

# Poetic Technique in Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate*

by

June Edverson Thjømmø

for the Department of Humanities  
University of Oslo  
Oslo, Norway

September, 2008

## Abstract

Seth's 1986 novel in sonnets, *The Golden Gate*, received mixed critical reviews, and has been given limited detailed poetic analysis. I use *close reading* analytical techniques and contextual analysis tools to examine the ways in which Seth's technical choices inform meaning and effect in the work. Fifty-four sonnets are analyzed, in whole or in part. The analysis is arranged by voicing strategy and theme or motif, including: Beginnings, Dialogues, Party Contexts, Nature, Activism and Acts. I preface the analysis with: (1) a review of the primary tools of poetic analysis, and (2) a discussion of contextual concerns. I then summarize commentators' and scholars' contributions briefly to give a contextual perspective to the contribution this thesis makes. Following the analysis, I conclude with a discussion of evaluative considerations, and recognize new strengths discovered in the work.

The analysis reveals *how* Seth's language and technical choices illustrate his command of poetic techniques, informing meaning and effect. The evaluation of figurative language, imagery and metaphor, tone, character, and theme are discussed. I conclude that *The Golden Gate* is a more significant contribution to modern narrative verse than has been previously recognized, and merits renewed literary notice, continued scholarship and further annotation.

I provide a 26-page synopsis of the work at Appendix A for those who have not read the work, which provides a narrative context for viewing the analysis.