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

by

June Edvenson Thjømøe

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.