

THE PARABLE by William Soutar

*Two neighbors who were rather dense 1  
Considered that their mutual fence  
Were more symbolic of their peace  
(Which they maintained should never cease)  
If each about his home and garden 5  
Setup a more substantial warden*

*Quickly they cleared away the fence  
To build a wall at great expense  
And soon their little plots of ground  
Were barricaded all around 10  
Yet still they added stone to stone  
As if they would never be done  
For when one neighbor seemed to tire  
The other shouted; Higher! Higher!  
Thus, day by day, in their unease 15  
They built their battlements of peace  
Whose shadows like a gathering blot  
Darkened one in neglected plot  
Until the ground so overcast  
Became a rank and weedy waste 20*

*Now in their obsession, they uprear  
Jealous and proud, and full of fear  
And lest they halt for lack of stone*

*They pull their dwelling houses down  
At last by their insane excess, 25  
Their rampart guard a wilderness  
And hate arousing out of shame  
Flares up into a wondrous flame*

*They curse they strike, they break the wall,  
Which buries them beneath its fall 30*

*This poem is a paradigm of great poetic symbolism, describing the  
cold war and indeed most wars which involve man.*