CATASTROPHE IN RHYME

by I. Doolittle Wright

I repeat my perennial scold,
Our profession is shaped by the mold,
Of the covert view,
That the roots of the new,
Are not to be found in the old.

The source of the general rule,
Transmitted by Marcellin Boule,
That Neanderthal,
Had no offspring at all,
Is the Neocatastrophist School.

But it seems unaccountably strange,
To deny that the strength of a range
Of natural forces
Suffice as the sources
That shape biological change.

There's something completely absurd,
In the view that's been recently heard;
The claim that stasis,
Can serve as the basis,
Of all that has ever occurred.

Mechanics are never detected,
In the popular view that's projected;
Since all that works,
Is change by jerks;
And Darwin is flatly rejected.

For that's how most scholars behave,
And it's easy enough to be brave,
When objection at most,
Is the groan of the ghost,
As it turns in its Westminster grave.

But if Darwin were with us today,
Consider just what he might say;
'Examine the strata,
Containing the data,
And use the ensuing array.'

Now ponder that primitive brood,
Eating their undercooked food;
The ones that are early,
Are rugged and burly,
With tools that are simple and crude.

Then look at what happens with time,
As a result of the technical climb.
The reduction of stress,
Means there's more of the less,
With moderns emerging sublime.

If we stick to the fossils involved,
The problem is easily solved;
Since Neanderthal form,
Can serve as the norm,
From which our species evolved.

[From C. Loring Brace, "Modern Human Origins: Narrow Focus or Broad Spectrum." The David Skomp Distinguished Lectures in Anthropology, Delivered April 16, 1992, Indiana University.]