, xlviii, liii, lix, lxii-lxiv, lxvi, lxix, lxxiv-lxxv, lxxx, lxxxv, xcix, cvi, 6, 51-3, 56, 65, 76, 81-2, 85, 92, 102, 105, 107, 109, 113-5, 122, 124, 126-7, 129, 137, 150, 152, 156, 160, 163, 169, 171, 195-6
- Flaubert, Gustave 60  
 Flecker, James Elroy xlv  
 Freud, Sigmund 193  
 Frost, Robert 57
- Gainsborough, Thomas 154  
 Gardner, Helen 9  
 Garley, David & Dorothy 150  
 George I 72, 168  
 George II 72, 168  
 George III 72, 168  
 George IV 72, 168  
 Gingell, Ben xcvi  
 Gittings, Robert 156  
 Gouws, John 197  
 Graham, Robin 76, 81, 93-4  
 Gratian, Emperor 133-4  
 Graves, Robert 155, 157  
 Grinham, Robert xvi-xvii  
 Gunn, Thom 88
- Haggard, Henry Rider 61, 186  
 Hall, R.N. 186  
 Harare x, 11, 73, 187  
 Hardy, Thomas xxix, xlvi, lvii, 61, 116, 132, 155-7, 160  
 Hastings, Lewis xxxiii  
 Haydn, Franz Joseph 24  
 Henson, David & Meg 151  
 Henryson, Robert 195  
 Herod Agrippa II 135  
 Herrick, Robert 27  
 Hitler, Adolf 121  
 Hobbes, Thomas 145  
 Hodgson, John xlii  
 Hokusai, Katsushika 92-3  
 Holderness, Richard, Rev. lxxv-lxxvi, lxxxi, xciv, 7  
 Homer 60, 132, 147, 176-7, 193  
 Honorius, Emperor 134  
 Hopkins, Gerard Manley xliii, 61  
 Horace [Quintus Horatius Flaccus] xiii, xl, 126  
 Housman, Alfred Edward xxvi, xxix, xl, xlii, xlv, xlvi, lvii, lxxiii, 56, 95, 102, 130, 152, 160  
 Hughes, Ted xliii, 88  
 Hughes, Thomas 125
- JAM* cxiv  
 James I & VI 83  
*JITM* cxiii  
 John, King 84, 110  
 Jonson, Ben 193
- Kadoma / Gatooma viii, ix, xxv, xxviii, lxix, 162

- Keats, John xxix, xxxiv, xlii, xcix, 9, 11, 13, 47, 102-3, 170, 197  
 Kekana, Job liii, 113, 158  
 Kempis, Thomas à 189  
 Kipling, Rudyard 49  
 Kirschenbaum, Michael cxv-cxvi  
 Kytson, Thomas 167
- Lawrence, David Herbert 5, 15-7, 28  
 Lely, Peter, Sir 154  
 Lessing, Doris 145  
 Livingstone, Douglas viii, xi, xxxv, lxvi-lxvii, lxxii-lxxiii, lxxv, xc, xcii, 87-8, 108, 118, 122, 133, 145  
 Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth 44  
 Louis XVI 94  
 Love, Harold xvii  
 Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus) xiii  
 Lye, Worcestershire i, xii, xv-xvi, 50, 86, 104, 119, 129
- MacFie, Elizabeth xviii  
 Mahler, Gustav 97  
 Mallarmé, Stéphane 22  
 Marie Antoinette 94  
 Marlowe, Christopher 132, 192, 197  
 Maronda Mashanu 7-9, 74  
 Marryat, Frederick (Captain) 172  
 Marvell, Andrew xcvi, 26  
 Masefield, John 170, 174  
 McGann, Jerome J cxi, cxii-cxiii  
 Mendelssohn, Felix 168  
 Meredith, George 125  
 Millais, John Everett, Sir 165  
 Miller, Grant cxiv  
 Millet, Jean-François 9-10  
 Milton, John 34, 49, 133, 181  
 Molony, Rowland viii  
 Moraes, Dom xlv  
 Morse, Samuel F. B. 15  
 Moyo, Judith 137  
 Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 163  
 Muir, Edwin 56  
 Mussolini, Benito 42
- Nelson, Horatio 83  
 Niven, George 201  
 Noyes, Alfred 57, 170  
 Nyanga (Inyanga) v, x, xxiii-xxiv, xlvi 11, 18, 60-1, 77, 79, 101, 108, 159, 162, 164, 174, 194
- O'Shaughnessy, Arthur 106  
 Ovid [Publius Ovidius Naso] 34  
 Owen, Harold 131  
 Owen, Wilfred xxxii, xlii, lx, lxii, 105, 130-2
- Paton, Alan 117  
 Philip, David xi, 88  
 Plomer, William xliv, 117
- Pope, Alexander xiii, xviii  
 Pringle, Thomas xxviii, xxxii  
 Prudentius, Aurelius Clemens 128, 133-4
- Quayle, Anthony 51
- Redgrave, Michael 51  
 Rhodes, Cecil 7  
 Rhodesian bush war lxiii, 155, 157  
 Rhodesian Front Party xxiii, lxii, 74  
 Riversdale Primary School iii, v, xxiii, 43, 93-4  
 Rix, Len 131, 145  
 Robertson, Olive xxxvi, 113, 154  
 Robinson, Peter cxii-cxiii, cxvi-cxvii  
 Rodin, Auguste 12, 165  
 Roland [Paladin] 179, 183  
 Rowley, H. xv, 177  
 Ruzawi Diocesan School for Boys ii, xvi-xviii, xx, li, 36, 55, 90, 119
- Salisbury Poetry Society 195  
 Sappho 60  
 Sassoon, Siegfried 56, 155, 157  
 Schreiner, Olive 7, 117  
 Schubert, Franz 41  
 Scott, Robert Falcon xciii, 171  
 Scott, Walter, Sir 195-6  
 Shakespeare, William xiii, xxix, xl, xlii, xlv, lvi-lviii, 51, 109, 133, 166, 179
- WORKS BY:  
*Antony and Cleopatra* 59, 75, 92, 179  
*As You Like It* 30, 45, 57, 147, 179, 198-9  
*Cymbeline* 146, 192, 198  
*Hamlet* 110, 153  
*Henry IV* 1 & 2 142  
*Henry V* 142  
*King Lear* 20, 164, 173, 179  
*Love's Labours Lost* 37, 80  
*Measure for Measure* 165  
*Merchant of Venice, The* 67, 141  
*Merry Wives of Windsor, The* 142  
*Midsummer Night's Dream, A* lvi, 17, 31, 140, 162  
*Much Ado About Nothing* 100, 141  
*Othello* 51, 67, 139-40, 179  
*Romeo and Juliet* 37, 85, 179  
 Sonnets 46, 166  
*Tempest, The* 32, 141-2, 179  
*Troilus and Cressida* 192  
*Twelfth Night* liv, lvi, 65-7, 163-4, 179  
*Winter's Tale, The* 38-9, 46, 52, 60, 100
- Shaw, Bernard 59  
 Shelley, Percy Bysshe 35  
 Shillingsburg, Peter ci-cii, cvii, cx, cxii  
 Sidney, Philip, Sir xlv  
 Skinner, Douglas Reid lxxx, xcii  
 Slater, Francis Carey iv, xxii, xxxii, lxvi, 2, 5-6, 62-3  
 Smith, Ian xxiii, xxx, lxii, 19, 65

Smith, Malvern van Wyk xxvii, xxxii  
 Snaith, Stanley 98, 190  
 Soref, Harold 19  
 Spenser, Edmund 34, 171  
 St David's Girls High School xxiv, 65, 137  
 St Faith's mission school 65, 113  
 Stalin, Joseph 42  
 Steere, Douglas 2, 7-8  
 Stevenson, Robert Louis 174  
 Stilicho, Flavius 134  
 Stopford, John 153  
 Stourbridge i, xii  
 Stubbs, George 154  
 Style, Colin xxvii-xxviii, xxx-xxxi, xxxix,  
     xlili, xlvii, lxvi-lxvii, 33

Tearle, Godfrey 139  
 Tennyson, Alfred, Lord xlii, lviii, 42, 130,  
     176-7, 181, 185  
 Theocritus 10, 34  
 Thomas, Dylan xlii  
 Thomas, Edward xl, xlii, xlvi-xlvii, 11, 56, 61  
 Thomas, Ronald Stuart xlvi  
 Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de 68  
 Traherne, Thomas xcvi  
 Tully, Neil xxxi, lii-liii, lxi  
 Tully, William 7  
 Turner, Joseph Mallord William 154

Unilateral Declaration of Independence xxx,  
     lxiii, xcvi, 18, 74-5

Valentinian, Emperor 133  
 Van der Stel, Simon 20  
 Van Gogh, Vincent 33, 183  
 Vanhoutte, Edward cx  
 Vergil / Virgil [Publius Vergilius Maro] xiii,  
     lx, 10, 34, 54, 122, 131-2  
 Vermeer, Jan 20, 153-4  
 Victoria, Queen 168  
 Voltaire [Arouet, François Marie] 41

Walpole, Horace 126  
 Waterhouse, F. xv-xvi  
 Watson, William 57  
 Webster, John xxxviii, 107  
 Webster, R. A. 154  
 William III 168  
 Williams, Dyfri 197  
 Wilmot, John, Earl of Rochester xcvi  
 Wilson, Edward (Dr Bill) xciii, 171  
 Wordsworth, Dorothy 57  
 Wordsworth, William xl, xlvi, l, lvii-lviii, lxii,  
     cxvi, 10, 28, 38, 61, 114-22, 133  
 World War I / (First World War) xii, 12, 16,  
     19, 83, 168  
 World War II / (Second World War) xxi-xxii,  
     lii, 6, 11, 19-20, 29, 32-4, 41, 45, 51,  
     94, 110, 168, 182, 188, 192  
 Wrenningham mission 2, 153

Wright, David viii

Yeats, William Butler 14, 80, 160, 181  
 Young, Francis Brett xxii, lxvi, 2, 6

Zimunya, Musaemura Bonus lii-liii